

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/CthDOXOCTdo>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting

This is the season of Lent

When we prepare ourselves for the great events of Easter

It is when we look honestly and critically at our lives

We identify where we fail and get things wrong

And we look forward to the gift of a new start, a new life

In our hearts we follow the way that Jesus took.

Opening meditation

we love the old songs:
we hum to ourselves
about the old, old story
and feel like we are slipping on
a frayed, comfortable shirt
which will keep us warm;

we sing in the shower
of all those places
where the saints have trod,
and wonder what ever
happened to them;

the fears of aging
jerk us awake
in the middle of the night
and into the silence
of our souls
we whisper
'Jesus loves me, this i know,
for the Bible tells me so . . .'

we love the old songs so much
we might miss the new ones:

the sunrise announcing
a new beginning each day;

the laughter of children,
louder than despair's dirge;

the softness
of a parent's love
which smooths our rough edges;

May the joyous Spirit teach us new songs,
teach us new songs.

Jesus said....' People will come from the East and the West, from the North and the South and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Some who are last will be first, and some who are first will be last." Just then, some Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "You need to get out of town, and fast. Herod is trying to kill you." Jesus replied, "Go tell that fox, 'Today and tomorrow, I'll be casting out devils and healing people, and on the third day I'll reach my goal.' Even with all that, I'll need to continue on my journey today, tomorrow and the day after that, since no prophet can be allowed to die anywhere except in Jerusalem.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often have I wanted to gather your children together as a mother bird collects her babies under her wings—yet you refuse me! So take note: your house will be left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is the One who comes in the name of our God! "

reflection

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
the city that kills the prophets
and stones those who are sent to it!

'How often have I desired
to gather your children together
as a hen gathers her brood under her wings,
and you were not willing!

There's a marvellous Peanuts cartoon that I think resonates with the feelings of this lament of Jesus. Lucy is standing next to a tree. Looking up, she shouts to Linus: "What are you doing in that tree?" Linus answers from the branches of the tree: "Looking for something."

Then he adds: "Can you see Snoopy? We climbed up here together, but now I don't see him." Lucy unsympathetically shouts back up the tree: "Beagles can't climb trees." The next frame of the cartoon shows Snoopy falling out of the tree landing on his head with a loud 'clunk.'

"You're right!" Snoopy concludes. Then Lucy lets Snoopy have it: "You stupid Beagle, what are you doing climbing around in a tree?" Poor Snoopy's sore head is still spinning. Linus interrupts from the tree:

"Don't yell at him... We're trying to find a strange creature in a nest." Lucy walks off saying: "You're both crazy! Go ahead and knock yourselves out! I

couldn't care less!!" Then Snoopy with his head still sore and spinning thinks:
"Rats... I was hoping for a hug!"

Both the lament and the cartoon are important.

One of the most telling things the late Bishop Jack Spong said in an interview looking back over his ministry was his gradual realising of the importance of recognising: the utter Jewishness of Jesus, and the way the gospel storytellers tend to present a Greekish Jesus rather than a Jewish Jesus.

Jesus, and the disciples of Jesus during his life, and the communities that formed soon after his death, have a clear identity. They are a group of Palestinian Jews within Judaism. And there is little to no evidence that Jesus had any conscious intention of founding a new religious institution either superseding Judaism or alongside it.

We can never really appreciate the depth of feeling a Jew like Jesus had for Jerusalem. No earthly place was more precious. And no place brought out Jesus' sense of compassion more, than Jerusalem.

Luke reminds us of this.

All told, Luke mentions Jerusalem 90 times in the Gospel that carries his name, while all the other New Testament writers combined, mention it only 49 times. So it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Luke loves the place. Jerusalem is the dwelling place of God, the place where God's glory shall be revealed.

Jerusalem is also the place where God is betrayed by those who hate the good and love what is evil.

Barbara Brown Taylor's comment sums it up well:

"Nothing that happens in Jerusalem is insignificant. When Jerusalem obeys God, the world spins peacefully on its axis.

When Jerusalem ignores God, the whole planet wobbles"

Not for nothing has Donald Trump decided to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem....

But back to Jesus and Luke's context..

I would invite you to reflect that it seems clear Luke's Jesus lived in the context of danger. Danger, because of what he was saying. Danger, because he was probably being grouped together with zealots and other political agitators,

by the powers that be. Danger, because, it is claimed, Herod Antipas was never backward in coming forward to deal decisively with the leader of a religious movement whom he perceived as undermining the authority of his government, And that danger is emphasised in Jerusalem - the centre of power.

It also seems, that the warning given to Luke's Jesus by some of the Pharisees, indicates that engaging in acts of compassion and caring which restores dignity to people, can have wide ranging implications:
both personal and communal.

It's not unreasonable to ask, "Why should Herod worry about such a 'nice person'?" Because Jesus vision went beyond the individual to a transformed society.

That had social and political implications. Both dimensions matter...

So, like Snoopy, I reckon Jesus could also have responded:
"Rats... I was hoping for a hug!"

Secondly let's not lose sight of the strong feminine side in this Lucan story.

'How often have I desired
to gather your children together
as a hen gathers her brood under her wings,
and you were not willing!

Luke is really digging deep into the Wisdom tradition of Judaism here. The observation has been made that there is hardly a more feminine picture of Jesus available in the gospels tradition,
than the vivid picture of a hen rounding up her chickens
and fluffing her feathers protectively over them.

She has no razor-sharp teeth, no claws, no pumped up muscles.
All she has is her willingness to shield her chicks with her own body.
Such is Luke's picture of the compassion of Jesus.

This chimes with what seems to be a new awareness that in Jewish literature,
'Wisdom' (always feminine) was pictured
as God's treasured companion...

As scholar William Loader's comments
"Behind the image of the hen is the image of Wisdom and behind

that is an image of God, God, the compassionate and caring mother. Jesus embodies that".

Maybe this is what Luke is challenging his small community to do/be.
And us, too, as we overhear this story
many generations later: embody it.

Embody the compassion.
That's all we can do.

For many years debate has raged in the Church of Scotland as to whether we should be continuing to pay for our own church in Jerusalem.

After one conference with the Middle East Council of Churches, a Palestinian Christian living in Jerusalem, shared these comments with one of the participants:

"Thank you for coming to visit the 'living stones', and not just the dead stones, the holy places, the archaeological sites. And most importantly for being 'living stones'. Most Christian pilgrims bypass us. We are invisible. We are at best dirty, dangerous Arabs.

"They say 'how wonderful it is to walk where Jesus walked'. I say it is more wonderful to walk with the people with whom Jesus walked. I have been walking where Jesus walked for the last 50 years.

But, the purpose is not to walk where he walked, but to walk how he walked"

And that will require us to embody compassion.

Prayer

*How quietly the earth breathes forth new life.
How eagerly the sun bleeds forth the spring,*

I am listening.

*I am listening to seeds breaking open,
to roots growing strong beneath the ground,
to green shoots rising up from winter wombs.*

*I am listening to thorns blossoming,
to barren branches laughing out new growth,
to wildflowers dancing through the meadows,*

I am listening.

*I am listening to the forest filling up with song.
I am listening to the earth filling up with life.
I am listening to the trees filling up with leaves.*

I am listening.

*I am listening to the sky with its many changing moods,
to flashes of lightning, peals of thunder,
to opening buds and greening grass.
I am listening to the breaking forth of light
in the vestibule of dawn.
I am listening to the freshness of the morning.*

I am listening.

*I am listening to the rain drops
giving hope to thirsty gardens.
I am listening to the orchards
pregnant with new life.
I am listening to the flowers
bursting forth in rainbow colours.*

I am listening.

*I am listening to the brook,
to the song of happy waters.
I am listening to music
rising up from all the earth.
I am listening to spring
soaring in on wings of life.
I am listening to the sounds of spring.*

I am listening.

*I am listening to prayers
pouring forth from feathered throats.
I am listening to prayers
rising up from misty waters.*

*I am listening to prayers
of a meadow crowned with dawn.*

I am listening.

*I am listening to the growing
in the garden of my heart.
I am listening to my heart
singing songs of resurrection.
I am listening to the colours of life.*

I am listening.

*I am listening to winter
handing over spring.
I am listening to the poetry of spring.*

I am listening.

blessing

Let us go into our world, our community,
our neighbourhood,
our byways,

our highways,
our relationships our conversations, in God's love
and be the love that is shared.

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