

Podcast
21st June 2020
Matthew 10:24-39

Music
Welcome



Hello, and welcome to this week's worship podcast from New Kilpatrick Parish Church. I am Jeanette Peel, the probationary minister, at New Kilpatrick. Thank you for taking time out to be with us today, whatever time you are listening, and wherever you are listening from. We know this is very different from meeting together in one place, but we are still a church community, and are very much here for you.

And over the next twenty minutes or so we will spend time in each other's company, distancing yet together. So welcome.

We are slowly coming out of lockdown. More shops and places to visit are opening, family and friends can see each other more often, and we can glimpse a little piece of familiarity under the new way of living. Today's reading however, seems to take us from that place of being together and reconciliation to one of division and strife. From peace to anger. From security to insecurity.

Paula D'Arcy leads and attends retreats where people from many different backgrounds come to face their deepest grief, insecurities, and anger to find the freedom that lies on the other side. She shares this:

There is a love which itself has the power to free the human heart. Many remarkable people live in testament to this love, even though they are held in jail cells and prisons, or suffer the harsh conditions imposed by poverty, racism, adversity, war, and occupation. The truth of this love is that, if we can be uprooted from our daily preoccupations and taken by direct experience into its presence, then a profound transformation is possible.

Whoever arrives at this place looks at the world differently. The distinctions on the surface no longer exist. Here it is possible to suspend our certainties and touch something greater: The Spirit within us.

There is much to lament about the world just now. And in that lament, through the cries of pain and anger and frustration, we must find time to listen to one another to overcome that which is wrong. Matthew's message today addresses just how this can be done.

Reading – Matthew 10:24-39

"A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master

of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! “So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. “Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.



Prayer

Let us turn our hearts and minds to God in prayer. Let us pray.

Loving God, we seem to be dashing from one heartache to another with nothing in-between. As we prepare to return to some kind of normality, we come to realise that for some people there never was a normal. They already lived with loneliness and isolation, pain and fear, injustice, and distrust.

As we listen to your words today, may they speak deep within us. To the very essence that makes us, us, and may we hear the words afresh this day. May we be still and listen for their meaning even after the years that have passed since they were written.

Loving God, in our short time together, may we come to you open and available, to hear your word, and understand the meaning of it. As a community of faith, wherever we may be, we come together as one voice as we say the Lord’s Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy 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.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever.
Amen

Reflection

For a short time it appeared, on the outside at least, that finally we were all living in community with each other, looking out for neighbour, helping the poor, feeding the hungry, caring for and looking after creation, and generally living out Jesus' teaching. But we were wrong. Yes, these things are still happening but already people seem to have reverted to old ways, old habits, despite the talk of how these changes should be the new norm. The last couple of weeks have seen a lot of this turned on its head. Pictures of beauty spots once again turned into rubbish dumps. People pushing to be first in queues as shops begin to open. Do we not have enough already? Complaints that we cannot do what we want against a backdrop of people still dying from coronavirus, and scientists' warnings of what may still come.



Our passage today does little to reconcile any of the above. In fact, it appears to actively bring division, rather than encourage peace and love. We cannot fail to hear the opening words and not think about the protests about Black Lives Matter.

“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master.” This one statement, on its own, and out of any other context, is nothing short of incendiary in the current social and political climate. The image of slave and master is written for all to see and hear. We cannot deny that. And Jesus lived in such a world where this was how society existed, regardless of how wrong we feel it is today.

There are plenty of passages used in the Bible to uphold prejudices, hate, fear of other people, in an attempt to hold them back, or prevent them from being treated as equals, to enable everyone to live peacefully. But we must be careful. We can miss the meaning of these ancient texts because we read them through a twenty-first century lens. Language is dynamic and meanings of word constantly change from generations to generation. There are nuances and connotations that change with every generation with certain words.

A particular difficulty is presented when words in biblical Hebrew and Greek refer to ancient practices and institutions that do not correspond directly to those in our world. Such is the case in the translation of 'ebed (Hebrew) and doulos (Greek), terms which are often rendered 'slave.' These terms, however, cover a range of relationships that requires a range of meanings—slave, bondservant, or servant—depending on the context.

We find this in the story of Jesus healing a Centurion's Servant, the word slave and servant is used interchangeably depending who is speaking. We also have Jesus identified as the suffering servant in the Songs of Isaiah. There is a different connection and nuance that we miss. Just as we have in this text.

Ultimately, what Jesus is saying is that it is *enough* for a disciple to be like his teacher, the goal is to be exactly like, identical to the teacher. In our text last week, Jesus sent the disciples to do the works he did. Not just to tell people about him and what he was doing, but to be exactly like him. And this changes the direction and purpose of this text. They were not told to be greater, but to reveal God in the exact same way as Jesus did.

The point of everything is to be exactly like Jesus. That is the first and foremost thing we are tasked with. And to do that we have to understand that everything we do should be centred on the same things Jesus did. If we do that, not only do we stand up for those who are oppressed, discriminated against, undervalued, and ignored in society but we also need to look at our own way of living. We are all against the above but we can all do hypocrisy very well if we do not consider where our own goods and resources come from, the clothes that we buy, the food that we eat.

Division comes not from believing, or not believing, in Jesus or God, but from doing, or not doing, what Jesus commands us to do, while looking into how we live. The object of discipleship is not to point to Jesus but to become who Jesus was. It is to be Christ in the world, the incarnation of God in the world so that people look at us and see God.

Matthew's gospel is addressing a serious and important issue here, we need to listen to what we are being told what to do and then address what needs to be changed, starting with ourselves. Amen.

Epilogue

Lord, make us servants of your peace:
Where there is hate, may we sow love;
Where there is hurt, may we forgive;
Where there is strife, may we make one.

Where all is doubt, may we sow faith;
Where there is gloom, may we sow hope;
Where all is night, may we sow light;
Where there is tears, may we sow joy.

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Prayer

Our prayer of intercession has been adapted from Psalms for All Seasons, by Melissa Haupt, as part of the resources from Refugee Week 2020. Let us pray.

O God, hear us, as we raise our voices;
in you we take refuge.
Preserve those whose life is threatened by enemies
and who are the target of bitter words.
Remember those who are vulnerable and exposed,
those who are victims of natural disaster, war,
persecution, racism,
those suffering anguish and sorrow.
May we bring them all to safety.
To those seeking a hiding place,
to those torn from their homes,
those who are separated from loved ones,
those who are lost or have run away.
May we bring them to safety.
You look with mercy and love on all refugees.
Help us to welcome the stranger, befriend the lonely, and show compassion.
Allow your Spirit to move in us and teach us to seek justice,
to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you, telling of all your works.
Let us welcome everyone in your name. Amen



Sending Out: Galatians 3: 27-28

In Galatians, Paul writes these words:
As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Benediction

May we go out this day
To do as Jesus did
To Love, to forgive, to listen, to recognise God
In everything we do.
And may the blessing of God the father,
Son and Holy Spirit remain with us
And with all those we love.
Amen

Announcements

Thank you for the invitation to journey with you today, wherever you may be. It is always a special time where we meet in the imagination that sound offers. If this is your first time with us, then it is a pleasure to be with you. We are back again next week but while we cannot meet in church we do meet as church, mainly online at nkchurch.org.uk where you can engage with us in different ways.

You can get updated with all the different things happening at New Kilpatrick through the website www.nkchurch.org.uk, through the weekly bulletins which are emailed or posted out, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. So please get in touch if you want to find out more.

We've a bundle of zoom events each week, daily prayers written freshly each day, a new psalm for lockdown each week as well as food bank and community appeals. But we keep in touch by phoning each other too.

A special thank you to Meg Barrowman, Iain and Pat Stark, who all shared in our time together to make this podcast. So, for now, thank you. Until we meet next week, take care.

Music