

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/k5kDuZ2ZBQ8>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

In this Easter Season of new life and new hope,
may the light of this candle remind us that light and life have the victory
over death and darkness.

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 cry out for truth, we ask for a sign, we demand answers. And we remain, questioning, wondering. What does it all mean? We wish for satisfaction, but Jesus has shown us his Way.
Where is he going? Where are we going? Where will his Spirit be?
And we remain, journeying, planning. Seeking truth and searching for our own life in him.
Our hearts are often troubled. But he has shown us his Way.
We believe, we have conviction, we do his work as best we can.
And we remain, hopeful, joyful.
Our hearts are filled with love for him.
We know his promise to us, and the Way.
We will remain, until the end.

Reading Luke 3 23-25; 4; 14-19

When Jesus began to preach, he was about 30 years old. Everyone thought he was the son of Joseph. But his family went back through Heli, Matthat, Levi, Melchi, Jannai, Joseph, Mattathias, Amos, Nahum, Esli, Naggai.....

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and his reputation spread throughout the region. He was teaching in the Galilean synagogues, and all were loud in their praise. Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. Entering the synagogue on the Sabbath, as was his habit, Jesus stood up to do the reading. When the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed him, he unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: "The Spirit of our God is upon me: because the Most High has anointed me to bring Good News to those who are poor. God has sent me to proclaim liberty to those held captive, recovery of sight to those who are blind, and release to those in prison— to proclaim the year of our God's favour."

Reflection

In his book, "Jesus, A Revolutionary Biography", John Dominic Crossan, one of the foremost historical Jesus scholars of our time wrote: "He was an illiterate peasant but with an oral brilliance that few of those trained

in literate and scribal disciplines can ever attain". Later he writes: "He comes as yet unknown into a hamlet of Lower Galilee...he looks like a beggar, yet his eyes lack the proper cringe, his voice the proper whine, his walk the proper shuffle".

For us, there seems to be something appealing about the image of a poor peasant lad from a small hill-top village off the beaten track going to the Jordan to be baptised not just by water but the Holy Spirit. Then gathering together a group of equally poor, illiterate, Galileans and, within less than three years, posing a threat to an Empire which killed him and then three hundred years later the movement he started conquering that Empire. One can but wonder!

The problem is that the proposition that Jesus was an illiterate peasant somehow does not ring true even when looked at simply within the context of the Gospel narratives. Is it really credible to suggest an illiterate peasant would be taken so seriously that lawyers and scribes would travel for three days to debate with him?

One can, of course, believe that his baptism was a form of divine programming by the Holy Spirit, but, to some, that does not quite make sense - even theologically. In Christian churches throughout the world we proclaim that Jesus "was made man". Jesus' humanity is fundamental to our faith. Jesus died a horrifying, demeaning and painful death on a Roman cross. His pain must have been real and it could only be real if he was truly and wholly human. So, if divine programming is 'out', how did he acquire his knowledge and skill?

If one looks at Lower Galilee where Jesus was born, brought up and spent much of his early ministry, one finds a region of fertile land and a lake rich in fish harvested by fishermen. The area was ruled by Herod Antipas, a puppet ruler of Rome who was Jewish. The inhabitants were predominantly Jewish but were poor because much of the fertile lands had fallen into the hands of rich landowners, and taxes were high. Around the lake the fishermen were also subject to high taxation. The area was relatively peaceful as Antipas was skilled in ensuring that unrest was kept to a minimum. Despite their poverty, the people were devout Jews. Every village would have had regular meetings, known as 'synagogues', for the discussion of village matters but, of much greater importance, a gathering to discuss and debate their faith.

Periodically, an itinerant 'teacher of scripture' (rabbi) would join the meeting and spend time with them accepting only hospitality. The

evidence suggests that there were more itinerant rabbis in Galilee than in Judea, despite that fact that Jerusalem was in Judea! What little we know of Jesus' family suggests that they were also very devout, perhaps undertaking the three day walk to the Temple in Jerusalem each Passover.

Born into this environment the boy Jesus would have joined the other village boys and have been taught the Torah - the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, which he would have been learned by rote. Instruction in other parts of the scriptures would have followed as he grew older. If Luke's story is factually accurate, by 12 years he could debate with his elders. He was clearly a child of exceptional ability to be able to absorb so much scripture but, of course, this is not unique.

For example, Mozart was a child protégé who was competent at the keyboard and violin and composed at the age of five and in our culture we marvel at the genius of poets like Burns and John Clare. Although, in daily conversation, Jesus would have spoken Aramaic he would have also understood and spoken Hebrew. It is also likely that he could read Hebrew but perhaps not write it.

In terms of his upbringing, Jesus' father, Joseph, was, we are told, a carpenter. Some would therefore argue that, in terms of social status he was below a peasant as he had no land. But scribes and rabbis were expected to have a trade, and carpenters were regarded as particularly learned. We see this in the words of one old Jewish saying: "Is there a carpenter or the son of a carpenter who can solve this problem for us?" One wonders therefore whether Joseph was more learned than the Gospels tell us and maybe even a minor rabbi. If this was so, we are given the image of the boy Jesus learning his trade with his father whilst at the same time discussing and debating scripture, and what the most recent itinerant rabbi had taught them.

However, would the experience and learning in a small village like Nazareth, even taking account of its close proximity to the wealthy Jewish city of Sepphoris, have been sufficient? Somehow one doubts it. If one looks at this through the eyes of a Jewish scholar, we find the view expressed that: "By the time he [Jesus] began his public ministry he had not only received the thorough religious training typical of the average Jewish man of his day but also he had probably spent years studying with one of the outstanding rabbis in Galilee."

Prayer

We pray for ourselves, for this online community of believers, each at a different stage of life and faith, thriving, struggling, wondering, hoping and trusting.

May the Spirit grant us grace to meet each person where they are, not where we think they should be.

We pray for our communities, for our families, friends, children, parents, neighbours, and enemies, each one a child of God and so, our sibling through the love of Christ. May the Spirit grant us the power to love all others as she loves us.

We pray today for King Charles and Queen Camilla.

May the Spirit be with them as they assume their responsibilities;

May many be encouraged by their interest and concern.

In all they do may they be mindful of the wellbeing of every child of God.

We pray for our world as the planet continues to bear the wounds inflicted upon it by our waste, our arrogance, our inability to see the beauty of creation. In our constant misuse of the resources given to us, may the Spirit grant us the boldness to see the error of our ways, to act now before it is too late.

Blessing

Jesus shows us the Way
and we follow.

let us go out into the world

The Way, the Truth and the Life are there for us all!

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