**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**13th February 2022**

**Luke 6:17-26**

**Gathering**

May we find those open spaces

Beyond the church

Not because we reject her

But because we want her to be fulfilled

Those open spaces

On the plains

Where crowds gather

And the saviour speaks the words

Blessed are…

Honourable are…

Holy are…

Those open spaces

Where his words flip

Woe to you…

Shame on you…

Unholy are you…

In these open spaces

Where beatitudes call us

And shape our imagination

We gather

In this our 373rd anniversary of our parish

Our own open space

And as God’s People in this parish

We worship

**Welcome**

Hello, I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish and thank you for allowing us to gather with you in our online worship.

We’ve been in the synagogue, then on the waters side, and today we gather on the plain, where Jesus is preaching a sermon. Don’t forget these other places we have been because they all come together, but here today, it is a time to listen, and repeat, and listen again, to Luke’s version of the Beatitudes: words appropriate for us as we celebrate our 373rd anniversary of being not a church, but being a parish, our own open space to meet each other, and in getting here via all those other places over the last few weeks, maybe recognise themes we have heard before, as Jesus gives breath to kingdom words, that cut across the world’s words, and call us into life.

**Prayer**

May we find the peace, O God

That cuts through the noise

And be in the stillness

Of grace

Of forgiveness

Of love

And in such a place as this, O God

May we rummage through

Those things that bring us hurt

And trouble us

And niggle and make us anxious

And lay them down

Lay them down

Here

In this quiet

Renewing space

Lay them down

In this generous

Forgiving space

Lay them down

In this holy

Welcoming space

Shaped for the world’s bruised

And weary

And heavy laden

Loving God

And you are a loving God

May we linger here

In the peace of holiness

And the generosity of heaven

And the laughter of love

And be touched by that which heals

And renews

And rekindles us

That we might grow a little today

Stretch a little deeper

Live a little further

Share a little more generously

Learn a little more from each other

And hope into the kingdom

In this place of blessing

Of presence

We gather

And pray

Hear us in the global prayer

Our Father, who is in heaven

Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, the power

And the glory, forever

Amen

**Scripture Introduction**

Today our scripture passages will be heard woven through the reflection. We’re taking the Song of Mary called the Magnificat, then the words of Jesus in the synagogue called the manifesto of the kingdom and Luke’s version of the beatitudes called the sermon on the plain. And we tangle them all together. Luke’s beatitudes are almost a mirror image of the sermon on the mount in Matthew. Not quite the same. Luke is very much in the now and in the practical. Matthew spiritualises things, softens them. Luke doesn’t.

But we weave them altogether today for they have something in common.

**Listen, Repeat**

One of the techniques of teaching is reinforcing a thought: repeating it, perhaps in a different way, but keep repeating until it sinks in. The same technique has been used quite dangerously in our Trumpian/Johnstonian age where inaccurate, and false claims are made and repeated until they are believed and end up having consequences.

When you read the Gospels, the same technique is used here, though in a life-affirming, justice-inspiring, hope-giving way. If only some of our parliamentarians could err on that side we’d be in a lot better place.

Let me take you back to the song Luke has Mary sing when she hears the Saviour of the poor was to be born and she was to be his mother:

*“My soul magnifies the Lord,*

*and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,*

*for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
    and holy is his name.*

*He has shown strength with his arm;
    he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.*

*He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
    and lifted up the lowly;*

*he has filled the hungry with good things,
    and sent the rich away empty.*

It is called the Magnificat and sets out God’s kingdom vision before Jesus is even born. This is the hope of what will happen when God takes on flesh. The present worlds systems and balances will be turned upside down.

Mary has hardly taken a breath when a couple of chapters later, and Jesus is grown and beginning his ministry, we hear these words from him in the synagogue, familiar to us as we heard them only a few weeks ago:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
    because he has anointed me
        to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
    and recovery of sight to the blind,
        to let the oppressed go free,*

*To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.*

**Listen 2**

These words, called the Kingdom manifesto, sound familiar, not only because we heard then a short few weeks ago, but because they are almost a repeat of Mary’s words.

And then, hot on the heals of his sermon in the synagogue is Jesus sermon on the plain, Luke’s beatitudes:

*“Blessed are you who are poor,
    for yours is the kingdom of God.*

*“Blessed are you who are hungry now,
    for you will be filled.
“Blessed are you who weep now,
    for you will laugh.*

If we aren’t getting the message in Luke yet, then we probably will never get it because it is the same message, repeated and reinforced. This is the the kingdom that’s going on here, listen, repeat, listen, repeat, listen, repeat. Let these images become so familiar to you they make a home in your soul, says Luke, because this is the core of the whole kingdom initiative and is what Jesus is about. And we’ll hear more of the same later in Luke.

We have to remember that the gospel is more confession than history, that it is it more a statement of faith, a narrative that illustrates what Jesus means, than a story about what he got up to. Every image is a confession of faith, a picture that proclaims the intent of God.

Listen, repeat, listen, repeat. I was told by someone to write down everything people say to you that is life-affirming, that is positive, that encourages. And read them every day. That way you might believe you are worth something.

This is faith’s version of that. Luke is repeating the same truth, the same insight, until we see it’s worth, its value and continue to make it part of our DNA as a parish.

We’re growing out of the pandemic now. These are our foundational words that send us on our way back into our parish again. Let us continue to listen, repeat, listen, grow, listen, become.

**The Kingdom Paradox**

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” This sentence fails to make sense. Not by any rational logic. Our world can’t understand that easily.

Generally, being poor is not considered a “blessing,” and the power inherent in the term “kingdom” would never be handed to the poor.

Yet, here this paradoxical sentence exists, and is spoken by Jesus, the first in a long line of seemingly paradoxical statements.

This whole scene begins following one system of logic, and very quickly, Jesus flips the script and presents something entirely different, yet paradoxically exactly what the world truly needs: the paradox of a world turned entirely upside down.

It feels like populism is already doing that, turning our morals and values on their head and letting a sunken morality seem reasonable. But here is something that cuts through the snash and hurt of the debates that are happening at the moment. Here is a word that will heal the world more fully. Here is something worth hearing that cuts like a laser through a multitude of words and falsehoods that are thrown at us every day as we try and make our way through them.

These are words that deserve to be heard and demands a measure of silence in order to hear, that they may take shape in our imaginations, and grow something in our lives and our parish community.

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

Loving God

For 373 years we have prayed as a parish church

For our parish and people

Tried to love our neighbour

Tried to be your presence in this place

Thank you for the times

When the kingdom has taken root

And love has been shared

And good news has been lived out

Yet sorry for those times

When that has not happened

When we have failed to love our neighbour fully

When we have felt we needed to focus on ourselves more

When we have been anxious and worried about our own future

In this anniversary

May we bless all those we are called to care for

With presence and love

With hope and justice

May we bless our parish

With the hope of the kingdom

Lived out in all our living

May we bless our parish

As we connect and live together

Locally and globally

And we mention here our neighbours in Yemen, Afghanistan, Ukraine

As much as our neighbours in the next street

And we pray for a moral leadership in our own nation

As much as we do in every nation

And we live in a new balance with creation here in our parish

As much as we long for that for our whole world

And we live justly towards each other here

As we seek justice in trade and environment in every country

In these ways,

In this blessing we are called to be in the world

May we mark our anniversary

Sow your kingdom

Proclaim your good news

And live as your people

So may we gather here

Those closest to us whose worries and concerns we carry

From family and friends

To our parish neighbours

Those who are ill physically and mentally

And those worried about finance and work

Those who feel the cold

And worried about prices

To all in our parish

And in our communities

Hear our prayer

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**