

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

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March**

**Call to worship** – based on Psalm 19

The heavens are telling the glory of God      **May our worship reflect God's glory.**  
The firmament proclaims God's handiwork.      **May we see each other as the handiwork of God.**  
Let our prayer and praise, our singing and proclamation project the love of God.

**We commune with Christians around the world, with Christians throughout time.**

With Christians across geography and across time,

**Let us worship!**

**Hymn: At the name of Jesus**

1 At the name of Jesus ev'ry knee shall bow,  
ev'ry tongue confess him King of glory now.  
'Tis the Father's pleasure we should call him Lord,  
who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

Through all ranks of creatures to the central  
height  
To the throne of Godhead, to the Father's breast  
Filled it with the glory of that perfect rest/.

2 Mighty and mysterious in the highest height  
God from everlasting, very light from light  
In the Father's bosom, with the Spirit blessed  
Love, in love eternal, rest, in perfect rest.

5 In your hearts enthrone him; there let him  
subdue  
all that is not holy, all that is not true;  
crown him as your Captain in temptation's hour:  
let his will enfold you in its light and pow'r.

3 Humbled for a season to receive a name  
from the lips of sinners unto whom he came,  
faithfully he bore it spotless to the last,  
brought it back victorious, when from death he  
passed.

6 Brothers, this Lord Jesus shall return again,  
with his Father's glory, with his angel train;  
for all wreaths of empire meet upon his brow,  
and our hearts confess him King of glory now.

4 Bore it up triumphant, with its human light

**Opening Prayers**

Eternal God, whose signature we see, if we dare to look, in the creation of the universe,  
help us this hour to look and to listen for Your handwriting and Your voice in this place,  
among these people.

Connect our temporary praise to Your timeless rhythms, your ageless melodies, your everlasting  
joyful noise.

Guide us now to focus upon You, knowing that in You, our distractions become new possibilities  
for action.

Breathe life into our singing, our praying, our speaking, our listening, that all these activities might  
become more than they are.

In our worship we reach out to You, O God, knowing that You have already enfolded us in Your  
arms.

Jesus, cleanser of temples and souls, at this mid-point in the Lenten journey, look deep within our  
hearts and our lives, and clear away all that holds us back.

May our minds, spirits and bodies be a Temple that is open to Your presence: and may our words  
and our actions be transparent to Your love and truth.

We pray that this church community, will be purified in its life and mission, so that all that we do in  
and from here may reveal Your Gospel to others.

In a moment of silence we sit before You, and name those things for which we seek Your  
cleansing and healing, so that we may be more faithful disciples.

*Silence*

Friends of Jesus, we are made clean by the words he has spoken to us. There is room in our lives  
and in our community for the Holy One to dwell. Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

**We say together the Lord's Prayer**

**Readings: Exodus 20:1-17 The Ten Commandments**

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

**20** Then God spoke all these words: <sup>2</sup> I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; <sup>3</sup> you shall have no other gods before me. <sup>4</sup> You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, <sup>6</sup> but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. <sup>7</sup> You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. <sup>8</sup> Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labour and do all your work. <sup>10</sup> But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. <sup>12</sup> Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. <sup>13</sup> You shall not murder. <sup>14</sup> You shall not commit adultery. <sup>15</sup> You shall not steal. <sup>16</sup> You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. <sup>17</sup> You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

**1 Corinthians 1:18-25 - Christ the Power and Wisdom of God**

<sup>18</sup> For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." <sup>20</sup> Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

**John 2:13-22 - Jesus Cleanses the Temple**

<sup>13</sup> The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. <sup>15</sup> Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup> He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" <sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." <sup>18</sup> The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup> The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But he was speaking of the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup> After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

**Reflections on the readings**

I wonder how many of you remember the old children's television programme 'Play School'. A favourite part of every episode was when the presenter would ask, 'Which window are we going to go through today?' and our little black and white television screens would show three huge windows, the Round Window, the Arched Window and the Square Window. At this point, eager children sitting cross-legged on the carpet at home would shout out their hope – before the presenter for the day made the choice and took us into an exciting story through one or other of these windows.

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

Sometimes looking at the Bible story reminds me of the Play School windows, especially when, as today, the passages chosen in the lectionary seem to be quite different shapes and give quite different ways of seeing God and our relationship with God.

The passage in Exodus in which Moses receives the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai highlights the role of law in building our relationship with God. The Israelites, travelling as a migrant, nomadic community through wilderness terrain for forty years, needed some guidelines about how to live with each other and how to relate to God. The Ten Commandments are still well known – the fact of them anyway, if not the content – and have formed the basis for civil law as well as religious practice in many parts of the world for millennia. In a relatively short passage they cover much of human behaviour, from the call to put God first and foremost in our lives to a reminder not to look with longing on the brand-new hybrid car our neighbour has just purchased. In between they touch upon idolatry, blasphemy, work-life balance, family relationships, human rights and justice – quite an undertaking!

And wisdom is the shape of our next window onto God. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians wants them to understand that the human philosophies which were prized so highly by these early Greek Christians are not, ultimately, the way in which God is revealed or encountered. In fact, much of what God has done might appear to be folly compared with human wisdom.

I can remember my old university friend getting a birthday card for her 18-year-old son, Ed, my Godson; amidst a cleverly drawn image were the words: 'Teenagers: Are you tired of being harassed by your stupid parents? Act now, move out, get a job and pay your own bills – now, while you still know everything.' 'Now, while you still know everything'... do you remember that phase of life? Thankfully it's usually short-lived and we spend the remainder of our lives realising how little we really know; how foolish we are. Yet, Paul seems to be saying, foolishness will bring us closer to the heart of God than wisdom can – certainly than what the world recognises as wisdom. He disparages all that his culture might value so highly and instead nails his colours to an absurd mast – the wooden cross of a criminal. Paul himself realises that this will be 'a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles'. Surely it is foolishness to trust in such weakness, yet this is the road to which Paul points and to which Christ calls. In church life today, we often bewail our insignificance in society, our weakness, our lack of power or status. Perhaps these are the very qualities that will allow the power of Christ and the wisdom of God to be seen.

So, having glimpsed something of the gift of God's law through the Square Window and the upside-down nature of Christ's wisdom through the Round Window, come with me and gaze through the Arched Window to see some action; what is Jesus up to in today's Gospel passage from John chapter 2.

Jesus is in the capital; a travelling preacher from the north hitting the big city at the very height of the high season – it's almost Passover time and any Jew who possibly can will want to be in Jerusalem. It is crowded.

In our reading, it was in the courtyards of the Jerusalem temple, that Jesus met a spectacle which stirred him to violent anger. The very place where God was understood to dwell, where compassion was embodied, where justice was palpable, where worship was primary, in that very place God had been usurped by trading, self-interest, exploitation and commerce.

Where was the recognition of the holiness of God which Moses and the Israelites had experienced on the mountain? Where was the observation of the law of God with its clear directives to put God first and not to steal? The most holy season of Passover was being twisted into a market-place of profit and consumerism. (Not unlike Easter these days)

There is a warning here not to be sucked into the consumerism of our society, but to be consumed instead with zeal for the dwelling place of God. Not a building now - for Jesus has promised that the Spirit of God lives within us – so our zeal, our enthusiasm, is for hosting and revealing the presence of God in our very selves, in our congregations, in our communities, in our world.

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

In these days of restricted travel and gathering, many of us have spent a great deal of time indoors, perhaps trying to find new views from our windows to stretch our horizons as much as we can. Let's do that today, let's be drawn to these different, inviting, elegant windows of our Bible passages to gaze and gaze and gaze again on the glory of God made known in transformative law, in a foolish kind of wisdom and in radical action.

**Prayers of intercession**

Liberating God, in love You have set us free:

free from slavery to sin and self, free to know and love You, free to follow and serve You.

We praise You for Your faithful love toward us, and for the many ways You have demonstrated that love to us. We see your love in the natural world around us—in the sky and trees and rivers.

We see your love in the gift of your commandments—the rules for living that guide us into right relationship with You, and with the people around us.

And we see your love in Jesus Christ, who lived and died to bring us life.

Because we have experienced your love, we come before You with confidence, bringing our needs and the needs of our world. God, in your unfailing love, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who live surrounded by violence—whether from war or political unrest, crime or domestic abuse. We pray for those who have been victims of violent crime, and for those whose loved ones have been injured or murdered. God, in your unfailing love, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who find themselves involved in crime, whether by choice or through coercion; those caught up into gangs or prostitution, those who have turned to crime to pay for their addictions, those who are imprisoned. God, in your unfailing love, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our homes and families: for parents juggling the responsibilities of work and family, for husbands and wives whose marriages are breaking down, for children chafing under parental authority or expectations, for men and women caught up in adultery or adulterous thoughts.

God, in your unfailing love, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the many people in our world who do not yet know You and have not experienced the new life that comes from knowing Christ Jesus; who continue to search for purpose and meaning.

God, in your unfailing love, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, give us strength and courage to keep Your commandments, to live in faithful obedience to Your will. Guard our hearts and minds from all that might distract us from living out our commitment to You. Help us to find our true worth in knowing You more fully, and serving You more faithfully.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Cornerstone. **Amen.**

**Hymn:** Beyond these walls of worship

Beyond these walls of worship,  
in the stress and joy of life  
can we offer you our bodies  
as a living sacrifice?

Will we keep you at the centre  
far beyond the Sunday call?

Will we turn to you, be transformed by you  
still declare you God of all?

Beyond these walls of worship  
in the times of work and rest  
will we display our love for all  
when our faith's put to the test?

When the people that surround us  
deny that you are there,  
will we display our faith in you  
in life, in praise, in prayer?

Beyond these walls of worship  
may your Spirit strengthen us  
to make the whole of life our worship  
as we witness to your love?

From this moment in your presence  
send us out now to proclaim  
that we'll live our life as a sacrifice  
to the glory of your name.

CCLI Song # CCLI Licence 632441  
© Ian Worsfold and Paul Wood

**Blessing**

May the holy wisdom of God, guard your ways and guide your paths  
May the living truth of God enlighten your hearts and open your minds

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

And may the living Spirit of God give you life, and life to the full!

**Amen!**