

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

Sunday 7th February

Call to worship

Holy God, you call us here to worship you, and we come to pray, to sing and to give you praise. Come amongst our gathering, touch our hearts, prompt our minds, inspire our spirits, such that we will leave this moment more open to you, and with a deeper commitment to your world. In Jesus, name, Amen.

Hymn: Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord

Strength will rise as we wait upon the
Lord,
Wait upon the Lord,
We will wait upon the Lord. (Repeat)
Our God,
You reign forever.
Our Hope,
Our strong Deliverer.
You are the everlasting God,

The everlasting God.
You do not faint,
You won't grow weary.
You're the defender of the weak,
You comfort those in need.
You lift us up on wings like eagles.
Brenton Brown and Ken Riley *©Copyright 2005 Thankyou
Music/PRS
CCLI Song #4556538 CCLI Licence 632441

Opening Prayers

Dear Lord, today we pause a while in your presence. In our journey through life we rest a moment to acknowledge your love and to worship you. With thankful hearts we recognise that you travel with us, that the God of all creation knows us and loves us, that you sent your son Jesus to open heaven to all believers. So in this moment we worship and we adore you.

And as we rest and reflect, we also take this opportunity to say sorry. You know us through and through Lord. You know our motives, our actions, our deepest thoughts. We say sorry that they are not always loving, they are not always selfless, they are not always worthy of a follow of Jesus.

But we trust in your love and mercy. Help us to change, help us to grow, help us to follow the Jesus way, as we hear your words of grace, that our sins are forgiven. Amen.

We say together the Lord's Prayer

Reading: Isaiah 40:21-31

²¹ Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? ²² It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; ²³ who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

²⁴ Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

²⁵ To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God"? ²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard?

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The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹ He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. ³⁰ Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; ³¹ but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Reflection on the reading

Isaiah 40 is one of the most striking pieces of poetry in the Hebrew Bible. From the opening line (which comes before today's reading) where God through Isaiah invites and challenges the reader to 'comfort, O comfort my people', through to these amazing verses here at the end.

The poetry, the drama of it, is amazing – 'do you not know'? 'Have you not heard?' 'The Lord is the everlasting God.' 'To whom will you compare me?'

Isaiah really communicates something of the awesomeness of God, and the urgency of the invitation to us to follow, to love, to commit our lives to our God. And, as always with Isaiah – though the challenges are hard, the promises are rich. Who amongst us today feels tired, weary, ready to take a break, to have a nap, to put our feet up...

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. And Isaiah doesn't just leave it at that – his imagery of running, walking and soaring on eagles wings is hard to resist. Can we let go of our own agendas, our desire to do everything in our own strength, and soar on the updraft of the Spirit today, and this week, this year?

You have been entrusted with a task, with a part to play in God's kingdom in God's unfolding story. And you don't have to do it alone. You are *never* alone.

The Lord is the everlasting God, and today, we invite that everlasting God into our hearts once more.

Wherever you are in your walk with God, may these readings, and the reflections offered on each, present you with a challenge, and an invitation, to take the next step in your journey. And know that you are loved. Amen

Reading: Mark 1:29-39 - Jesus Heals Many at Simon's House

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹ He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³² That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴ And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵ In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸ He answered, "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." ³⁹ And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Reflection on the reading

Imagine yourself gazing on the town of Capernaum. It is a fertile, prosperous and busy fishing port, set by the banks of the Galilee. Visualise a typical house of the time. – a cluster of rooms surrounded by two courtyards. Perhaps this was Peter's house, the place where his mother-in-law was cured. Is this the nearest Jesus had to a home?

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Gaze on all the ordinary events that went on there – the cooking and cleaning and washing. Smell the wood fire, and the fish being grilled for supper. Listen to the chatter and the laughter and the quiet breathing of sleepers at night. Experience the peace and calm that this haven provided for Jesus.

Consider how Mark is describing the rapid progress of Jesus' ministry, the swiftness of his travels and the urgency of his response. The passage starts with the words 'as soon as': this is only the end of the first full day of his ministry – a Sabbath day, and no rest for Jesus is possible.

Consider how Jesus is declaring his identity and his purposes by his actions. Notice that there are not yet any proclamations. Even so, Jesus is in danger of being overwhelmed by the sheer weight and volume of human need and expectation, for 'everyone is looking for you'. Consider how he will retain the strength to respond to this scale of demand.

Faced with the pressure of everything around him Jesus gets up early to be able to find somewhere quiet where he can be alone to pray.

At this point I would like to share with you a poem

When Jesus looked o'er Galilee
so blue and calm and fair,
upon her bosom, could he see
a Cross reflected there?

When in the hush of eventide,
cool waters touched his feet
was it a hymn of Calvary's road
He heard the waves repeat?

When sunrise dyed the lovely deeps,
and sparkled in His hair,
O did the light rays seem to say:
a crown of thorns He'll wear?

But when the winds triumphantly
Swept from the open plain,
the Master surely heard the song:
The Lord shall live again!

Contemplate a solitary place where you can best pray. Where would you choose? Perhaps its down on the beach, where you can hear God speak in the roar of the waves? Or a wood where you hear him whisper in the rustle of the leaves; a garden, where you see his hope in the new buds opening? Perhaps at the foot of a mountain, where your eyes strain to see the summit, tantalizingly near yet unreachable; or the peak, where the world is spread out beneath you in all its detail, diversity and fragility; a desert, where the wind blows new shapes in the sand every day?

Prayers of intercession

God of old foundations, and new beginnings form and reform us in your image, fill us with your eternal love for all your creation.

Kindle and nurture in us a zeal to care for and protect the earth and all its inhabitants.

Before time was, you breathed your word over the formless void, formed rivers and oceans, wild forests, and the desert wilderness.

You made the air clear and clean. Help us, to tread carefully on the sacred gift of your creation, and make good the damage caused by human thoughtlessness and selfishness.

God of old foundations, and new beginnings, renew and refresh us with your healing hand, drive out the ailments of our bodies and the fevers of our souls, nurture in us a spirit of calm peace and quiet strength.

When we were soil and senseless elements you formed us in your image and breathed your uncontainable spirit into our fragile bodies.

Help us when we struggle in caring for this holy gift,

Heal those weakened by known and unknown ailments,

Strengthen those exhausted by explained and unexplained conditions,

Bind the wounds of the broken-hearted,

Bring peace to all that are faint and weary.

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God of old foundations, and new beginnings,
Enable and enfold us in your caring arms,
Cast out the demons of destructive conflict and unjust power,
You rejoice when we live in love and harmony.
Give our leaders your wisdom when we disagree about human occupation and settlement,
bless us with your compassion in caring for the weak and vulnerable,
Fire in us a passion for justice that transcends human borders,
Break down the walls of hatred in our communities,
And build bridges of love where differences are perceived.
God of old foundations, and new beginnings, we seek you in places that are familiar to us,
help us to see you also in strange and unexpected places.
Send us out to all to proclaim your message of rebirth and renewal to all people,
Lead us in the path of righteousness, in the name and power of our Saviour, your son
Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn: Jesus lover of my soul

1 Jesus, lover of my soul,
let me to thy bosom fly,
while the nearer waters roll,
while the tempest still is high;
hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
till the storm of life is past;
safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last!

2 Other refuge have I none;
hangs my helpless soul on thee;
leave, ah! leave me not alone,
still support and comfort me.
All my trust on thee is stayed,

all my help from thee I bring;
cover my defenceless head
with the shadow of thy wing.

3 Plenteous grace with thee is found,
grace to cover all my sin;
let the healing streams abound;
make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the fountain art;
freely let me take of thee;
spring thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.

Charles Wesley

Blessing

The Lord is the Everlasting God, and our God loves us, more than we can possibly know,
and the divine is inviting us to travel the path set out before us.
Complete in us, O Lord, the work you have begun.