

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation

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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/HleEe3uh4A0>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this candle to remind ourselves that our faith is not in our words but in our lives, not in what we say but in who we are. May we pass on God's love like an infectious laugh: shining like the sun, like a starry night, like a lamp on a stand, light for life, a light for our lives We are open this day to grow more human, not through the lessening of struggles, but through an expansion of them that will unblock us and reveal our gifts. May our hurts be shared, our fears sharpened, our limitations challenged so that we expose and embrace the choices and chances and creativity we have in every moment, in every season.

Let us commit to accept our talents openly, nurture them hopefully, develop them faithfully and give them away freely. Our leadership, time, talents, presence, ideas, creativity and voice

we eagerly explore and share. In the end, may we commit to the justice of the prophets and practice it toward the needy in this world. We celebrate the beauty not only in pianist, poet and painter but also in those whose encouragement lights our lives, whose guffaw laughter fills the room, whose gentle touch fills a void, whose authenticity inspires, whose commitments build a church, whose compassion builds a community, whose challenges stretch our will and whose love makes our day.

.Reading

Luke 16 1-13

Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a wealthy landowner who, having received reports of a steward mismanaging the property, summoned the steward and said, 'What's this I hear about you? Give me an account of your service, for it's about to come to an end.' The steward thought, 'What will I do next? My employer is going to fire me. I can't dig ditches. I'm ashamed to go begging. I have it! Here's a way to make sure that people will take me into their homes when I'm let go.' "So the steward called in each of the landowner's debtors. The steward said to the first, 'How much do you owe my employer?' The debtor replied, 'A hundred jars of oil.' The steward said, 'Take your invoice, sit down quickly and make it fifty.' To another the steward said, 'How much do you owe?' The answer came, 'A hundred measures of wheat,' and the steward said, 'Take your invoice and make it eighty.' "Upon hearing this, the owner gave this devious worker credit for being enterprising! Why? Because the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light. So I tell you: make friends for yourselves through your use of this world's goods, so that when they fail you, you'll be welcomed into an eternal home. If you can trust others in little things, you can also trust them in greater, and anyone unjust in a slight matter will also be unjust in a greater. If you can't be trusted with filthy lucre, who will trust you with true riches? And if you haven't been trustworthy with someone else's money, who will give you your own? "Subordinates can't have two superiors. Either they'll hate the one and love the other, or be attentive to the one and despise the other. You can't worship both God and Money."

Reflection

In both Matthew's and Luke's gospels we read:

"Subordinates can't have two superiors. Either they'll hate the one and love the other, or be attentive to the one and despise the other. You can't worship both God and Money."

Jesus taught a gospel that was "easy" to hear for labourers who were weary and heavy-laden. It was "hard" to hear and practice for those who were "rich" or wealthy. When it came to God and wealth, Jesus's message was you can't serve both. Why? Because the Way that Jesus envisioned and asked others to envision was a Way upon the rain falls and the sun shines with equity on everyone.

Jesus cast a moral vision of a world where we don't compete with one another, but rather cooperate with and help one another. It's a world where people are valued over profit, property, power, and privilege. Jesus's vision was of a world where people take responsibility for taking care of one another, and our resources are shared as we mutually aid each other. Jesus preached a radical wealth redistribution from the haves to the have-nots. Not everyone

would be poor. The Jesus of the synoptic gospels did not teach a contemplative path toward privatised peace of mind. He taught a distributively just path toward peace on earth. On his path, we recognize the reality that we are in this together. We are not each our own. We are not alone here. We are connected. We belong to each other. We are part of one another. We not only share each other's fate; we are each other's fate.

A quotation often attributed to Gandhi is, "The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed." There is truth in this. Whenever we serve wealth, whenever we try to hoard more than we could ever possibly need, most often someone somewhere will be going without or being exploited so we can have that surplus. You can't serve both the accumulation of wealth and God too, because the God Jesus was referring to is a God who tells us to take care of people including those who would be exploited for you to accumulate. The bottom line is not our profit, but people, and taking care of people most often eats away at least at some of our profits.

Jesus's ethic is not capitalist. In a capitalist system, the goal is to create as much capital as one can. The game is won by those who are able to create the most capital and use it to create more, just as in the game *Monopoly*. Jesus, instead, asks us to lift all boats together, rather than lift one or a few boats while others sink. His world is not a closed-end, win-lose world, but a world that is win-win. We all thrive together and no one is left out. Every person matters and even our competitors or enemies are not disposable.

In the passage above, Jesus juxtaposed people and wealth. He did not teach that the way to help people is to make as much money as one can. He put the pursuit of wealth and the welfare of people in opposition: you can only pursue one or the other, but you cannot do both. This strikes at the core of differences between charity and justice.

To be clear, I think both charity and justice work are necessary. As retired Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson accurately stated "There's an old saying that the church is pretty good at pulling drowning people out of a river. You know, we're good at the charity thing. But what we need to do is to walk back upstream and figure out who's throwing them in, in the first place."

Pursuing wealth in order to help people often leaves the system unchanged. Charity can be vital for the short term. But too often it leaves systemic injustice unchallenged. It's easy to feed the homeless without asking why people lose their homes, to begin with. Our work must go beyond charity to include justice work, the work of challenging, disrupting, and changing the systemic causes of injustice.

Jesus' vision for the world was one where people took care of people. It was a call not to rest your peace of mind about the future in hoarded wealth. When we have to choose between more wealth or people, Jesus called us to choose people.

I want you to do something out of the ordinary. Most people are familiar with the game *Monopoly*. *Monopoly* is a game played as a "fun" way to demonstrate the benefits of an economy that rewards wealth creation and the pursuit of capital. Get a version of this game and sit down and play the game for 30 minutes. At the thirty-minute mark, I want you to change the rules. Take Jesus's teachings on mutual aid, resource-sharing, and wealth redistribution, and try and play the game based on these teachings. What challenges do you run into with the new rules? How do you overcome those challenges? How does the goal of the game change? Can you change the rules enough so that it's possible for *everyone* to

thrive? Share what jumps out most to you by this exercise with the rest of those you're playing with.

Remember, we are in this together. You are not alone. We are connected. We belong to each other. We are part of one another. We not only share each other's fate, but we are each other's fate. It's not just about peace of mind, it's a distributively just path toward peace on earth.

Prayer

Where nations buckle under the stress
of impossible debts,
may we use our wealth of influence and voice
to bring about liberation;

Where communities wrestle
with inequality and dividedness,
may we use our wealth of love and welcome
to bring about equity and connection;

Where people suffer
from poverty, lack of opportunity and shame,
may we use our wealth of money
to bring about sufficiency and dignity;

May we learn to release ourselves from our devotion to meritocracy,
individualism and correctness,
and to embrace Christ's inappropriate justice,
his scandalous grace,
and his indiscriminate love.

Blessing

May we go, restored to right relationships.
May we go, and honour each person for who they are.
May we go, and live towards each other with honour.
May we go, in a love that continues to reshape and renew us always.

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