

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

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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.

Sunday 21st November 2021

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/xH6Ap6uKziw>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We gather because we can, in our own places, yet as one. Beyond us our words are heard, our worries shared, our questions spoken, within God, for there they find their place of hearing is shared with the depths of love.

To hold and handle silence is to hold and handle all of God: the mystery that shapes us with no word of explanation the grace that frees us with no line of limit the love that names us with no name yet understood the shame that convicts us, that uses no word of blame,

the pain that slows us, that speaks no word of shame, the question asked by us, that has not yet been formed. Only in still small utter silence is truth heard.

To hold and handle silence is to hold and handle all of God

Reading Helen K

Mark 13; 1-8

As Jesus was leaving the Temple, one of the disciples commented in passing, "Look, Teacher! What huge stones these are! What wonderful buildings!" Jesus replied, "See these great buildings? Not a single stone will be left on another. Everything will be torn down." As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives facing the Temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will all this happen? What will be the sign that all this is about to take place?" Jesus began by saying, "Be on your guard that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name saying, 'I am the One,' and they will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumours of war, do not be alarmed. Things like this must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation and empire against empire; there will be earthquakes throughout the world and famines—yet this is only the beginning of the labour pains.

Reflection

A bit of a scary reading to finish up the Christian year, you may suppose....Theologically, we can perhaps understand why the gospel bookends for the church year are 'little apocalypses' but emotionally (and hopefully) we long for bookends marked grace, peace, forgiveness, kindness, justice, compassion. And then we realise that what Jesus is talking about is not fear, but faith; not terror, but trust; not the worst of times, but the hoped-for fulfilment of all goodness, wonder, life, beauty, and love.

The signs of our times — the hunger for spirituality, the crisis of individualism, globalization, and developments in science after Einstein, climate change — accentuate why we need the radical freedom of Jesus.

The mysticism of the man from Nazareth — his experience of union with God as Abba — and how it was connected to his prophetic mission, infuses both the readings for the beginning of the Christian year and today the end. This blend of spirituality and a passion for justice gives Christians a model to follow in daily life. Jesus did not reject the law of the Torah, but relativised it with such statements as "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath." The laws were intended to be of help to people but should not be worshipped in themselves.

Jesus was a revolutionary in other ways too; especially in challenging his disciples to move beyond the limitations of the blood family to the broader family of God's kingdom. Although he was radically critical of the world, he never singled out individuals for blame, condemnation, or hatred, no matter what they did. He was also a healer, an aspect of his ministry that is very important.

Jesus demonstrated a path of personal transformation that we would do well to emulate today. His practice of silence and solitude led to an inner peace and tranquility. He saw himself and his mission clearly. He was grateful for all the blessings in his life. And he proclaimed that the child was for him a model of humility, trust, wonder, and playfulness. Although Jesus never used the word detachment, he exemplified it in his ability to let go and not cling to things, ideas, people, places, and tradition.

Jesus' whole life was an expression of unconditional love. Jesus practiced bringing people together, based on love: We saw how he reached out to all the individuals he met, whether they were rulers or beggars, saints or sinners. Every individual person is lovable, no matter how hypocritical he or she might be. Genuine love is always unconditional.

This practice of unity led to empathy with others, an ethic of sharing and generosity, and a radical freedom. For Jesus, freedom was not an end in itself but a means to complete service to God and others. Once we commit ourselves to the path of unity it will lead to great and wonderful things:

The work of the Way of Jesus sometimes appears to be very slow. Perhaps that is because we do not always appreciate the immensity of what we are involved in. Yet, precisely because it is the work of the Way of Christ, the future is secure. There is hope for the universe and for each of us as individuals. When I die, my ego, my false self, will be destroyed once and for all, but my true self will continue forever in the Ground of all being, the Self of the universe.

Not so long ago there was a tendency to separate the spiritual from the political, prayer from work for justice, mysticism from prophetic action. Those who experienced a hunger for spirituality seemed to have no thirst for justice. Politics and the struggle for liberation were felt to be thoroughly mundane and unspiritual. It was all about building up credits in this life for a life of bliss when we die. On the other hand, those who were fired with a passion for justice and freedom often thought that resorting to prayer and mysticism was escapist individualism.

There were of course many remarkable exceptions — people who saw prayer and justice as two sides of the same coin. I think of Thomas Merton, Desmond Tutu, Oscar Romero, George McLeod, Mahatma Gandhi, and numerous others of different faith traditions across the globe. What interests us here is the powerfully simple way in which prophecy and mysticism form an inseparable whole in the life and spirituality of Jesus.

Today it is called the mystico-prophetic tradition. This term is being used more and more frequently in Christian theology and spirituality, not only as an attempt to overcome the antagonisms between the two in the recent past, but also as a way of recognizing that traditionally, at least in the Judeo-Christian tradition, there was no such division or antagonism. Prophets were mystics and mystics were prophets. Any idea that one could be a prophet caring for justice and social change without some experience of union with Christ was unthinkable. Equally unthinkable was any idea that one could be a perfectly good mystic without becoming critically outspoken about the injustices of one's time. We often forget that mystics from Basil the Great to Catherine of Siena spoke out boldly against the injustices of the rich, of the political powers, and of church leaders in their times.

These were people who took Jesus seriously and, like Jesus himself, they were rooted in a mystico-prophetic spirituality.

Prayer

Travelling the Way of Christ is not always easy. Often we feel overwhelmed by the wilderness places of our world. Often we're at the sharp end of tongues which pierce hearts and poison lives. Often we would turn back and find a safer, more comfortable way of being his covenant people.

Yet despite desert days and wasteland, serpents and suffering, the Spirit guides his people through with signs of hope and healing.

That very hope and healing continues to come, day after day, among the poor and the lonely, the sick and the weary, the angry and the abused, the warmongers and the peace seekers.

It is for those and others whose lives are touched by grief and greed, injustice and injury, emptiness and endlessness that we pray now, trusting in the goodness and the grace that retrieved lost sheep and wayward sons, that consoled grieving mothers and weeping women at a tomb, that fed aching stomachs and eager minds, that soothed the open wounds of untouchables and the throbbing scars of hatred, that laid open itself to pain, rejection and abandonment so that we might know acceptance and belonging and recognise the signs that the kingdom has come among us.

Blessing

The God we worship is never confined to only holy places.
So let us go and travel with the God who is found in ordinary and surprising
places.
Knowing we are worthy recipients of love and support we can never earn, and
we are worthy providers of love and support others cannot earn.

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