

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation

Minister: Rev Fraser Macnaughton Tel: 873312
FMacnaughton@churchofscotland.org.uk
Pastoral Minister: Rev. June Freeth Tel: 721449
JFreeth@churchofscotland.org.uk

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/Sb9-p7UTrhE>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

**God is here! Among us, within us, bringing Light to our lives!
We light this candle to reminds us of God's Light that can never be
extinguished.**

***The Golden Rule "In everything do to others as you would have them
do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.***

Still a startling truth
the truth that practising love is more important than all else.

That loving God with heart, soul and strength
must overflow into love of neighbour.
This stark fact requires no interpretation, no explanation.
It requires no tweaking.
It simply is.
Not easy to live up to.
Demanding.
But the most important thing in all the world.
Loving God.
Loving neighbour.
When will we get it?

Reading Acts 16:16-34

Once when we were going to prayer, we met a household worker who was possessed by a spirit of divination, and who made a great deal of money for her employers through its fortune telling. She began to follow Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These are faithful followers of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation!" She did this for many days. Finally one day Paul lost his temper, and turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to leave this woman!" It left her that moment. When her employers saw that their profitable operation was now hopelessly dead, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities in the public square. They brought them to the chief magistrates and said, "These people are Jews and are disturbing the peace by advocating practices which are unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in the attack on them, and the magistrates stripped them and ordered them to be flogged. They were whipped many times and thrown into prison, and the jailer was told to keep a close watch on them. So, following these instructions, the warden threw them into the innermost cell of the prison and chained their feet to a stake. About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God as the other prisoners listened. Suddenly a severe earthquake shook the place, rocking the prison to its foundation. Immediately all the doors flew open, and everyone's chains were pulled loose. When the jailer woke up and found the doors wide open, he drew a sword and was about to commit suicide, presuming that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We're all still here." The jailer called for a light, then rushed in and fell trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas, and, after a brief interval, led them out and asked them, "What must I do to be saved?" They answered, "Believe in Jesus the Saviour, and you will be saved—you and everyone in

your household." They proceeded to preach the word of God to the jailer and his whole household. At that late hour of the night he took them in and bathed their wounds; then he and the whole household were baptized. He led them up into his house, spread a table before them, and the whole family joyfully celebrated their newfound faith in God.

Reflection

Imagine how you must feel, if having done someone a good turn, you are then flung into jail. Yet it appears that that is just what happened to Paul and his friend Silas after they had seemingly cured a mad girl of her dementia.

Can we imagine the scene for a minute? We see Paul and Silas in prison, having been stripped and given a severe beating. We hear the door, that heavy door, thud as it closes and locks. We feel the darkness, the stone walls, running with damp. We hear the rough voice, asking who they are. Wrongfully arrested, stiff and bloody, every muscle-twitch painful, they must have longed for sleep, somewhere to lie other than the cold stone slabs under their feet.

Being in prison. It is one of these situations in life that unless we have experienced it ourselves, we do not really know what it is like.

They recalled the story of Jesus when he took the scroll choosing to read from Isaiah. Jesus lifting his voice to all those in this synagogue, whom he had known for years. 'The Lord has sent me to bring good news to the Poor, to set at liberty those who are in prison...."

Jesus reading these lines.

Powerful Words hanging in the air. Jesus as he read these lines reflecting back to the times he had gone to the prison to visit his friends from long ago. Memories of the conditions and how many young were thrown into the jail, by the Romans to rot away.

Faces of two friends who had spent ten years as they lived caged in as animals. Jesus' heart was moved during those visits when he watched how the guards treated the prisoners. Where was the compassion in the hearts of these guards? Jesus remembered as he read these words strongly of a good friend who was wrongly convicted of a crime he never committed. Jesus remembered seeing his wife visit him. What anguish spread across his wife's face she spoke of the children. How hard it was to buy food. His friend would pound his hand on the table frustrated

angry at a system that caged him in for something he didn't do why? He would whisper why?

The sadness that filled Ezekiel's eyes, oceans of sorrow poured down his face, showing what sprang from the hours of being alone thinking of the ones he loved. Jesus remembered that afternoon in the prison he went over to Ezekiel sat down next to him and his wife. Jesus remembered he wanted to say so many things but he couldn't find words for the anguish he felt remembering how he took their hands and prayed with them, asking Yahweh to free him from this confinement, that in the darkest moments to reach out to find Yahweh's hand very close and his wife? Jesus remembered praying that she does not lose hope. As he prayed, large tears began to flow down her face saying so clearly how hard these years had been separated from the man she loved, missing his presence.

Seeing their children grow up without their father.

Jesus remembered telling Judith that he would visit her at home - would bring something for the children - maybe bring them out. Jesus knowing that Yahweh was found in visiting these ones who had been thrust into this hopelessness, no doors open, no windows, no exit, only waiting, hoping against all odds.

Jesus remembered one time at the jail, seeing two young men enter, heads down. They had been sentenced that day and were given the maximum of years. They couldn't talk, they just silently buried their heads in their hands and you could hear their cries of sadness.

With all these memories, Jesus read so strongly these lines from Isaiah, feeling the great injustices of the society of the Romans, of the high priests, the privileged classes, given everything, all the advantages, the best education, trips, fine clothes. Never found themselves in the situations to commit crimes.

Jesus remembered in the jail. How many torturous stories of children being abandoned by their parents, being beaten, having fathers who drank too much, not having enough to eat, and one wonders how they got to these prisons of the Romans. It was so clear that their lives had been hard from the start. Jesus, remembering all these faces of people he visited during this year. And he wondered where Yahweh was in all this. He just knew that to be locked up like this, lacking in hope, is where one needed to be to bring some hope, some light, some good news that God had not forgotten them. There is a silence here, filling the spirit, filling, filling, filling.

Prayer

Jesus prayed, "that they all may be one," We look for the time when the whole world will be one, in concern for the weakest and poorest, for the very old and the very young.

We pray that we will find a role in this huge task; a gift, a message, an active form of participation.

Jesus prayed, "that all may be one,". We pray that the communities of faith will unite in sharing their beliefs and working for common goals. We pray that we might play a part in this task, a contact, a discussion, a work project.

Jesus prayed, "that they may all be one," We pray that neighbourhood groups will get together to care for those most vulnerable and at risk.

We pray that our faith community may join with others, to offer a meeting place, to provide leadership, and be the focus for expressed hopes and just demands.

We pray for the world, that its leaders will get their act together, that we will be one in our concern for all humankind. We pray that the air, the water, and the whole earth will be protected for our grandchildren. That the peacemakers find a way to achieve peace.

That women will have the same opportunities as men. That children will get the food, clothes, and shelter they need, without regard to their country of origin.

We pray that the dignity of regular work will be there, for each person who wants to work; that those who choose to worship, will be able to do so according to their faith tradition.

Blessing

Blessed are they who go in the name of the Lord.
Go from here in the name of the Lord, not to be bound by laws..
but to be free to reflect the freedoms
of love, compassion, truth and justice, given to us in Christ.

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

