

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/INo-EXPBV8A>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

May the light we now kindle
Inspire us to use our powers
To heal and not to harm,
To help and not to hinder,
To bless and not to curse,
To uphold the Spirit of Freedom!
We come into this sacred space in need
of community, assurance, comfort, and wholeness.
Our presence in this place testifies that

weeping may linger for a night
but joy comes in the morning.
This is not a time to deny the challenges we face
or to bury our burdens with easy religious talk.
Rather, we recognize the healing, restoring
presence of God revealed in surprising ways
and we are moved to pray.
The Psalmist wrote You have turned my sadness into dancing;
you have taken off my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy
Let us celebrate our growing wholeness
and worship the One in whom all things are possible.

Reading

ECCLESIASTES 3 1-8, 11

Everything on earth has its own time and its own season. time.
There's a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to knock down and a time to build up,
a time to cry and a time to laugh,
a time to wail and a time to dance about,
a time to fling stones away and a time to gather them together,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to leave lost,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear apart and a tie to stitch together,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and time for peace.
So I realised that all we can do is be happy and
do the best we can while we are still alive

Reflection

Pioneering Psychoanalyst Carl Jung said, "We cannot change anything until we accept it. Condemnation does not liberate. It oppresses." These are challenging words. Here is my take on what Jung meant by this statement.

What Jung was getting at was that at the point of becoming aware that something is not right, either within or outside of us, there is a strong human tendency to do the octopus dance. What I mean by that is that arms shoot in every direction looking for people to blame. It's the easiest thing to do, but doesn't lead to healthy change. "It's the Tories' fault. It's the SNP's fault. It's Boris' fault. It's Nicola's fault. It's my parents' fault. It's God's fault. It's the big banks fault. It's my genes' fault. Etc"

The Islamic philosopher Rumi wrote, "People of the world don't look at themselves, and so they blame one another." As long as we are looking around for someone to blame, we aren't taking responsibility for our own lives. This can be dangerous.

A Buddhist story describes a man who has been shot with an arrow. In pain, and risking death, he refuses to have the arrow removed until he knows who shot the arrow, what material the arrowhead is made from, what direction the arrow was shot and how deeply it is lodged. He refuses to have the arrow removed until he has all his answers. The tragedy is that he will die before he has what he is looking for. This seems to get to the heart of Jung's statement about acceptance. We have to accept what is, without blame and judgment, before we can heal ourself or any system.

Please note- acceptance does NOT mean being passive or submissive. It's the choice to approach a situation pro actively and peacefully rather than judgmentally, and without fear and loathing. The American cartoonist James Thurber said, "Let us not look back in anger or forward in fear, but around in awareness." Anger is often a form of denial, masking the sense of disappointment that life hasn't played out the way we hoped. Fear is a form of projection, imagining the worst of every change. Awareness is the antidote to both fear and anger. Awareness breeds acceptance of life exactly as it is, and acceptance breeds real life compassion and change.

To put this in very practical terms, consider the issue of education and children who live in cities and communities or indeed remote islands, that have little access to resources and educational opportunities. We could choose to spend our time looking for someone to blame, writing angry letters to politicians, cursing the "Get it right for every child" policy etc, OR we can spend our time volunteering in something like a mentoring programme or and making a direct difference in the lives of children. There is definitely a place for a skilful, self aware version of the first response but only very few have the composure to pull it off. The second

choice is the better bet for most of us, and will create immediate positive change in the lives of children.

The same is true in many personal situations. Acceptance comes before change. If our marriage has ended or we have lost our job, we can spend our energy cursing the ground our ex walks on, or we can accept the situation as it is, and get on with creating an exciting and healthy future for ourselves. In this case, acceptance is the beginning of self compassion. We don't have to condone or endure other peoples' abuse. Just accept that everyone is on their own journey, dealing with their own situation, and choose to move on with as little toxic resentment as possible.

Carl Rogers was another prominent psychologist who took the ideas of Jung to a new level of personal responsibility. He believed that his clients had within them all the answers to their own problems. The role of the therapist was to create space for the client to find their truth. The essence of personal problems for Rogers was the inability of people to accept themselves. Therefore they were unable to accept the world around them and unable to effect meaningful change. As he said, "The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change."

Acceptance is the second step in a healthy change process. Us and this moment, with all of its crazy and confusing challenges, are a perfect match, engaged in a passionate love affair. We are the right people in the right place at the right time. Give thanks for who and where we are. It is PERFECT for NOW and becoming even more *perfecter* every moment. You see, we can even make up words to describe the exhilarating process of becoming.

From a place of radical acceptance, we can respond, and participate in exciting change. With radical acceptance, we can effect radical change. Garrison Keillor has a nice way of saying this, "I believe in looking reality straight in the eye and denying it." Once we face life as it is honestly, we can set about denying current reality the power to hold us captive.

Author John Miller wrote,

There's not a chance we'll reach our full potential until we stop blaming each other and start practicing personal accountability.

Prayer

We commit this day to regarding each other highly and respecting each other as God-persons - those instilled with awe, grace, a spirit of reciprocity, beauty and worth. May we move beyond being apathetic to the importance of saying life-giving words and offering life-giving gestures and proceeding with life-affirming attitudes. May we free ourselves and others to use our minds and creativity wisely so that shape is given to the new. We offer our hands, our voices, our hearts and minds to creating a more humane, human, honest community here and beyond these walls. Might we invite, create and experience happiness in the contexts of our relationships. May we really consider again what it means to love one another right now.

May our hands, voices and hearts be active and present to those in need, those we love, those being born, those dying....those in relationships breaking apart, those seeking new jobs, those searching for health and wholeness, those depressed, those joy -filled as well. We release ourselves to enriching relationships, infinite life and each other, and we bring the celebrations and anticipations of what is possible in the remains of the day, hoping to provide encouragement and hope to those we meet along the way.

Blessing

May we go with a sense of justice, live with a sense of right,
speak with a sense of fairness
for all folk: the least powerful, and the silenced.
May we go with God's voice roaring in us, challenging us,
transforming us, towards the kingdom of love.

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