

Quiet-Time Service - 20th October 2021

Good Evening. We're delighted that you're here to join us in this short, online service of prayer and reflection and you're warmly welcome. I'm speaking to you the sanctuary of Orchardhill Parish Church in Giffnock, and we link many homes, including yours, with our awareness of the presence of the one God who makes us sisters and brothers to each other. Whether your home is busy and full or peaceful and quiet this evening, please reach your spirit into our common belonging as we share some quiet time within the embrace of God's love.

Let us pray together:

Heavenly Father, heavenly King,
we come before you today just as we are.
We come to listen and to learn.
We come and lay everything down
to stand in your awesome presence.
Loving God, all-sufficient one,
we acknowledge your presence and we worship you.

We adore you, Lord of all.

We worship you, Lord Jesus Christ, holy and anointed one.
You laid your life down that we might live.

We adore you, Lord of all.

We welcome your authority and influence in our lives, Holy Spirit.
You intercede for us when we have no strength.
You are with us and guide us in our weakness.

We adore you, Lord of all.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are worthy of all our praise:

we adore you, Lord of all.

Amen.

Mark 6: 1-6

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?" ³ Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, [\[a\]](#) Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offence at him.

⁴ Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ He was amazed at their lack of faith.

As Jesus travelled from Capernaum up into the hill country above the Sea of Galilee, he was heading home. He had just made a significant impact down at the lakeshore, healing a woman who crept up behind him in a crowd, and bringing a dead girl to life. Now it was time to head back home, time to taste some of mum’s home cooking. It was time to see how the Kingdom of God might be received in more familiar territory.

Here we have the story of Jesus returning to Nazareth and meeting with some resistance. Jesus should have had a home advantage, but he didn’t. Things start out well, but as soon as he starts teaching in the synagogue, people are amazed, and they seem to think this hometown boy has become a bit too big for his boots.

There is even a hint of scandal as the people of Nazareth question his authority. They ask, “Isn’t this Mary’s son?” instead of, “Isn’t this Mary and Joseph’s boy?” While some might see this as a true representation of the virgin birth, in that time and place it was just short of an insult to skip over naming the father as head of the household. It hints at the possibility that Jesus was an illegitimate child, bringing shame to his whole community.

Shame and honour formed the foundation of social interaction in Nazareth. It was a balancing game: if someone gained honour in the community, that meant someone else had to lose. Keeping the balance between shame and honour was important.

And here was Jesus, claiming the honour of a prophet for himself! This would upset the whole hierarchy of social standing. It would mean that someone – probably the synagogue leaders – would have to lose honour. This young upstart needed to be put in his place, and reminded that they knew who he was before he got famous – just a common carpenter, nothing more.

Jesus has been busy amazing people in Capernaum, across the Sea of Galilee, and even in the middle of the lake itself, but now it’s his turn to be amazed. And what has Jesus shaking his head? It’s the lack of faith he sees among his hometown friends and family. In fact, this lack of faith brings us to one of the more problematic verses in this passage: Jesus, the Son of God, is rendered powerless. Mark writes, “And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them.” (v. 5)

Biblical scholars have wrestled with this sentence, and theologians have argued about it. Matthew’s version cleans things up a bit for us. Matthew says Jesus “did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith” (Matt 13:58), making it sound more like Jesus chose not to work any wonders.

But the question should not be about whether Jesus chose to do miracles or was prevented from doing them. Maybe the question is, how does our lack of faith affect the way God

works? Do we really keep God out of the miracle business, simply because we lack faith? Before we get too caught up in arguments about God's omnipotence and grace that is not dependent on anything we do, let's look at what does happen in Nazareth. Jesus does heal a few. There are at least some who seek him out in faith, just as Jairus did on behalf of his dying daughter, just as the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years did. And I think this might be the key – Jesus responds when we fall at his feet and ask for his mercy. He can't answer our prayers unless we pray them. He can only transform our lives to the extent that we allow him to. Jesus' ability to do great things in Nazareth was only limited by the fact that nobody bothered to ask – except for a few, and they were healed.

One of the commentaries I read asks - "What if ... Mark is simply inviting us to contemplate the possibility that we actually have something to do, that we have an important role to play in the manifestation of the kingdom. To say it another way: this isn't about salvation, it's about the role each one of us is invited to play in sensing, experiencing, and making known God's will and work in the world."

How might we be encouraging God to work in our lives? How might we be preventing him from doing the work he wants to perform in us?

Let's take a moment to let God's Spirit direct our thoughts to the ways we might be resisting God. As we do this, you might want to let your hands rest in your lap in an open posture, releasing to God the things that keep you from experiencing his power:

some hurt or regret you can't let go,

some grudge you hold onto,

some addiction that has come to define your identity,

some anger that continues to burn in you,

some problem that you just don't quite want to trust God to solve.

Or maybe there is something you need to receive from God into your open hands –

some commitment God is calling you toward that you don't want to acknowledge,

some ministry opportunities you are afraid to accept,

some challenge to grow that you think is too difficult for you.

This isn't only about accepting God's grace to save us and inviting Jesus into our hearts. It's about our willingness to be true disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It's about trusting God enough to ask him to change us and mean it.

The disciples who followed Jesus to Nazareth didn't abandon him when the town rejected his message. They were watching closely to see what he would do. As Jesus kept on with his ministry of preaching good news and healing the sick, casting out unclean spirits and giving hope to the poor, the disciples were learning what it means to be a true follower of Christ. Following Jesus means putting it all on the line. We may find that some don't want to hear our message of hope. That doesn't mean we should stop sharing it. Some may ridicule us or walk away. There are others who will respond to the good news that God loves them. When we put our full faith in Christ, living into the assurance that he will act, he can change our brokenness into fruitfulness. To the glory of God. **Amen.**

Let us listen to All to Jesus I Surrender - [here](#)

Let us join together in prayer, let us pray:

God of all creation, you hold the depths of the earth in your hands.

You are closer to us than the air we breathe.

Fill our souls with your wonderful love and light.

Give us strength and courage to reflect that love and light in the world.

Let us never shrink back from who we are in you or hide our light inside ourselves. Renew in us a sense of joy, painting the dark shadows around us with your light, your love and your salvation.

Hear us today as we pray for a world too often darkened by hatred, evil, power and greed.

Within our darkest night, **Let your light shine.**

God of power and might, your broken world cries out from the depths,

a world dominated by the darkness of war, terror, pain and suffering.

We think of the on-going and deepening conflict in Syria and the middle East.

We share the pain and anguish of those who have had to flee from their homes, countries and livelihoods, who risk their lives, desperate for a new start free from fear and war.

May they see your light, feel your strength and power

and know the truth of your promise that we shall not be overcome by the dark shadows of life or the darkness of human nature.

Within our darkest night, **Let your light shine.**

God of compassion and grace, we share with you our love and concern for people in a dark place today.

Be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.

In their loneliness, be their consolation;

in their anxiety, be their hope;

in their darkness, be their light.

Let your light shine through the darkness of all their pain and their suffering.

Within our darkest night, **Let your light shine.**

God of life, we ask for your healing power on those who are enduring pain and illness.

We especially think of those who have had their diagnosis and treatment delayed because of the COVID pandemic.

We share the grief of people close to us, who've recently lost loved ones.

We know your everlasting light shines with us, in moments of great sadness and great joy.
Within our darkest night, **Let your light shine.**

God of love and hope,
Renew in us a deeper sense of who we are in you.
Help us to be aware of your presence each and every day.
Make us instruments of love and praise.
May our words, actions and lives be living examples
of your forgiving, healing, life-giving love.
And may that love that never ends
be our comfort, strength, and guide
to the glory of God,
In Jesus' name.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray as our saviour has taught us:
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name; Your kingdom come, your will be done on
earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our
sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us
from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

Blessing

May the beauty of God
be reflected in our eyes,
the love of God
be reflected in our hands,
the wisdom of God
be reflected in our words,
and the knowledge of God
flow from our heart,
that all might see,
and seeing, believe.

Amen