

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/fyl3UOspAPw>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this flame to remind ourselves that We are one with the universe.

We are one with the sun and the stars.

We are one with the earth.

We are one with the One who is mystery...

This is the time to be slow,
Lie low to the wall
Until the bitter weather passes.
To try, as best we can, not to let

The wire brush of doubt
Scrape from our heart
All sense of ourself
And our hesitant light.
If we remain generous,
Time will come good;
And we will find our feet
Again on fresh pastures of promise,
Where the air will be kind
And blushed with beginning'.

Let silence be placed around us now, like a mantle.
Let us enter into it, as through a small secret door.

May the mantle of silence become a cloak of understanding
to warm our hearts this day

Reading Luke 10:25-37

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." But the expert on the Law, seeking self-justification, pressed Jesus further: "And just who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "There was a traveller going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, who fell prey to robbers. The traveller was beaten, stripped naked, and left half-dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road; the priest saw the traveler lying beside the road but passed by on the other side. Likewise there was a Levite who came the same way; this one, too, saw the afflicted traveller and passed by on the other side. "But a Samaritan, who was taking the same road, also came upon the traveller and, filled with compassion, approached the traveler and dressed the wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then the Samaritan put the wounded person on a donkey, went straight to an inn and there took care of the injured one. The next day the Samaritan took out two silver pieces and gave them to the innkeeper with the request, 'Look after this person, and if there is any further expense, I'll repay you on the way back.' "Which

of these three, in your opinion, was the neighbour to the traveller who fell in with the robbers?" The answer came, "The one who showed compassion." Jesus replied, "Then go and do the same."

Reflection

Today I would like to begin Part 1 of a 5-Part Series which will run intermittently through this year, entitled

What Makes a Christian?

Sometimes I think that the collective witness of Christianity is best expressed by the expression, "the elephant in the living room."

I can close my eyes and envision millions-perhaps even billions-of Christians in this large room, all talking, milling about and being energetic about their faith-but virtually ignoring this giant elephant who is right there in the middle of it all.

They even have to bend and contort themselves to see around this elephant, but they continue to ignore him.

What is this elephant?

Let's look at it this way:

Christians profess that God Himself lived on earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

You with me so far?

God Himself walked among us, teaching, preaching and showing what He meant by His life example. He was very clear what was the most important.

That giant elephant is the Greatest Commandment.

I hear Jesus saying: Of all the things you do, do this.

If you're going to put your time and attention anywhere, put it here: Love God and love neighbour abundantly.

Yet, how often is this preached?

Of course, it is mentioned.

What I mean is: How often is it preached like this?

How often is it preached the way Jesus preached it:

With intensity,

Centrality,

And a sense of utter, singular importance?

I'm sometimes baffled by our ignorance-it must be some kind of collective denial. But it is certainly immensely disrespectful to the entity which we claim is God.

The Greatest Commandment is in all 4 Gospels:

In Matthew 22, Jesus tells us that all other laws are to be read through the lens of the Greatest Commandment. All other laws are qualified by- and cannot be otherwise understood-outside of this context:

In Mark 12:, Jesus makes a connection between following this commandment and one's closeness to the Kingdom of God:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

In Luke 10, as we heard, Jesus not only gives the command to love God and neighbour, but he also says this is what you must do to inherit eternal life. How often have you heard that preached at church? I am not a betting man, but it would be easy money to say that most preachers only mention this line in order caution us not to take it too seriously-using other lines from the Bible to qualify-or outright negate-this statement by Jesus Himself. They say that Jesus could not possibly have meant what He, you know, actually said:

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

Jesus then tells the story of the Good Samaritan. He gives the answer in verse 37:

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

In John 13, Jesus states that our very public witness of our Christian identity itself depends on whether or not we love one another. Otherwise, people will not recognize that we are indeed Christians. Jesus tells us to follow his example. Jesus not only gives the commandment to love, but also states that His life has modelled this love.

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

If there is any doubt as to who is included in the list of people to show love toward, the New Testament is clear-the commandment to love includes everyone from those in our own Christian group to the widows, orphans, outsiders, marginalised people on up to and including our enemies. In other words: Everyone. There is no shortage of Scripture citations to back this up. So stay tuned!

Prayer

We pray for this world of so much violence and no solution; so much that has been done rightly or wrongly; and a fear and panic that no solution can be found.

So for those who find prejudice a way of life we pray; for those who are trapped and caught in conflict seeing no way out; for those who have been displaced, living in a foreign land away from family; and for those living with decisions made and those making decisions for the future we pray.

For all forms of prejudice; for folk who physically or emotionally build walls we pray that their walls will be knocked flat; for those who live with an extreme view of religion for those who are self-interested and for those who live a life which dehumanises others we pray that they might find the darkness of their thoughts illuminated by Christ's light, and ways to share in the grace and compassion of the living Word.

We pray for all those who work with and support children and young people, for those of all ages who give their time, talents and love to create places in schools, communities and churches that can be the foundation of growth, confidence and relationships
For ourselves, for those who are our family and friends; those who we know are ill and those recovering from ill health; those who are lonely, anxious, confused or stressed; and for those who bring colour back to life we pray.

Blessing

May we find a place for love to belong in the world.
May we make a welcome for the lost on the paths of our lives.
May we create space that makes room for all those we meet this week
and may we find, in each place, Christ already waiting for us.

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