

Podcast

30th August 2020
Matthew 16:21-28



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. Although worship will be restarting in the church from next Sunday, 6th September, our worship podcast will still be here each week. So even if you are unable to come to the building, church will still be coming to you.

Last Sunday, we gathered round the table to celebrate Communion with each other, from within the space of our own homes. Bread was baked and shared. Stories were told. Christ was present.

And today, may we keep that moment with us as we follow Jesus on the journey edging closer to Jerusalem and the cross. In last week's text, Jesus asked the question, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" and the disciples gave their answers. Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." He got the question correct only for this week to get it all very wrong.

Centering Prayer

In the fragmented beauty of a broken world
The shimmer of hope breathes new life
Through the cracks that appear under its surface.
The fragility of peace teeters on the edge of
Each new dawn as we find our place in life.

From understanding to disillusionment
From acceptance to disapproval
From joy to mourning
The disciples felt it all.

As we recognise these emotions in ourselves
May we come today with open hearts
And open minds to listen to what
You are speaking to us this day.

And now, hear us 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



Story Introduction

Our story today finds Peter in hot water – again. It is a story found in all the synoptic gospels, each with their own slightly different variation. That is an important point to note because these are not history books, they are stories and parables put together by the early church. Each gospel, written for different audiences, and then all put together as one. Peter, the rock on which the church will be built, seems to have fallen from grace. He probably was thinking and saying what we would have all done. You do not need to do it Jesus. I will protect you. We will take another road, another course of action and all will be well. It is easy for us; we know what happened. Peter did not. Let us listen to the reading now, taken from Matthew’s gospel, chapter 16: 21-28.

Reading – Matthew 16: 21-28

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Reflection

This text heralds a new beginning of Jesus’ journey from those very first words, ‘From that time on’ but it continues directly on from last week’s reading. Peter, once again, is at the

centre of the story however, this time not in a good way. After receiving a blessing from Jesus for recognising who he is, getting the gold star award, it is completely turned on its head and here, Peter is in a sense admonished by Jesus for failing to realise what being the Son of Man, Messiah, actually means.

I feel sorry for Peter. He has gone from a state of complete understanding and possibly elation to what appears to be nothing in one conversation. How many times do we find ourselves in a similar position? We get something and understand it only to realise that what we thought it meant is the complete opposite. When I was very young, I decided to help my mum polish a wooden unit in the bedroom – the good thing – only for her to realise, well in my way, I was using nail varnish remover – the not so good. I was too young to understand but the principle is the same.

If you listen or read this passage again you can recognise a similar theme running through it, ‘unless you take up your cross’ and ‘unless you lose your life.’ It is the second of these that is the important one, the one Jesus is trying to get the disciples to understand. The whole of his teaching bound up in that one phrase.

Take up your cross means losing your life. It is giving way to all your own ambition, the earthly things, and letting go of your ego, giving yourself wholly and truly over to God. It is entering into the life that Jesus asks of us and talks about. Letting go of everything that we cling to, that are important to us, wealth, status, greed for example. Think of the recent story of Zacchaeus the tax collector. He offered to give away half his possessions and pay back fourfold what he had taken. He made things good, understood Jesus’ teachings, and then followed him into discipleship.

Or the story of the rich young man who asked what he must do to inherit eternal life; meaning enter into a relationship with God. Yet, he could not give away that which he held close to him. His wealth. All of these things are death of one thing allowing a rebirth into something else. Death and resurrection. We cannot have one without the other.

So, taking up our cross is not just putting up with something, or accepting something or being weak. It is making a choice to do something, not having something done to us. It is the gateway to discipleship with Jesus and a right relationship with God.

You can recognise it as a spiritual act which epitomizes Jesus’ teachings of turn the other cheek, walk the extra mile, forgiving everyone. The point Jesus was getting across to the disciples, and therefore us, is that you have to die, leave the old behind, to live fully in that relationship with God.

For Peter, he did not want to let go of Jesus. He could not contemplate what it would be like without him. Holding on to what was important without recognising that he had to let everything go. The beginning of the end, death, into that new beginning, that new relationship with God.

So now we must ask ourselves, what is it that we prioritise that keeps us from having that right relationship with God? What earthly things do we hold on to that are too important to let go of? Because letting them go is our gateway to true discipleship. Amen

Prayer

In our time of prayer, there will be a short period of silence for your own individual prayers to God. Let us pray.

Loving God, in the highs and lows of life, we are often caught up not only in our stories but that of others. Life is complicated and delicate and challenging, sometimes all three at once. As we prepare to open the church doors, may we be mindful of all people for whom returning to the building is still not an option; where anxiety, and ill health and disability put their attendance on hold. For those who have renewed their faith in newfound ways online through the videos and podcasts, may we remember to keep including them as we move forward.

Loving God, as countries still battle with the pandemic, where the most vulnerable have the least to help and to heal, may we do what we can to support them. In our prayers today we hold South Asia whose health efforts are fighting against the extensive flooding the area is experiencing, as well as Covid.

And as politics, and politicians, around the world headline the news, may we hope that decisions made are for the benefit of the people the governments are there to serve, not their own agendas. That those in charge begin to see the people, the person, as one in humanity, rather than a 'them and us.' When people are destitute and dying from poverty may we let go of the unimportant things and fight for justice and support for the most vulnerable in society. May we help turn things around on their behalf.

Today, may we remember all those in hospital or waiting to go in for tests and operations. For the people anxiously waiting on news that all has gone well. For the dying, and the bereaved, we hold them in our prayers, and be their support however that may be needed. Loving God, we remember them all.

And now we bring those we know and do not know to you in prayer. The prayers of our hearts and minds for those who need our love and support. We name them in the stillness and the silence.

Gracious God, accept these, our prayers, as an action of our faith, as we step out to be the love and support and neighbour to those in need. One and all. Always.
Amen.

Epilogue

Many years ago, a copy of this Welcoming Prayer, by Mary Mrozowski, was given to me. I keep it with me with at all times. Sometimes I take it out and read it but mostly I just remember the words and be reminded of what is important.

I let go my desire for security and survival.

I let go my desire for esteem and affection,
I let go my desire for power and control.
I let go my desire to change the situation.

I open to the love and presence of God
And the healing action and grace within.

Benediction

As we go into the world may we recognise what is important and what we need to let go of. May the blessing of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon us and with all those we love, today, tomorrow and for evermore. Amen

Announcements

Next Sunday 6th September, will be the first worship service in the church building in five months, and it will last for about 30 minutes. If you are a member of New Kilpatrick Church, then you should by now, or will do so very soon, have received a letter or phone call from your elder who can explain the details of church opening. Numbers are strictly limited, and more information is available in the Bulletin or on the website at nkchurch.org.uk.

There is a need to book a pew, as we have space for only 50 people. Everyone must wear a mask, be socially distanced, and we will not be able to sing. There are a whole lot of things to consider so please read the information before phoning the church office on 0141 942 8827 to book a space. I know that is a strange thing to do, but it is the only way we can stay within the government guidelines and keep everyone as safe as possible.

However, even with an actual service taking place you will still find us here or online at nkchurch.org.uk where you can engage with us in different ways. The church website and bulletin will keep you updated with all the latest news and projects that New Kilpatrick are engaging in.

A special thank you to Eliese Fleck, who shared in our time together to make this podcast. Next week, our text will be reflecting on where two or three are gathered in my name. And that is where we will be. Gathered. In person and on here.

Music