

## **St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall**

[www.stmagnus.org](http://www.stmagnus.org)

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

[www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation](https://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.

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You can find our Sunday worship here.

<https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/>

or on YouTube here.

[https://youtu.be/rae8nP\\_bcDA](https://youtu.be/rae8nP_bcDA)

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

[stmagnuszoom@gmail.com](mailto:stmagnuszoom@gmail.com)

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this Christ candle, a living symbol of the one Life in which we all live and move and have our being.

In our tradition the time of rest begins with the lighting of a candle. In this moment the stopping truly begins. To take a few breaths, to allow the mind to quieten. This is the beginning of sacred time.

We come to be opened by visions that can enlist us in larger causes and more caring actions.

We come to hear words that might take us into a deeper kind of integrity and reconnect us with our better selves.

So may the warmer fullness that we seek fill our hearts, our minds and our spirits.

#### Reading John 4 5-42

Jesus stopped at Sychar, a town in Samaria, near the tract of land Jacob had given to his son Joseph, and Jacob's Well was there. Jesus, weary from the journey, came and sat by the well. It was around noon when a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." The disciples had gone off to the town to buy provisions. The Samaritan woman replied, "You're a Jew. How can you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?"—since Jews had nothing to do with Samaritans. Jesus answered, "If only you recognized God's gift, and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would have asked him for a drink instead, and he would have given you living water." "If you please," she challenged Jesus, "you don't have a bucket and this well is deep. Where do you expect to get this 'living water'? Surely you don't pretend to be greater than our ancestors Leah and Rachel and Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it with their descendants and flocks?" Jesus replied, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give them will never be thirsty; no, the water I give will become fountains within them, springing up to provide eternal life." The woman said to Jesus, "Give me this water, so that I won't grow thirsty and have to keep coming all the way here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband and then come back here." "I don't have a husband," replied the woman. "You're right—you don't have a husband!" Jesus exclaimed. "The fact is, you've had five, and the man you're living with now is not your husband. So what you've said is quite true." "I can see you're a prophet," answered the woman. "Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you people claim that Jerusalem is the place where God ought to be worshipped." Jesus told her, "Believe me, the hour is coming when you'll worship Abba God neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you don't understand; we worship what we do understand—after all, salvation is from the Jewish people. Yet the hour is coming—and is already here—when real worshippers will worship Abba God in Spirit and truth. Indeed, it is just such worshippers whom Abba God seeks. God is Spirit, and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to Jesus, "I know that the Messiah—the Anointed One—is coming and will tell us everything." Jesus replied, "I who speak to you am the Messiah." The disciples, returning at this point, were shocked to find Jesus having a private conversation with a woman.

But no one dared to ask, "What do you want of him?" or "Why are you talking with her?" The woman then left her water jar and went off into the town. She said to the people, "Come and see someone who told me everything I have ever done! Could this be the Messiah?" At that, everyone set out from town to meet Jesus. Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus, "Rabbi, eat something." But Jesus told them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." At this, the disciples said to one another, "Do you think someone has brought him something to eat?" Jesus explained to them, "Doing the will of the One who sent me and bringing this work to completion is my food. Don't you have a saying, 'Four months more and it will be harvest time'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields—they're ripe and ready for harvest! Reapers are already collecting their wages; they're gathering fruit for eternal life, and sower and reaper will rejoice together. So the saying is true: 'One person sows; another reaps.' I have sent you to reap what you haven't worked for. Others have done the work, and you've come upon the fruits of their labour." Many Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus on the strength of the woman's testimony—that "he told me everything I ever did." The result was that, when these Samaritans came to Jesus, they begged him to stay with them awhile. So Jesus stayed there two days, and through his own spoken word many more came to faith. They told the woman, "No longer does our faith depend on your story. We've heard for ourselves, and we know that this really is the saviour of the world."

### Reflection

There is a big difference between "what is happening," and "what is going on." I may see a man and a woman driving in a car; that is "what is happening." But there are limitless possibilities as to "what is going on." They may be a brother and sister, or a husband and wife, going to Church or going home for lunch or going shopping. They may be business associates going to visit a client. They may be courting.

There are also many ways of interpreting "what is going on." A young business man may be working hard and making a lot of money. A competitor may see him as a rival. A doctor may see him as a high risk for a heart attack. A poor relative may be very envious of his prosperity. A more spiritual person may pity his enslavement to the things of this world.

When Christ meets the Samaritan woman at the well side little seems to happen but there is a lot going on. One of the most broken women in the whole Bible meets the most whole man in all of history and healing takes place.

It was noontime, and nobody goes to draw water when the day is hottest, unless she wants to avoid meeting people. She wants to avoid people because deep down, as deep down as a well, she feels unloved. The great pain of the human heart is loneliness, often linked to guilt (I am so bad how could anybody love me?). This pain of feeling unloved leads to compulsive or addictive efforts to take love hostage. She had tried to find love in relationships with at least six men but because she was trying to grab love in loneliness, she stifled and killed it in that very act. And then, like all of us in our pain, she denied it and denied who she was; "I have no husband" she said. It was a lie that was true.

This woman for the first time in her life meets a man who is truly loving. Beneath all of her facade he sees a beautiful human being and he reaches out in love to recreate her, not looking for any pay-off for himself. He begins by asking her for water. To ask a service can be putting oneself in a relationship of need to the other and thus giving that person a feeling of worth. She is taken aback and asks, "You're a Jew. How can you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?" These are two people who break the Law. She in her craving for love had flaunted the laws of sexual propriety and then flaunted truth to deny her true self. Jesus, who is love itself, flaunts the human laws that set barriers between people. The Jews had no dealings with Samaritans and a man and a woman could not converse in public. She breaks the right kind of law for the wrong reason, while he breaks the wrong kind of law for the right reason.

Then Jesus said, "If only you recognized God's gift, and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would have asked him for a drink instead, and he would have given you living water."

And so it was for the woman. When Jesus had restored her dignity and self worth she went ahead into the town. Many Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus on the strength of the woman's testimony—that "he told me everything I ever did." For him it was okay for her not to be okay. When he accepted her not being okay she began to accept herself. When she accepted her not being okay herself she became more okay.

This woman is a real woman and a symbolic woman. She is a symbol of what is in all of us: loneliness, broken sexuality, fear, anger, guilt, incapacity to

forgive and so incapacity to love. "If we only knew the Gift of God" that is within us we would be gradually healed from this pain and brokenness.

Each of us are made in the image and likeness of God. For many of us this relationship was formalised when we were initiated into a Christian community in Baptism. Very often it was also formalised out of existence in our Church lives. We were hounded into being made to go to Church and had a morality imposed on us without much reference to the Spirit within, the Spirit of love, that dwells in the depths of our hearts. The well, the gift of God's spirit within, is there but we have to clear away the words and images and activities that have covered it over. Then we become the well; the source of living water is bubbling up within us and gradually bringing us from brokenness into wholeness. Taking time to be with ourselves, to be ourselves, some time each day enables us to access this source. This God presence within us that enables us to be all we can be. That enables us to discover and re-discover that like the Samaritan woman, it is okay for us not to be okay. When we realise we are accepted by God like that, we begin to accept ourselves. And when we accept not being okay ourselves we too become more okay.

#### Prayer

For the Church, that we may be a source of living water for all who thirst  
for meaning and purpose in their lives

For a greater openness to the Word of God: that we may take God's  
Word to heart; ponder it; and draw life from it

For a deepening of hope: that the Spirit of God will remind us of the  
length and breadth of God's love and faithfulness

For the grace to seek authentic fulfillment: that we may not be seduced  
by superficial satisfactions but seek the One who can fulfill our deepest  
longings

For all who face prejudice and discrimination: that God will heal their  
wounds and help them to continue to share their gifts for the good of  
society

For all who thirst every day, especially refugees, the victims of violence,  
natural disasters, and war: that God will help and assist them and that our  
hearts may be more sensitive to the plight of all who are suffering

For greater recognition of the ministry of women: that we may be open to

and encouraging of the ministerial gifts of women who bring the Good News to our communities and to those who never come to Church

For an end to bloodshed and violence in areas of conflict, particularly Syria, South Sudan and Ukraine: that God will lead human hearts away from killing and violence into paths of peace and dialogue

### Blessing

May we see the love of God  
all around us.

May we show the compassion of Christ  
in all that we do.

And may we be surrounded by the Holy Spirit  
as we seek her guidance today,

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