

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.

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/UkcwhF8Q IE>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this Christ candle, a living symbol of the one Life in which we all live and move and have our being. We gather in this spirit-filled space to give thanks and reflect.

If Jesus' feet were on this island now, what would he say to us and all who live here, politicians and people, migrants, mothers, colleagues and customers, students and sellers?

Mountains form the backbone of this country.

What backbone do we display?

Beaches invite us to play and relax

What chance does everyone have to re-create and re-energise?

People remind us of the infinite variety of humankind

How varied can our responses be?

On mountain or beach, with everyone present, the Spirit is found within us. May the Spirit we call God, shown to us in Jesus who walks with us here, enlighten our lives and open our hearts.

Let us again listen to the silence of this sacred space.

A space made ready for us by willing hands.

May we recognise in our life the presence, power and light of our soul. May we realize that we are never alone,

Reading

Luke 10 23-28

Turning to the disciples, Jesus spoke to them privately: "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you, many prophets and rulers wanted to see what you see but never saw it, to hear what you hear but never heard it." An expert on the Law stood up to put Jesus to the test and said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit everlasting life?" Jesus answered, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" The expert on the Law replied: "You must love the Most High God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself." Jesus said, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you'll live."

Reflection

The expert of the Law passed the Jesus test.... Good on him. Jesus said, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you'll live."

Self-acceptance means being okay with who you are. Treating yourself kindly. Accepting that you're a human being and therefore imperfect. Allowing yourself to mess up, make mistakes, and learn from them.

Self-acceptance means you refuse to buy into the judgments your mind makes about you, whether they're good judgments or bad ones. Instead of judging yourself, you recognize your strengths and your weaknesses, and you do what you can to be the person you want to be. Your mind will tell you an infinite number of stories about what sort of person you are, but you don't have to believe them. Consider the following example.

Have you ever watched a documentary on Africa? What did you see? Crocodiles, lions, antelopes, gorillas, and giraffes? Tribal dances? Warfare? Nelson Mandela? Colourful marketplaces? Amazing mountains? Beautiful villages in the countryside? Poverty-stricken shantytowns? Starving children? You can learn a lot from watching a documentary, but one thing is for sure: a documentary about Africa is not Africa itself.

A documentary can give you impressions of Africa, some dramatic sights and sounds that represent it. But a documentary can't give you the real-life experience of Africa: the taste and smell of the food, the feel of the sunlight on your face, the humidity of the jungle, the dryness of the desert, the feel of an elephant's hide, the pleasure of interacting with the people. No matter how brilliantly filmed that documentary is, even if it's a thousand hours long, it can't come close to the experience of actually being there. Why not? Because a documentary about Africa is not the same thing as Africa itself.

Similarly, a documentary about you or me would not be the same thing as you yourself or me myself. Even if that documentary lasted for a thousand hours and included all sorts of relevant scenes from our life, all sorts of interviews with people who know us, and all sorts of fascinating details about our innermost secrets, even then the documentary would not be you or me.

Take this a stage further. Think of the person you love most on this planet. Now, which would you prefer to spend time with, the actual living person or a documentary about that person? So, there's this huge difference between who we are and any documentary that anyone could ever make about us, no matter how 'truthful' that documentary may be. And I've put 'truthful' in quotation marks because all documentaries are hopelessly biased in that they only show you a tiny part of the big picture. Since the advent of cheap video, the typical hour-long television documentary is the 'best' of literally dozens, if not hundreds of hours of footage. So inevitably it's going to be quite biased.

And the bias of a human film director is nothing compared to the bias of our thinking self. Out of an entire lifetime of experience, literally hundreds of thousands of hours of archival 'film footage,' our thinking self selects a few dramatic memories, edits them together with some related judgments and opinions, and turns them into

a powerful documentary entitled *This Is Who I Am* (and it usually has a subtitle: *Why I'm Not Good Enough*). And the problem is, when we watch that documentary, we forget that it's just a heavily edited video. Instead, we believe that we are that video! But in the same way that a documentary of Africa is not Africa, a documentary of you is not you.

Our self-image, our self-esteem, our judgments about the sort of person we are, all these things are nothing more than thoughts, images, and memories. They are *not* you.

As Jesus' unparalleled authenticity and inner serenity were rooted in his understanding of God, so Christian self-acceptance is rooted in the conscious and experiential affirmation of Jesus in our struggle to be faithful.

"Do this and you'll live" The real you not the you of a documentary about you.

Do we ever reflect upon the fact that Jesus feels proud of us? As he did the expert on the Law who had initially set out to put Jesus to the test. Jesus, proud that we have accepted the faith which he offered us? Proud that after he chose us, we chose him for a friend and mentor? Proud that we haven't given up? Proud that we believe in him enough to try again and again? Proud that we can trust that his Spirit can help us?

Do we ever think that Jesus appreciates us for wanting him, for wanting to say no to so many things that would separate us from him? Do we ever think that Jesus is grateful to us for pausing to smile and comfort one of his children who has a great need to see a smile, to feel a touch? Do we ever think of Jesus as being grateful to us for learning more about him so that we can speak to others more deeply and truly about him?

Jesus said, 'I do not call you servants, but friends. . . .' Therefore, there is the possibility of every feeling and emotion which can exist between friends to exist here and now between us and Jesus.

Prayer

We call upon the Spirit of Christ to listen to our prayers for the people of the earth:

Too many are hungry, lack shelter, endure injustice; too many are held back, kept silent, treated as lesser people; too many lack clean water, adequate food, easy medical treatment; too many cry over the loved ones they have lost to war and violence. Our prayers are for the people of the world.

Where we can bring change that will make a difference, where we can influence policy writers and law makers, where we can make choices that better care for our world may the Spirit nudge and encourage us to make that a reality.

Many are grieving and facing the challenges of loneliness; many are anxious about the deteriorating health of themselves or those they love; many are challenged by unemployment or concerns about job security; many are troubled by addictions to drugs or alcohol. Our prayers are for the people of our community.

Where we can be a friend and companion, where we can provide comfort and support, where we can walk with those seeking purpose and a new start in life, may the Spirit nudge and encourage us to do so.

For our parents who look after us and those parents for whom we care;
for our children who often worry us; for those for whom we ask for a happy and healthy life; for relatives with whom we have lost touch yet who remain part of who we are; for those we name now who may be going through a particular challenge.

May the Spirit of the Loving God, speak to us the Word of life that alone can energise and empower us.

Blessing

We have asked and we have received, we have come and now
we go
ready to be the answer to those prayers we have offered,

to be persistent in asking the questions
and seeking answers,
to be determined that we can make a difference as God's
witnesses.

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