

## **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)

Minister: Rev Fraser Macnaughton Tel: 873312  
**[FMacnaughton@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:FMacnaughton@churchofscotland.org.uk)**  
Pastoral Minister: Rev. June Freeth Tel: 721449  
[JFreeth@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:JFreeth@churchofscotland.org.uk)

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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/ZxUfoxtbB8E>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

[stmagnuszoom@gmail.com](mailto: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.

It's not easy  
Leaving our normal life outwith these walls to  
come into this place and concentrate on  
being with God. On being more holy.  
To be still, to be quiet.  
To be prayerful.

But why try to do that?

The people that we worry about are the people that we care for and love.

The people that we have fun with, that make us smile and those that make us sad. We keep them in mind always.

The people that are far away, in danger and fear, those who are starving and who need help so desperately. Those we do not know and cannot imagine the day to day of their lives.

And the noise of our own lives. The fitting it all in. The getting stuff done. Making time for the spaces between the lines of our lives so that we can live them and not just get through each day.

Don't try to leave it all behind.

Bring it in here with you.

Into this place, into this sacred time.

It is your life, your God-given creative existence.

Bring it.

Hold it in your heart

And breathe.

Deeply.

Taking in the Spirit and enfolding all that you care about within it.

This is now your sacred time. Your prayer.

Reading

**Luke 4: 20-24, 31-37**

Rolling up the scroll, Jesus gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he said to them, "Today, in your hearing, this scripture passage is fulfilled." All who were present spoke favourably of him; they marvelled at the eloquence of the words on Jesus' lips. They said, "Surely this isn't Mary and Joseph's son!" Jesus said to them, "Undoubtedly you'll quote me the proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your own country the things we heard you did in Capernaum.' But the truth is, prophets never gain acceptance in their hometowns.

Jesus again went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee. He would teach there on the Sabbath. And the teaching made a great impression on them, because he spoke with authority. In the synagogue one day, there was a person possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, which shouted

in a loud voice, "Leave us alone! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God!" But Jesus said sharply, "Be quiet! Come out!" And the demon threw the person down in front of everyone, then went out without doing any harm. Everyone was struck with astonishment, and they said to one another, "What is this teaching? He commands the unclean spirits with authority and power, and they leave!" And reports of him spread throughout the surrounding countryside.

### Reflection

Last week we looked at some of the aspects of Jesus' Jewishness. In particular where he might have learned his story telling and debating skills to be able to take on scribes and teachers of the Law and inspire ordinary folk. One of the problems we are presented with is, in terms of the Gospel narratives... there is no mention of Jesus having a "teacher" unlike, for example, Paul. Indeed, in Matthew's Gospel we hear Jesus telling his disciples: "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master". While there may be debate as to whether Jesus actually said these words, they are indicative of the narrative that Matthew and the other Gospel writers were telling. The focus is on Jesus as the central character and all other supporting characters are very much 'bit parts' and that focus would have become blurred by any suggestions that Jesus was the son of a rabbi and had also been taught by a rabbi of the school of Hillel the Elder or that of his rival Shammai. In addition to the uncertainty of his religious training, there are other potential problems with Jesus' early life.

Luke tells us that he was about thirty years old when "he began his work". This is the age at which, in Jewish eyes at the time, a man reached full maturity. It was also the age at which David became king. The Gospels then tell us of a hectic period of perhaps one to three years when his reputation as a miracle worker and teacher spread across the region beyond Galilee to Decapolis and into Judea, to Jerusalem itself; to such an extent that he posed a threat to the stability of the government. Is this really credible in a time when there was no mass communication as we know it?

Is it not more feasible that Jesus had already been gaining a reputation in Galilee before his baptism? This suggestion may seem to conflict with the Gospels which tell us that his own home town rejected him at the start of his ministry. But that story has its own problems. Nazareth was a small village, and one would have assumed that many would have

recognised his abilities and noticed his developing controversial views in the discussions in the local synagogue. This could seem to suggest that he had spent much of his early adult life away from Nazareth as the disciple of an itinerant rabbi or studying in another location. This possibility gains some weight from the fact that Jesus does not appear to have married. To the Jews marriage and the raising of children were important because of their belief that God blessed Noah and his sons, and commanded them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." It would have been unusual for a man of Jesus' age not to have been married - something which has caused no end of speculation. Looking at this in the context of Jesus' world, it was not uncommon for an itinerant rabbi and his disciples to be unmarried as the lifestyle of being constantly on the move and relying on local hospitality was not conducive to family life. Rabbis tended to marry later in life in their thirties and forties.

Looking again for clues within the Gospels, one finds that the town of Capernaum on the coast of the Sea of Galilee had a prominent place in Jesus' ministry and this leads one to speculate that he may have spent more time there than we are told. Capernaum was a thriving place on two major caravan routes and, from archaeological research, had a synagogue building in the 1st century. Was it perhaps in Capernaum that Jesus spent time studying with the local rabbis as well as the itinerant rabbis passing through the town? Was it there in the synagogue that he first met with Peter, Andrew, James, John and even Levi, the tax collector, and listened to and debated with them, identifying them as potential disciples when he began his ministry? Was it here that he had his house and home? Had he, before he commenced his ministry, perhaps visited the neighbouring villages to prepare the ground for when he decided, following his baptism and a period of meditation in the wilderness, to begin the great task that was entrusted to him by God.

There will be many who might find this image of Jesus as a traditional, but exceptionally able Jewish rabbi, uncomfortable. Regrettably many Christians, including scholars, have been anxious over the centuries to ignore his firm Jewish roots. In many ways it is easier for some just to see Jesus as a miracle-worker and mystic. But we have tended to ignore that in the times he lived he was not the only one who fitted that description, and that there were others recorded by writers in that period.

Jesus was different and, if we are to really understand why, we need to have open minds exploring him as a man of exceptional intellectual ability steeped in the traditions of his people, but who, by his work, revealed the 'one God' to millions of people and we cannot honestly find a single word of

Jesus that could seriously exasperate a well intentioned Jew. Some of the intriguing questions we can ask as we try to unpack a much overlooked aspect of the reality of the life of Jesus. He was a Jew...not a Christian!

### Prayer

Mother God, we the custodians of our broken world are unsure and despairing as to what we can do to fix it. Or maybe we just don't think or care enough about it, when the effects of climate change are not yet truly real to us here?

You gave this planet life. The recipe was perfect.

A ecosystem that had everything every possible ingredient.

And yet we, like people for millennia before us, have taken too much.

We have not replanted, nurtured or balanced our consumption and now there's not enough left in the store-cupboard of the earth's resources for a fair share for all.

Our crops here seldom fail completely.

We don't know what it is like to eat pigeon pea dhal every day or what it would be like if that, our daily bread, ran out.

No rain, no harvest, no food.

Too much rain, crops washed away, no food.

Do we think of those here, in this country of prosperity, who skip their daily meals so that their children can eat.

At least something.

As we sit down to eat?

And we have so much.

Choice, availability, plenty.

All-giving God, are we selfless enough to pledge to live simply, so that others may simply live?

Mother of our earth, which we share with everything else that is living, in every form,

whatever ingredients we have, the method for the recipe we need is simple.

Season everything well. It will taste so much better.

Season with love, kindness and generosity.

Just three things that can, if we all use them wastefully,

Change this world for us all. Everywhere.

Blessing

The Good Shepherd knows us, the Good Shepherd calls us in  
and sends us out

to love and serve  
the waiting world.

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