

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

[St Magnus Cathedral Facebook page](#)

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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 on Facebook

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

or [on YouTube here](#)

<https://youtu.be/KYpFz0F9dIM>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this candle as a symbol of the spark of life which abides within us and around us.

May it be as a light in a dark night, a light in a window that welcomes the weary traveller home

We have gathered here as a community.

We may just be passing through but a place has been made for each of us.

This morning we all, far or near, belong to the cathedral community.
All loved, all needed, all valued.
Let what we say and do here be real and full of integrity,
and let us use that honesty to build a better world.
We are born to make manifest
the glory of the Sacred that is within us.
It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.
With all our faults and weaknesses we are all special in the eyes of God.
And as we let our own light shine,
we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
God promises that 'I am with you always' and he will never leave us.
So we have no need to be afraid.
And as we are liberated from our own fear,
our presence automatically liberates others.
When we are battered by life's storm winds Jesus says 'I will be with
you.'
His peace and love is always there for us.

The Spirit of God, broods over the waters
of our chaos leading us towards lives of kindness, lives filled with
generosity and love.
May we be inspired to live in peace and community, to always welcome
strangers,
for every person is a word of God,
and all creation is a book about God
Amen

Reading Matthew 11; 25-30

Then Jesus prayed, "Abba God, Creator of heaven and earth, to you I
offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever,
you have revealed to the youngest children. Yes, Abba, everything is as
you want it to be." Jesus continued, "Everything has been handed over to
me
by Abba God.
No one knows the Only Begotten
except Abba God,
and no one knows Abba God
except the Only Begotten—
and those to whom the Only Begotten

wants to give that revelation. Come to me,
all you who labour and carry heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon your shoulders
and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble of heart.
Here you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy
and my burden is light."

Reflection

Namaste. Namaste is a word that has found its way into the English language and our culture, but one that defies any easy translation. It is a Sanskrit word meaning "to bow". It indicates a deep respect and honouring of another person. Namaste is a generous word. When we bow to another person, we want the best for them, and we bow from our own highest intentions. Most languages and traditions have a word such as Namaste that is generous and inclusive. The Jewish tradition has Shalom and Christianity has Grace.

All these words transcend any one definition. They all indicate a state of perfect equilibrium; mind, body and spirit in balance. The storms and changes of life can't shake this balance. Not even a leaf stirs on the well rooted tree that is balance. It is a pond without the slightest ripple. It is the silence of a star filled sky.

Balance has been an emphasis in religions. Balance is a major theme in Buddhism. 589 years before Christ, The Buddha coined the phrase "the Middle Path" in an address to his monks-

"Monks, these two extremes ought not to be cultivated by the recluse. What two? Sensual indulgence which is low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, and conducive to harm; and self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, and conducive to harm. The middle path, monks, avoiding the extremes, gives vision and knowledge and leads to calm, realization, and enlightenment."

The Buddha understood the Middle Path, or balance, out of his own life experience. He was brought up a prince, in affluence and free from want. When he first encountered sickness and death, he realized that his protected life had not prepared him to deal with these things. He

rejected his upbringing and all worldly pleasures, and swung to the other extreme. He gave up all worldly pleasures and spent his time meditating. He discovered that this also didn't prepare him to deal with suffering. He concluded that neither extreme, indulgence or deprivation, was the path to liberation. Instead he proposed the middle way between these two.

More recently, the Dalai Lama has been a vocal proponent of the Middle Path in the relationship between China and Tibet. He proposes neither dependence on China, nor complete independence from China, but rather a degree of cultural autonomy. He advocates non violent protest against Chinese oppression, rather than an extreme form of violent insurrection. It's not universally accepted among Tibetan activists, some of whom are ready for more radical action, but in any case the Dalai Lama is an advocate of a form of Buddha's Middle Path.

Christianity has a more nuanced view of balance. On first reading, Jesus proposed anything but balance. He was a radical in his teaching. He said, "If you are not for me, you are against me", 'Give up everything and follow me" and "If you are luke-warm, I will spit you out." He appeared to be an advocate for extreme radicalism.

In fact the word "balance" occurs very rarely in the Bible. It appears as the Hebrew word "Mozen" and the Greek word "Zugos". Both words refer to the poles carried across your shoulders that balance two containers. Each container needed to be a similar weight and in right position in order to maintain balance.

The Hebrew word 'Mozen" is fascinating. It's the same root word as "ear". Thousands of years before science revealed that our inner ear is the control centre for human balance, the Hebrews used the same word for ear and balance. Is this coincidence or some sort of inherent wisdom?

"Mozen" also shares its roots with the Hebrew word for a Hawk, gliding in perfect balance on nature's currents.

The ear was so important in Hebrew culture. Unlike the Greek world of sights and fine physical form, Hebrew culture emphasized sound over sight as the domain of God's revelation. God was unknowable, and invisible, but God's word was heard from Sinai. The tradition was passed on orally and only after some time was the law cast in stone, so to speak.

In our reading today, Jesus offered balance (usually translated as yoke) to those who felt heavy with life's demands. What did he mean? How do we

reconcile Jesus' radical and extreme teaching with the notion of balance?
Maybe its something like this; firmness without being cold, commitment
without being dogmatic, love without being co-dependent, patience
without being passive, loyalty without being blind, faith without being
presumptuous, hope without being naive.

How do we retain balance in our religious views? Consider this story-

Once the Devil was walking along with one of his accomplices . They saw a man ahead of them pick up something shiny. "What did he find?" asked the accomplice. "A piece of the truth," the Devil replied. "Doesn't it bother you that he found a piece of the truth?" asked the accomplice. "No," said the Devil, "I will see to it that he makes a religion out of it. That will suit my purposes perfectly."

Religions lose their balance when they confuse story with literal truth. Religions go wrong when they confuse certain knowledge of God with an experience of a mystery that many call God. Religions are deluded when they teach any form of afterlife as an absolute truth. All of our beliefs are important, but partial truths. They must be partial, that is unless we know and have experienced everything, and no human has experienced everything.

Let's balance our partial truths with a commitment to curiosity and new understanding.

Prayer

Blessing

May our understanding of who Jesus was, grow,
the door to such knowledge and relationship be unlocked.
May the Way be born in us;
and through us be born into our world.

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

