

**LAIRG CHURCH OF SCOTLAND & ROGART (ST CALLANS) CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
SCO20871 and SCO10035**

Sunday 21st June 2020

Call to worship

As we gather here today to worship in our own time and in our own space we pray O God that you will come to us. God of all grace, by your Spirit come and transform us, as we worship. Amen

I would like to begin with a new song. For those of you who are not able to listen to this service online then please use the words below as a prayer.

Song of Love

Song of love and my surrender
How I gave my life to Him
And the joy of knowing Jesus
Nothing else could ever bring

May his goodness be my shelter
May his wisdom be my guide
And the scars will still remind me
How my friend has saved my life

I will sing of my redemption
And the love I don't deserve
How I found my precious Saviour
When the voice of God I heard

Song of freedom made eternal
And a peace forever mine
Through the cross and resurrection
Death defeated, He's alive

Song of hope to give my future
Solid ground on which to build
And my soul will live forever
Love divine and hope fulfilled

Alleluia what a Saviour
Alleluia, King of kings
He is risen, I'm forgiven
Precious love my soul to win.

CCLI Song # 7147333
Mark Pennells, Zarc Porter
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Opening Prayers

Loving and gracious God, we rejoice that we can be sure of your presence with us at all times and in all places;

When we feel needy, you hear us and come to our aid.
When we feel threatened, you hear us and surround us with your protective arms.
When we cry out to you, you hear us and answer us.
When we feel afraid, you come alongside offering reassurance and strength

Loving and gracious God, you are good, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you;
When we have turned away from you, you do not abandon us but love us and forgive us.

When we have made a mess of our lives, you continue to support us, bring us back on track, by loving and forgiving us.
When we have followed our own desires, sometimes you have gently nudged us, at other times you've needed to be more forceful; but always you show your love for us and forgive us.

Loving and gracious God, your love for us knows no bounds, for you even came amongst us in Jesus to share our life;

We turn our hearts and minds to worship you, receive our love.
We sense your transforming power at work in our lives, receive our love.
We long to be filled with your Spirit and become more like you, receive our love.

Loving and gracious God, be with us as we worship you today. Amen

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Let us say the words of the family prayer, reminding us that although apart we are still all one family.

Our Father

Readings: Genesis 21: 8-21 - Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away

⁸ The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. ⁹ But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. ¹⁰ So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac." ¹¹ The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. ¹² But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. ¹³ As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring." ¹⁴ So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

¹⁵ When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. ¹⁶ Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷ And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸ Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him." ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰ God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. ²¹ He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Romans 6: 1b-11

Dying and Rising with Christ

¹ What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸ But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 10: 24-39

²⁴ "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵ it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

²⁶ "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷ What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸ Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two

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sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹ So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³² "Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³ but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶ and one's foes will be members of one's own household. ³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸ and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Reflections on the readings

There may have been times when you have felt badly treated – by family, friends, colleagues, possibly even people in church. Perhaps these experiences felt even worse because you had been trying to do what you thought was right. Sometimes these experiences may have been downright abusive.

The Bible is full of many varied stories and this is wonderful because they reflect the full spectrum of our human experience. Take our OT reading. Hagar is a foreign slave who fathers Abraham's son Ishmael because his wife Sarah was unable to have children. Then miraculously Sarah does have a child, and Hagar and her son Ishmael are kicked out of the community, into the wilderness – effectively to die.

This is a story that raises many issues, about power, about jealousy, about how we treat foreigners, about how we treat women (it had to be Sarah and not Abraham who could not have children) and people of different social status. It is a story that results in exclusion and isolation. Over recent weeks people have experienced social exclusion and isolation because of Covid-19. Sadly those already socially and economically disadvantaged have perhaps suffered the most.

Yet, in these recent weeks we have also been re-evaluating how we think about, and act especially towards people doing relatively low paid jobs. We have a newfound appreciation for refuse collectors, shop workers, delivery drivers, carers and, of course, our nurses. God was able to act and offer hope and salvation even through the negative human emotions and behaviour that led to Hagar and Ishmael being banished. Maybe too, we can see God at work even through the suffering and grief of Coronavirus as we learn in a deeper way what it is to value and care for others.

Saint Paul too, in his letter to the Christian community in Rome, reminds us that we are people of hope and transformation, even amid suffering and death, because of the resurrection of Jesus. Yes, this speaks ultimately of eternal life but also of transformation and hope here and now; of how we can "walk in newness of life". We have had to find new ways of living through lockdown and so may we continue to offer transformation and hope to others through our actions and words as we seek to live as disciples of the risen Jesus.

Prayers of intercession

We live in a world where price is often confused with value; but price and value can be as different as priceless and valueless. As we pray for others today, we think especially of those on whom we have in the past placed little value but who today in our current circumstances we consider priceless. We thank you that in God's sight we are all valuable

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and we give thanks that Christ his Son paid the ultimate price that we might have communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Holy God, gentle and strong we pray today for babies and small children; those we know and love but also those who live far away especially in lands torn apart by war or famine. and for those who are sick...

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for young people; those scarred by the past, those who fear the future, those whose education have been disrupted in recent months and who feel lost...

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for all who are sick in body; those suffering with cancer or degenerative diseases, people near and far affected by the Coronavirus and other illnesses... We pray for those working to treat them and bring relief to their pain and healing to their bodies.

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for all who struggle to hold onto good mental health; friends living with depression, anxiety, addiction... and for ourselves in these times of uncertainty and fear...

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for all who are dying and those who have been recently bereaved; we know that your love is stronger than death – surround them with that love...

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for any who feel lost, abandoned, neglected or unvalued, for whatever reason... we know that you came to seek and to save the lost and we pray that they may know your gentle and strong love surrounding them at this time. Lord, graciously hear us. Amen.

Lead us Heavenly father lead us

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
O'er the world's tempestuous sea;
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
For we have no help but Thee;
Yet possessing every blessing
If our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us;
All our weakness Thou dost know;
Thou didst tread this earth before us,
Thou didst feel its keenest woe;

Lone and dreary, faint and weary,
Through the desert Thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending,
Fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
Love with every passion blending,
Pleasure that can never cloy;
Thus provided, pardoned, guided,
Nothing can our peace destroy.

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Blessing

We will leave here, never the same again.
We will follow you, our God, into the week ahead.
We will go where you will lead us.
Lead us, heavenly father, lead us. Amen