

Podcast
11th October 2020
Philippians 4:1-9

Music
Welcome



Hello, and welcome to the New Kilpatrick Parish Church weekly podcast. I am Jeanette Peel, the probationary minister, at New Kilpatrick. Last Sunday was Harvest Sunday and the church and online worship came together as one. For most of the part we celebrated together with words and music and videos of harvest past and present, as well as a video from the Junior Fellowship telling us their harvest thoughts. This week we are back to the old new with the church, podcast and YouTube service being separate. So even if you cannot get to the building or watch what is happening online, our worship podcast is still here this week and every week. Church is still meeting you wherever you are. So, thank you for joining us.

We have moved away from Matthew's gospel this week and have headed to Paul's letter to Philippi where the message is one to encourage, rejoice, and provide a much-needed optimistic outlook on life. One that is founded in love and the joy of knowing God even when there is disunity and conflict around us. Never before has this message been needed when we are in such uncertain times about what is happening around us, here in our communities and the world.

And our passage from Philippians links perfectly into last week's message of broadcasting and those unexpected harvest blessings that we have encountered over the last few months – popping up among the difficult and painful and lonely moments that we have experienced.

As part of this we are also offering a practical Community response this month, different ways we can care for neighbours both here and overseas, a chance to provide joy and love and peace for others. A reminder of that later. But for now, welcome.

Centering Prayer

The psalmist writes:

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures for ever. Who can utter the mighty doings of the Lord, or declare all his praise? Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times.

May we rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory in your heritage.

The steadfast love of God endures forever.

Whomever we are, wherever we are, whatever we do.

The love of God bringing peace, comfort, and love.

Let us pray.

Loving God,
You gather us in, the lost and the broken,
the joyful and found,
the marginalised and the vulnerable,
each and every one of us,
gathered into your love,
into your peace and forgiveness.
And in that gathering you call us to unity,
to live as one nation,
one race,
in your name.

It is in this unity that we are called to work together as one,
following Christ's teachings and living according to your ways.
In serving you, we serve each other,
transforming despair into hope,
fear into joy and
loss into new beginnings.

Forgive us when we turn the wrong way,
renew what is to come and take us from here
inspired to serve you in the world.
Keep on working in us and through us
even when we seem to have a long way to go,
until we extend your welcome to every person
in every part of your created world.

Loving God, wherever we worship this day,
at whatever time and whoever we have by our side,
may we hear your words speak into our soul,
into our very being and may we respond as you ask us to.
And may this begin this moment
as we say the Lord's Prayer together

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.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from
evil.
For yours is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory for ever. Amen



Story Introduction: Philippians 4:1-9

Paul's letter to the Philippians is quite short when you compare it to the gospel narratives. The letter is believed to have been written by Paul to the people of Philippi, while he was in prison, although it is unclear which period of imprisonment the letter refers to. It is a letter full of optimism and hope, and joy in the Lord despite the circumstances he finds himself in.

Paul urges the Philippians to resolve conflicts within their fellowship and there is an overwhelming sense that Paul knows all will be well, as they, and he have God at their side.

Paul is hopeful that he will soon be released, and on this basis, he later promises to send Timothy to the Philippians to minister to them but also expects to pay them a personal visit as soon as he is able. Let us hear the reading in full now: Philippians 4:1-9.

Reading – Philippians 4:1-9

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Reflection

Sometimes we just need a summary of what has been said to us, a reminder of what we have been told. And this letter is a bit like that. More than once in lectures this would have been very helpful to me too, rather than just trying to decipher my scribbled handwritten notes later on! Many years ago, I was given this advice about doing presentations, you may have heard it. Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them. It was advice given by Dale Carnegie, over 65 years ago, and is still the first piece of advice given in presentation websites today. A constant re-telling.

The passage from Philippians 4 is the beginning of the end of this short letter from Paul and it could be read as a summary of what we should be doing in life. A letter sent to the church at Philippi, filled with optimism, joy, and an acknowledgement of the people who are working for Christ. All the while Paul is praising God and keeping a steadfast faith in God's love and ever near presence. However, we have to understand that Paul is also writing in

the hope that Christ will return soon. What is noteworthy is that most of the people Paul name are women. And there is a strong likelihood that women served as bishops and deacons, as leaders in their own communities. There is no exclusion of women, not in this part of his writing anyway.

The initial verses shout out a call to unity in everyone, working as one, with one goal for the sake of the gospel message. In fact, this is a theme throughout all the letter, but it comes to the forefront once again as the letter nears its end. Euodia (*Ehodia*) and Syntyche, (*Sinticha*) have been working closely with Paul but it appears there has been some kind of disagreement. However, it is possible that the difficulty has been with the church of Philippi accepting them because they are female. Paul is providing them with credentials urging people to support them as they did for him. Either way, it shows that tension in the early church existed just as much as it does now.

Given all the disunity in the church and around the world, this is a timely reminder that for the gospel message to be preached, understood, and actioned, we do need unity. Constant bickering and fighting does not promote or show any sense of harmony or peace to anyone.



The idea of building a longer table rather than a taller fence analogy springs to mind. It is only when we come together and allow each other space to talk and actively listen to what is being said, that we begin to see things from another perspective and work out where our similarities lie and work from there. Paul recognises this, names it and moves on. Work together for the gospel. That is it. Nothing more. Nothing less.

And even from within prison, where this letter was written, Paul is still seeking unity. No prison inspections and health and safety laws in those days. It would have been a very grim experience. Yet through his words, Paul demonstrates a sense of hope. A hope delivered through his love for God and what we are tasked to do. Paul has plenty of reason to be angry and fearful for what his future will bring. Persecuted Christians often met an untimely and grizzly end during certain periods of history as did many other people who were thought to be against the Roman empire. Yet he encourages gentleness towards every person and prayers of thanksgiving to God - continuously. For Paul, God is always with him, never leaving, and here he is reminding the recipients of this letter that is the case for them, and us, too.

Last week in the Harvest Service we spoke of those unexpected blessings that we have received over these last few months. In among the pain and hurt and anxiety that we have experienced, there have been times of joy and peace, and glimmers of God's presence in our lives. And through these moments, maybe we have felt God's peace in our lives, lifting the anxieties off our shoulders, even if only for a fleeting moment. But here, in this letter peace is not just an individual experience but one built into the community through love and unity. It is part of the experience of authentic faith. The lived out, practical aspect of faith, which Church should have at its centre.

'Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.' Amen

Prayer

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

Creator God,

Even in the most adverse situations you stay with us even when we cannot find you. Your loving presence waits for us to hear your still small voice calling us back. As we wait on news that will affect what we can do and who we can see and visit, anxieties heighten, and we find ourselves in places we do not want to be again. With possibilities of further lockdowns in the near future, we fear for those who already struggle with mental health anxiety and to whom their support and lifelines are not so easily accessible. Loving God, may we do our part and reach out to them, to write, to call, to speak online and assure them of our support whenever they are in need.

As the weather turns colder, we are encouraged to reach out to those more vulnerable than ourselves, the homeless, those living in poverty, with little or no heating and food to get by day to day. May we as a community, and church of Christ, respond by offering what we can to enable them to experience God's love in action, God's peace in welcome, and God's acknowledgement that they are not forgotten.

Loving God, with news of illness, and those we know and love having died, we feel the pain of their passing and a deep sense of longing for your comfort because we cannot be with each other in our grief. May we remember all those who are bereaved, the poorly, those in care homes and hospitals to whom visitors cannot visit easily. Remind us to be there for them in other ways until this time passes and we can reach out and hold each other in understanding and love.

And now as we move into silence with the prayers of those we know and love, let us also remember those in the wider community who have no one offering a prayer for them. Hear us now in the silence.

Loving God, help transform our thoughts and prayers into action so we can be the living prayer that others need. Amen

Epilogue

Henri de Tourville (1842-1903), who was also often referred to as Abbé Henri de Tourville, was a French priest who distinguished himself as one of the precursors of sociology, as well as in the fields of philosophy and education. These words are from his writing, *Letters of Direction*.

'Accustom yourself to the wonderful thought that God loves you with a tenderness, a generosity, and an intimacy which surpasses all your dreams. Give yourself up with joy to a

loving confidence in God and have courage to believe firmly that God's action towards you is a masterpiece of partiality and love...

Rejoice that you are what you are; for our Lord loves you very dearly. He loves the whole of you, just as you are.'

Benediction

May we leave this place and rejoice that the love and joy in God enfolds us and sustains us in our time of need and beyond. And 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

New Kilpatrick's Sunday worship is available online through YouTube, as a podcast, and by attending the church service – please phone the church office to book a pew by the Friday morning and Catherine will phone you back to confirm your place.

During October, the church is exploring the theme of Creation and has got involved in some practical ideas to help both the Community at home and overseas. Each week, the church is collecting donations of food, toiletries, etc. that will be distributed to the local foodbanks. Monetary online donations can also be made through the website. Each week the request will be for a different type of item and this week it is packet food, especially cereals, tea, coffee (decaf), sugar, pasta, and jams. Please drop your donations off at the New Halls between 11.00am and 12noon on Friday.

We hope the online shop will be up and running by the weekend too. There you can purchase the above items online and the church will send them directly to the organisations we are supporting.



New Kilpatrick Parish Church
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Faith

Because Christian Aid missed out has missed out on many of its fundraising activities you can also donate to Christian Aid to support their activities both at home and overseas. Please go to the church website or <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/> to make a donation. Every penny or item counts towards helping someone else in need.

A special thank you to Anne McSkimming, who shared in our time together to make this podcast. So why not come along and join us next week and see where it takes us. In person and on here.