

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

[St Magnus Cathedral Facebook page](#)

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 on Facebook](#)

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

or [on YouTube here](#)

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

May this flame remind us of the light of wisdom.

May the warmth of its glow
remind us of the warmth of God's everlasting love.

Let it be this moment that all gathered feel and invite the synergy of soul, senses and body; that all would be and feel welcome, softened by grace and connection - knowing that those on this platform and this page, have known hardships, who wish the best for us, who will give us the benefit of the doubt, who wish to live with health and happiness - just as

we do. We gather now celebrating our common humanity and that we would be both comforted and challenged in this place of growth, learning and serving. Indeed, we weep the same, we are angry, we are overjoyed by the simple and spectacular and a rich, common blood flows within and between us.

Reading: Mark 1; 21-28

They came to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and began to teach. The people were spellbound by the teaching, because Jesus taught with an authority that was unlike their religious scholars. Suddenly a person with an unclean spirit appeared in their synagogue. It shrieked, "What do you want from us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" Jesus rebuked the spirit sharply: "Be quiet! Come out of that person!" At that the unclean spirit convulsed the possessed one violently, and with a loud shriek it came out. All who looked on were amazed. They began to ask one another, "What is this? A new teaching, and with such authority! This person even gives orders to unclean spirits and they obey!" Immediately news of Jesus spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Reflection

For centuries people believed that Aristotle was right when he said that the heavier an object, the faster it would fall to earth. Aristotle was regarded as the greatest thinker of all time, and surely he would not be wrong.

Anyone, of course, could have taken two objects, one heavy and one light, and dropped them from a great height to see whether or not the heavier object landed first. But no one did until nearly 2,000 years after Aristotle's death. Legend has it that in 1589 Galileo summoned learned professors to the base of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Then he went to the top and pushed off a ten-pound and a one-pound weight. Both landed at the same instant. The power of belief was so strong, however, that the professors denied their eyesight. They continued to say Aristotle was right.

I believe that this illustrates perfectly what is going on in the world today. You could show the terrible ravaging effects of war and violence

and people just want to go on fighting. You can show someone a diseased liver and cancerous lungs and people are going to abuse alcohol and smoke regardless of the facts.

You know what I wish? I wish someone would just climb to the top of the tower and push off a ten-pound argument and a one-pound argument and we'll see which one reaches the ground first. That would finally prove who is right and who is wrong. But then I am reminded that when Galileo did that no one believed him. Even with the authority of obvious visible proof, i.e. the two weights reached the ground at the same time, the professors did not believe. The problem here is obvious. Most people are going to believe what they have always believed regardless of the facts.

But something different occurred in the life of Jesus. Something persuasive.

Mark records that when Jesus came to Capernaum, on the Sabbath day, and entered the synagogue and taught, the crowds were astounded. Why?

One word:

Authority. He taught, not as the scribes taught, but as one having authority.

What was it that convinced them? What did they hear and see in the life of Christ that made him stand above all other teachers. Why were they so drawn to him?

The church in the world is a lot like the story of the missionary in the jungle. He got lost with nothing around him but bush and a few cleared places. He finally found a small village and asked one of the natives if he could lead him out of the jungle. The native said he could. "All right," the missionary said, "Show me the way." They walked for hours through dense brush hacking their way through unmarked jungle. The missionary began to worry and said, "Are you quite sure this is the way?"

"Where is the path?" The native said. "Bwana, in this place there is no path. I am the path."

Our path out of the jungle of this world is God in Christ. We may have some Rabbis, Masters, Father's, Teachers, and Reverends but we are all like the missionary. We rely not upon people but Christ who is our path.

Now comes the understatement. The people in the congregation, having witnessed a scene to rival anything in *The Exorcist*, look around at each

other and say, "What is this? ... A new teaching!"

A new teaching? If this had happened in any congregation I know, they may have sat for hours in stupefied silence, they may have rushed to the altar in sudden repentance, or they may have jumped out of the church windows in terror, but the last thing they would have done was to comment on how this casting out of a demon constituted an innovation in Christian education. A new teaching? Indeed.

To call such an extraordinary event of the casting out of a demon a new teaching, well, I think that constitutes understatement for most of us because our ordinary experiences of teaching are so dull. So much of our teaching and learning involves stuff that is on the periphery of our lives. We may need to know it, but it doesn't exactly hit the core of us, the things which most centrally define us as persons. It doesn't move us, change us, make us new persons.

Christ's teaching, on the other hand, transform us. Just ask the demon-possessed man, ask the apostle Paul, ask Martin Luther, ask John Wesley. You could describe this as a new teaching but better yet describe it as God with us. For if God is with us, that changes everything.

Prayer

Would we have eyes in love with seeing? Ears in love with listening, minds in love with connecting, hearts in love with attending? And then, to consider that everyone around us is God captured and displayed in human blood, bone and flesh...in mind and spirit, in hands and heart. May we really wonder of others in this way. That everyone else, in all their giftedness and annoyances, is just like us - God and life- infused persons of the most wondrous dispositions and proportions.

May this sense of wonder and unity compel us to live less harshly and to treat others with greater care, respect and gentleness. Might we whisper a bit more often, might we caress a bit longer, might we touch and tease a bit more playfully.

And may our wonder lead us to greater care and responses to all those struggling with life's dilemmas and realities. As security and jobs are lost, as relationships become strained, as people wonder in anxiety of what is to come, may we be ready with kind words, meals to be made, transport to be given, doors to be opened, finances to be shared.

In honour of mystery and the possibility of what can yet be, we pray
gather together as individuals and community-learning, wondering and
playing into more gracious, giving people for this world we share.

Blessing

In the light and beauty of day
We give thanks in awe and wonder.
In the dark and stillness of night
We dream of healing and hope

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