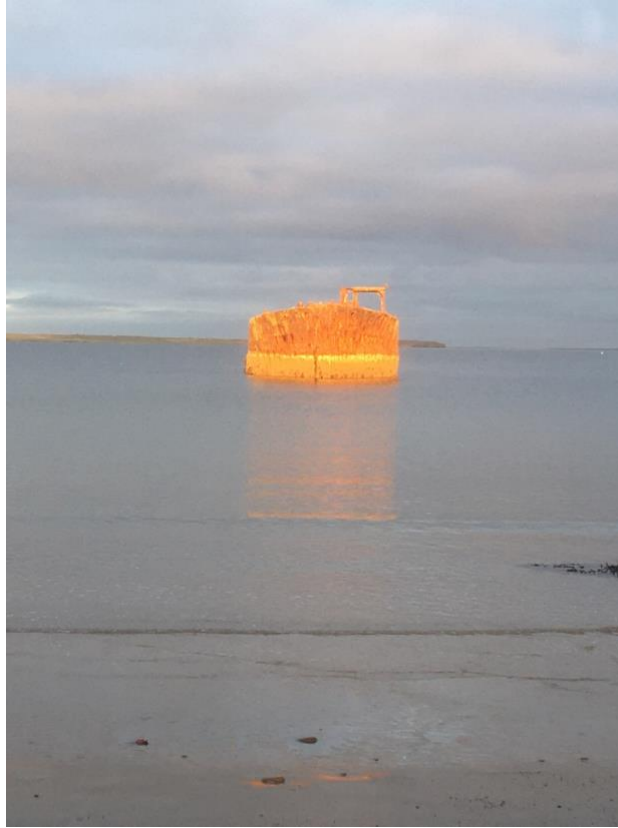


## **St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall**

[www.stmagnus.org](http://www.stmagnus.org)

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

[www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/](https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/)



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Welcome to St Magnus Cathedral this morning. It was founded in 1137 by St Rognvald, in honour of Magnus, his uncle. The Cathedral belongs to the people of Orkney and its doors are open to all. If you are a visitor, we hope this order of service will help you feel part of our worship together.

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### **SUNDAY 31<sup>st</sup> January**

You can find our Sunday worship here.

<https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/>

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/1CckQwFkxR0>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

[stmagnuszoom@gmail.com](mailto:stmagnuszoom@gmail.com)

## Opening meditation

May every morning be a reminder of God's creation for us of the turning from dark to light the coming together of all longing into the birth of life. May we find in this turning moment the opportunity for growth and the hope of tomorrow

Wonder is part of the evolutionary drive towards social justice and compassion.

Our appetite for wonder is part of what creates intimacy and community.

May our appetite for wonder build an inner motivation for us to relate well to the world and people around us.

## Reading Mark 1; 21-28 Helen Cunningham

Jesus and his disciples went to the town of Capernaum. Then on the next Sabbath he went into the Jewish meeting place and started teaching. Everyone was amazed at his teaching. He taught with authority, and not like the teachers of the Law of Moses. Suddenly a man with an evil spirit in him entered the meeting place and yelled, "Jesus from Nazareth, what do you want with us? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are! You are God's Holy One."

Jesus told the evil spirit, "Be quiet and come out of the man!" The spirit shook him. Then it gave a loud shout and left.

Everyone was completely surprised and kept saying to each other, "What is this? It must be some new kind of powerful teaching! Even the evil spirits obey him." News about Jesus quickly spread all over Galilee.

**For the words of God that challenge us,  
for the words of God we wrestle with or reject,  
for the word of God strong within us,  
We give thanks**

## Reflection

If there's one thing that we could probably all agree on it perhaps is that nowadays we have a glut of words from public figures. But there is a depressing predictability about what they have to say. How few speak with real authority. There is a terrible scepticism at present about the words of people in authority. Their statements of policy may be obeyed, but nobody seriously regards them as having authority.

If many public figures lack credibility, what is it that damages credibility? Is it when the speaker themselves don't believe a word that they are saying? 'That which I do not believe I cannot adequately say, no matter how often I repeat the words.' To quote Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Then the character of the speaker is very important. If a person's character is flawed, their credibility is seriously undermined. We would all find it hard to drink wine out of a rusty or dirty can.

And what about when the speaker doesn't live according to their own words. This is perhaps the most damaging thing of all. Emerson puts it like this: "do not say things. What you are stands over you and thunders so loudly that I cannot hear what you say to the contrary."

A large portion of the ministry of Jesus was given over to teaching. And his teaching was refreshingly different from that of the official teachers of the day, the scribes. No scribe ever expressed an opinion of his own. He would always begin by quoting his authority.

Jesus, on the other hand, spoke with his own voice, and needed no other. He cited no authorities and quoted no experts, yet he spoke with great authority. Nor had he any official position. From where, then, did his authority come? It came from the fact that he spoke the truth. As a Russian proverb tells us 'one word of truth outweighs the whole world.'

Besides, his teaching was fresh, direct, and had a transparency about it. Some examples. 'No one can serve two Masters; a city on a Hill cannot be hidden; a camel cannot pass through the eye of a needle; you cannot pluck figs from thistles.'

The teachings of the scribes failed to nourish the people. The teaching of Jesus nourished the heart and the spirit. Some teachers just provide facts. Others provide vision, inspiration, and meaning.

And of course his authority came from his character, which was such that it compelled people to listen. Then there was the fact that he backed up his words with deeds. Even though Mark says that his teaching made a deep impression on the people he doesn't tell us what Jesus said. This may seem to suggest that Jesus himself was the sermon.

A man was out walking in the early morning. The Sky was clear all over. At a certain point he heard the noise of a jet plane. He stopped to see if he could locate it. In his search he was guided by the sound, which seemed to be

coming from directly overhead. That was his mistake. He searched there, but no plane.

Then he saw a trail of vapour in the Sky. By following this trail to its origin he found the plane, a tiny silver triangle which was barely visible against the canopy of blue. The plane was away out there in front, whereas the sound was still only overhead. But that sound was loud enough to waken the dead.

In a manner of speaking, the plane acted first, and spoke later. Ideally this is how it always should be, deeds should precede words. When people have done something, or are doing something, begin to speak, people listen. Their words carry enormous weight. They have real authority. People may doubt what you say, but they will believe what you do. The weakness of a lot of words arises from the fact that they are not preceded, or accompanied, or even followed by words.

There is nourishment for our lives in the words of Jesus. But it's not enough to listen to them. We have to do them. If we are living by anything other than the truth he taught, we are undernourished.

### Prayer

Jesus.... in words of love he speaks to us about justice and living a balanced life. We know that our living is not that balanced at times but we celebrate when it is.

In the call to justice that comes from someone who lives justly, may we pick up the task of justice and live in his way.

In words of grace he forgives us for our ways of living that do not speak of his reign. We know that our living does not always show his way at times, but we celebrate when it does.

In the call to forgiveness that comes from someone who forgives unconditionally, may we pick up the task of forgiveness and live in his way.

In words of hope he calls us to life: life to be lived full, completely, with each other.

We know that our living does not always let that happen at times but he and we celebrate when it does.

In the call to full living that comes from someone who fully lives may we pick  
up the task of life  
and live in his way. May we find authority and reality in the way Jesus lived  
and in his Spirit may we live also, becoming the justice he calls for.

Forgiveness we seek, new life we need. Affirmation of living in his way we  
strive for Amen.

### Blessing

Let us go and travel with the God who is found in ordinary and surprising  
places.

We receive fragments of holiness, glimpses of eternity, brief moments of  
insight.

Let us gather them up for the precious gifts that they are and,  
renewed by their grace, move boldly into the unknown.

May you stay safe in the Way of Christ, and may you be blessed by his Spirit  
this day and always.