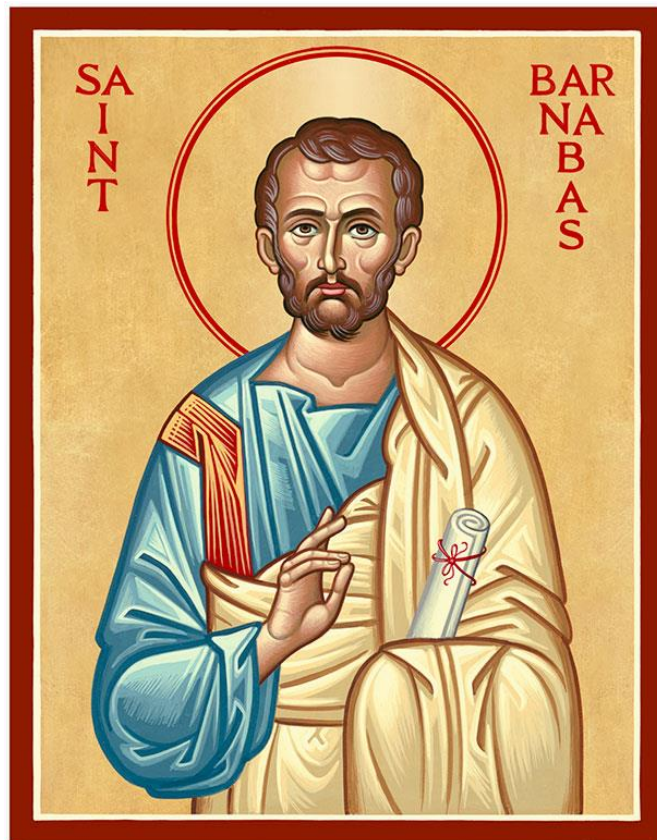


Saint Barnabas' Scottish Episcopal Church

4 Moredun Park View
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Magazine Autumn 2024

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The Winter 2024-25 edition of the St Barnabas' magazine will be issued in late November or very early December.

Contributions should be given or sent by mid-November to the editor, Philip Sawyer (philipsawyer@cantab.net).

Rector's letter

So far this year I have done fewer sick or home communions than at any time in the 33 years I have been at St. Barnabas'. This marks a significant change in the demographic of the age of the congregation over the past 10 years or so, during which time many elderly (and, sadly, some not so elderly) faithful stalwarts have passed on. Yet, by the grace of God alone, new, mainly younger people have joined the congregation, many of whom are playing an active part in the life of the church.

Another unexpected and remarkable blessing for us all is the increasing attendance at the Wednesday 12.30 pm service, where we regularly welcome people from other congregations and, sometimes, some of the staff of The Bethany Christian Trust. I do hope that you are encouraged by these signs of new life, and I thank you for the way in which you make people feel welcome and included – this is so important. Could it be that the seating lay-out forced on us by COVID, and which we have retained, makes for a less formal setting for worship, especially on a Wednesday when at times the attendances are similar to those on a Sunday?

Any suggestions to encourage and enable more people to attend either service – or both services! – will always be welcomed; please contact me or a member of the Vestry.

As we all know, however, serious illness is no respecter of age; at present we have a number of our congregation who are suffering in such a situation. Please pray that they will make a full recovery, and remember in your prayers their close families who suffer

with them. May the healing power of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rest and remain with them all.

My thanks to all who prepared for and made the Bishop's recent visit so well organised and, I hope, successful. The Vestry members seemed encouraged by what he said about the future sustainability of the congregation, a subject that will continue to be on the agenda of future Vestry meetings and of the AGM. Any comments and suggestion will always be welcome.

We are fortunate to be able once again to present, beginning in mid-September, the Scripture Union's 7-week "Bible Alive" course at P5 level in both Craigour Park and Gilmerton Primary Schools. This will be delivered by a local ecumenical team. Please pray that the children and teachers may be influenced by God's message of salvation for them.

Your friend and Priest,

David



Special dates and times for your diary
(in St. Barnabas' unless otherwise stated)

September	
Sunday 15 th 2.30 pm	SEECAT AGM Liberton Kirk Halls.
Saturday 21 st Meet at 10.40 am at the Roslin War Memorial	SEECAT pilgrimage walk; Roslin to St. Catherine's Well (the Balm Well in the grounds of the Toby Carvery).
Wednesday 25 th 12.30 pm	Prayer service followed by Bible study.
Saturday 28 th 10.00 am – 4.00 pm	SEECAT day retreat Liberton Northfield Church
Sunday 29 th 10.30 am	Dedication Festival Service. Vestry meeting after the service.
October	
Wednesday 2 nd 12.30 pm	Holy Communion followed by a shared lunch and a talk about Arran by Lily Johnstone.
Sunday 6 th 2.30 pm	Harvest Festival.
Tuesday 8 th 7.30 pm	Area Council meeting Old St. Paul's.
Wednesday 9 th 12.30 pm	Holy Communion followed by lunch provided by the Bethany Christian Trust and an opportunity to find about the trust's work in the Moredun area.
Thursday 24 th Evening	Diocesan Synod St. Paul's and St. George's

Wednesday 30 th 12.30 pm	Prayer service followed by Bible study.
November	
Sunday 3 rd 2.30 pm	Holy Communion for All Saints and All Souls.
Wednesday 6 th 12.30 pm	Holy Communion followed by a shared lunch, and games organised by Lib Anderson.
Sunday 10 th 10.30 am	Remembrance Sunday
Sunday 24 th 10.30 am	Christ the King
December	
Sunday 1 st 2.30 pm	Advent Sunday

If anyone is unable to attend church but would like to receive Communion, please contact either the Rector or Revd. Alice Anderson (contact details on the inside back page).

The date of the church's Annual General Meeting will be arranged at the Vestry Meeting on 29th September and notified to members of the congregation thereafter.

Please contact the Rector for dates of services at the Erskine and Gilmerton care homes; these services are arranged only a month in advance.

The greatest show on earth **by Peter Millar in his *A Candle in the Window***

Taylor Swift recently (7-9 June 2024) held three concerts in Edinburgh and each performance was enjoyed by 77,000 people. Commentators said it was the largest outdoor concert ever to be held in Scotland.

There are three Taylor Swifts: the musician, the celebrity and the performer. All three have made her one of the most famous people in the world but it is perhaps the third, the relentless energy, the wit, the ways she cackles and shimmies with joy that make her shows among the greatest on earth.

Several people who go to her shows say that they have been part of a spiritual experience. Her present show called *Eras* deals with many of the themes about our human journey. The journalist Sarah Carson expressed that in these words:

“Seeing Taylor Swift live feels like we are singing along to the soundtrack to our lives, not hers. But you don’t have to be a ‘Swiftie’ (as her devotees are known) to be stunned by *Eras*. This 46 song, three-hour 20 minute odyssey through 11 albums of girlhood to womanhood is a remarkable feat – of imagination, range, fashion, athleticism, high production and collective catharsis – that demonstrates, for anyone who questions it, exactly how she became the biggest pop star on the planet”.

Over many years I have often written about how we understand spirituality in what I believe we too easily call a 'secular society'. In her own inimitable way, Taylor Swift sings of some of the themes which have been core to philosophical and theological thinking for centuries. The journey within our human hearts will go on till the end of time in its trillions of manifestations, and that is why I believe that performers like Taylor are so significant in our times.

I think it may be true to say that thousands of the young people who follow her and are moved by her songs would know very little about traditional faith whether Christian or other. In Edinburgh, over three days, her singing touched the lives of 165,000 people from diverse backgrounds. That figure is important, for a recent study indicated that the total membership of the National Church of Scotland was 66,000 – many of whom do not attend any church regularly. These numbers indicate not that God is absent from our world but that there are many different ways of understanding transcendence. There are many authentic mentors in our world, and young people like Taylor are among them.

We may not be into pop music in any way, but what is necessary for us all in our times is to have an exploratory heart and mind when it comes to matters of faith and institutional religion. Vilayat Inayat Khan (1916-2004), a teacher of meditation and of the traditions of Sufism wrote some words which are so relevant for any discussions about spirituality and how it is expressed:

“the human spirit lives on creativity and dies in conformity and routine”. Or in the words of Nicolas Berdyaev: “God demands newness from humanity: God awaits the works of human freedom”.



The Rector's sermon, Sunday 16th June 2024

Collect: Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts whereby we call you Father: give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Readings: Ezekiel 17, vv.22-end;

2 Corinthians 5, vv.6-17; Mark 4, vv.26-34.

Recently here in St. Barnabas' I referred to a 3-part TV programme that recounted the stories of survivors of D-Day 80 years ago; I pointed out that we should be truly grateful that we live in a free democratic country, even if at present the reputation of politicians is at an all-time low. Yet we do have a free vote. Last week a visitor from Inverbervie was worshipping with us; she was here to canvass this constituency on behalf of her son who lives here and who is standing as an Independent candidate in the forthcoming General Election.

Whatever your political persuasion, I hope that you will agree that it is an important aspect of true democracy that anyone is able to stand in any of our elections. Yes, you do need a bit of money, and you

may well lose your deposit; however, unlike the USA Presidential Election, you don't need to have millions of dollars backing your effort. Maybe in the House of Representatives and in the Senate anyone has a chance, but I suspect that even then you need quite a lot of financial backing to run a campaign. Whatever is wrong with this country, we do have 'freedom' – a gift won by the sacrificial duty of our military forces and many others in those bleak days between the evacuation from Dunkirk and the final victory in 1945 – a victory not only for the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, but for much of Europe that had been conquered by Hitler. Sadly some countries remained under Communist oppression for another 45 years, and now we are seeing the freedom of Ukraine threatened once again.

The Collect for the day (see above) includes the following words that drew my attention:

“Give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service that we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God; through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord.”

Today's readings, including the Psalm, are not concerned with war, with victory over enemies, or with gaining freedom from oppression; so what are the freedom and liberty that are mentioned in the Collect?

In my life I have done things that I now regret: I have spoken words that I should not have spoken and wish that I could take back; I have not done a lot of

things that I should have done; I have been careless, thereby hurting other people; I have wasted time on things that were self-centred when I could have been serving others. I hope, however, that you will agree that I am not depressed or disillusioned with life, nor have I given up trying to be a better person. I give quite a lot of time to serve others in various ways for no remuneration or status. This freedom from the sins and failings of my life is due to my Christian faith – my belief that God loves me as one of His precious children, and that he sent His Son into the world to live and die for us so that we, through repentance and through acknowledging our faults and failings to Him, could find complete forgiveness through the endless stream of mercy and grace flowing from the Cross of Jesus Christ.

When we humbly accept that forgiveness, knowing that it stems from His unconditional love for us, we can embrace a freedom that encourages us to serve the one who has won that freedom for us. We can experience that tremendous load of guilt, missed opportunities, regret, and anguish for past errors being lifted off our souls and bodies – a load that but for His sacrifice for us, might have crushed us into depression, addiction, or even suicide. We then feel taller and stronger, and more truly alive in the power of the Holy Spirit than we have ever done before.

This is the freedom known to those incredibly courageous men, women, and even children who are even in our own day being persecuted to death for their Christian faith, but who refuse to deny it, preferring to

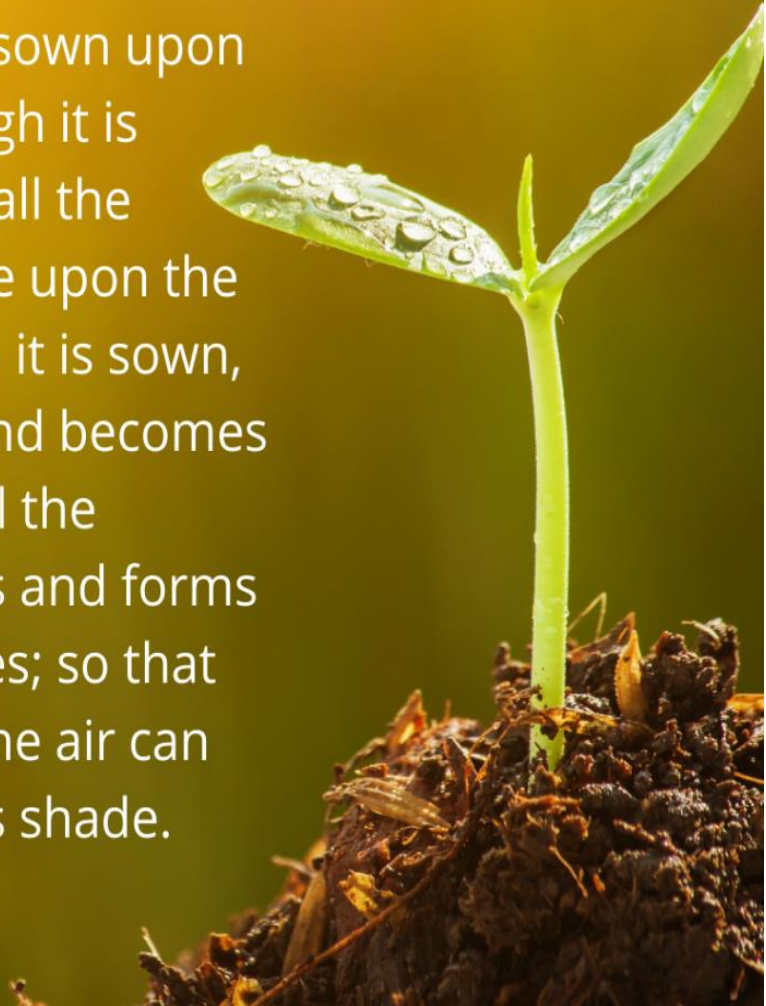
die in the sure faith of being welcomed into the everlasting freedom of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Once we have grasped that we are sinners pardoned by the Blood of Christ, we are, as St. Paul puts it in today's Epistle, a "new creation"; we have a new unburdened outlook on life and death; we feel safe and secure, enfolded in the love of God and in the peace of God, a peace that passes all understanding, that defies definition in human terms because it proceeds directly from God. In that terrible conflict to free Europe 80 years ago, so many people faced death almost every day, but found solace in the belief that death was not the end but the beginning of something more glorious and more liberating than words could describe.

As redeemed sinners who are part of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, we may feel small and insignificant, weak and ill-equipped to serve God; but in that parable in today's Gospel, Jesus likens the Kingdom of heaven to a tiny seed that grows into a great shrub. Each one of us who enjoys the freedom of a redeemed sinner can be inspired by the Holy Spirit to do great things in God's service, all to His honour and glory and not in our own self-interest.

[The kingdom of God] is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade.

Mark 4:31-32



Rev'd. Alice Anderson's sermon

Sunday 23rd June 2024

Gospel: Mark 5, 21-43.

I had been reading about a pastor named Phil; he had a new young assistant. It was usual practice for them to meet regularly in Phil's office to plan the worship.

One day, when they met as usual, the assistant could not help noticing that a constant stream of people came into the office, calling Phil away from the work that he was planning. The assistant asked Phil: "How do you ever get any work done with all of these interruptions?" Phil leaned back in his chair, smiled, and said: "The interruptions are where real ministry begins."

In today's Gospel we read how Jesus was interrupted from doing what he was doing. In Mark's Gospel we find that Jesus had more than 35 interruptions. One of these is described in Mark 5 verses 1-5.

Jesus was interrupted when four men carried to him a paralysed man who was in need of healing. As we all know, interruptions often come at inconvenient times, and we do not always deal with them well. But how did Jesus deal with them?

He handled them well and with compassion; people were a priority for Jesus; he cared about them, and still does today for you and me. He could see peoples' needs, and he cared. Our world needs this compassion here and now; we are the instruments of Jesus' compassion.

Jesus' way of dealing with the result of these interruptions is important to us all. He needed to retreat, to recharge his batteries, and to show his need for God to help him. He would often go away with his disciples or go to a remote place to pray.

We often forget our need for God and go off on our own, forgetting that what we do is for God's glory not our own.

There is another point that I need to make about today's Gospel reading: touch seemed to be important. We see that in the story of the woman with the haemorrhage who touched Jesus' robe, and in the story of Jesus touching Jairus' daughter. Today touching is taboo to some people, but I think that it is important.

An article was written about the power of touch, and many studies have apparently been written about the devastating effect on infants if they are deprived of human touch. This is true for all of us.

Years ago I went to visit someone; we had a chat and a cup of tea. When I was leaving, I gave this person a hug and was astonished when she said: "Alice, that's the first time in years that someone has touched me." She had appreciated the hug. With all the rules and

regulations we have today, maybe we should ask peoples' permission to hug them.

Touch can mean a lot to people. Jesus knew that in the case of the woman who touched his robe.

In today's Gospel we read about Jesus healing two women: one, Jairus' daughter, was 12 years old and had a life-threatening fever; the other was older and had been ill for many years.

Jairus' daughter was not just any girl; her father was the leader of the synagogue, so his daughter was a member of an important family. Jairus was so worried about his daughter that he walked up to Jesus in the middle of a large crowd and fell at Jesus' feet, begging him to come to heal his daughter.

Jesus started walking towards Jairus' house when he was interrupted: another woman entered the scene. This woman had suffered haemorrhaging for many years; and as a result she was considered unclean and had to remove herself from contact with other people. She had probably been isolated for many years, perhaps not even touched; she would have been pushed to the margins of society. I wonder how many people today are in a similar position and are in need of help.

The woman mustered the courage to push through the crowd and to touch the hem of Jesus' robe. Jesus knew at once that someone had touched him. I am sure that when he saw the woman he understood both her

need and her courage. He said to her: “Daughter, your faith has made you well.”



He drew close to her by calling her “daughter”; she was loved for who she was. We are all God’s children, his sons and daughters; what a privilege that is!

When Jesus saw Jarius’ daughter he touched her. He took her by the hand and asked the girl to get up. To touch a dead body would have been deemed to be unclean; Jesus makes the unclean clean.

Jesus touched other people: he touched Peter’s wife’s mother on the hand and took away her fever (Matthew 8, 14-15); he touched the eyes of two blind

men and gave them sight (Matthew 9, 27-31); he touched the ears and tongue of a man who was deaf and mute and gave him hearing and speech; he touched a leper to make him clean (Mark 1, 40).

These touches tell us something about the power of Jesus, the power that cares and heals. We thank Jesus for showing and teaching us about compassion, which is much needed in our world today.



The Raising of Jairus' Daughter

Margaret Gere (1878–1965)

The Cheltenham Trust and Cheltenham Borough Council

Charities supported by St. Barnabas' Church

Bethany Christian Trust

Ending homelessness in Scotland...one person at a time. That's what we're all about. Every year, thanks to people like you, we are supporting nearly 7,000 people in Scotland.

We're working with individuals and local communities across Scotland to prevent and end homelessness. We support families, young people, rough sleepers and people recovering from addiction. The need for our services is growing and your support is vital.

<https://www.bethanychristiantrust.com>

South-east Edinburgh Foodbank

At St. Barnabas', donations in kind can be left in the box that is beneath the table just inside the church door.

The following are always needed: cereal, soup, pasta, rice, tinned tomatoes/pasta sauce, lentils, beans and pulses, tinned meat, tinned vegetables, tea/coffee, tinned fruit, biscuits, UHT milk, fruit juice.

When possible, the foodbank will also provide essential non-food items such as toiletries and hygiene products.

It is possible to support the foodbank financially; details are on the web-site:

<https://www.edinburghse.foodbank.org.uk>

Please note that if you donate on line to the foodbank, you will receive an e-mail acknowledgement from Blythswood Care. If you wish your donation to go to the south-east Edinburgh

foodbank rather than to the wider work of Blythswood Care, you should make that clear in an e-mail reply.

Barnabas Fund

Barnabas Fund works to provide hope and aid for the persecuted Church, from Christians, to Christians, through Christians.

<https://www.barnabasfund.org>

Copies of *Barnabas Aid*, the Barnabas Fund magazine, can be found in the church.

Mercy Ships

Worldwide, 5 billion people lack access to safe, affordable, timely surgery. Many of them live in developing countries where healthcare infrastructure is limited or non-existent, or where there's a shortage of trained healthcare providers.

Mercy Ships uses modern hospital ships to bring world-class volunteer medical professionals directly to the places they're needed most. Our ships are the most efficient way to bring a state-of-the-art hospital to regions where clean water, electricity, and medical facilities and personnel are limited or non-existent. Instead of trying to build the facilities, we need to bring life-changing surgeries to ports around the world.

We train local healthcare providers and improve medical infrastructure; we stock our ships with a supply of vehicles so we can reach remote areas!

Web-site:

<https://www.mercyships.org.uk>

Rev'd. Deryck Collingwood's sermon

Sunday 28th July 2024

Gospel: John 6: 1-21

Sometimes the disciples must have thought Jesus was quite bonkers! We're told his family did; disciples were like family – they must have done too! According to John, feeding 5000 people was his idea, and they then had to make it possible.

Stories of feeding a multitude are there in the other Gospels but, as always, John has much more in mind, which is why we stick with this chapter for the next **four** weeks, moving from this story into rather a lot about the Bread of Life, or living bread.

When it comes to it, you can't get much more basic than the disciples' question "Where are we to get bread for these people to eat?"

Christine and I used to have a close relationship with Mary's Meals, a little charity at Dalmally, in Argyll, which started some years ago trying to feed as many children as possible around the world – children who missed out on their education because they were scavenging for food for their siblings or entire families. Mary's Meals are now feeding nearly 2.5 million children every day at school, to make sure they get there and get an education. But so much more is left to be done!

We hear that the gap between rich and poor in our own country continues to grow; and the gap between rich and poor countries may be even greater. So much remains to be done, more than we could ever imagine. Well-meaning folk keep working away to improve things, but someone else, it seems, is always working away to undo such efforts and reap more profit for themselves. Do we get closer to a solution, or will that gap just keep growing until it all explodes?

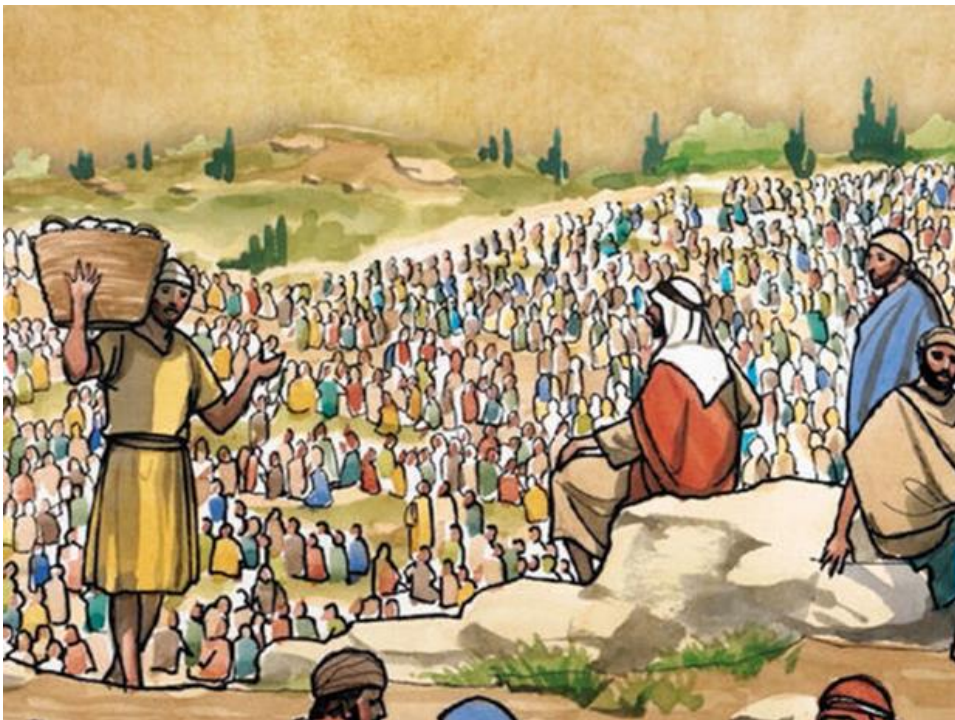
However much we may wish to change things, it seems that succeeding generations have as great if not a greater challenge to face than we have had ourselves. Jesus was realistic when he said: "The poor will always be with you!"

In this story, St John paints Jesus in images that his first readers could not fail to recognise. The story was bound to be reminiscent of that story of Elisha, having a totally inadequate supply of bread, yet miraculously feeding a huge number of people, with left-overs too!

John picks up details like the loaves being of barley; that reinforces a link to Passover, the time of the barley harvest and at the heart of our eucharistic celebrations.

Elisha was revered as a man of God, taking on the mantle of Elijah, the greatest of the prophets. In a range of miraculous ways he demonstrated redemption and new life. What Elisha did in feeding 100, Jesus did for 5000. And then they filled a symbolic twelve baskets from the fragments gathered up afterwards. What is John telling us here? Jesus is this living bread, every bit

as fundamental to our existence as bread itself. It is no surprise that our Eucharist is so central to our Christian life and journey – the true and living bread that we share around this table. So gathering those symbolic twelve baskets is about the gathering of tribes, of whole peoples in Christ too – the fulfilment of all things in Christ.



One of the earliest Eucharistic liturgies that we have, known as the Didache, includes these words: “As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountain tops and after being harvested was made one, so let your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, for yours is the power and the glory through Christ Jesus for ever.” What Jesus does in allowing his body to be broken, enables us to be brought together in him.

In the story, Jesus made a point of going over to the other side of the lake: into Gentile territory, where people

were perceived as 'different'. So in feeding the 5000, Jesus meets the needs of strangers; people who weren't thought of as 'safe'. It was completely unexpected by his disciples.

His prayer, for gathering us in, doesn't pretend that the problems of the world will suddenly be sorted. But it keeps Christ's disciples looking towards that time when Christ **will** fill all in all... in the words of Ephesians: "when with all the saints, we may know the breadth and length and height and depth, and be filled with all the fullness of God."

The disciples were then sent on ahead, in the boat, back across the water. A storm blew up and they got a big fright. But Jesus' eventual presence in that dark night brings them to where they were wanting to be: immediately they touch the land they were heading for.

We too are with them in that boat. We too have heard the promises – and we've experienced fear and helplessness in dark times also. We've been there in each generation and we know we'll be there again.

We have to be confronted by similar questions, in ourselves and each in our own generation:

- Where are we to be sent? – and,
- Where we believe we are sent, is that really where we want to be?
- What is it that we truly hope for?
- What do we really need for the journey?
- What do we not really need, that may hold us back?

- Do we trust this Jesus, this 'Bread of Life', to provide us with the resources we will need?

These are basic questions concerning the basics of life – life for all people, not just ourselves. At times it may seem easier to justify investing billions in research into some possible alternative or parallel existence elsewhere in the universe than it is to invest even a fraction of what that may cost into sorting out the basic living conditions of our fellow human beings on earth.

We can't just put the problem 'out there'. For sometimes it may also be easier to absolve ourselves of responsibility for other people's living conditions, as if that had little or nothing to do with our own comfort, and easier to lay greater responsibility on those who find themselves within the problem.

But Jesus offers living bread to the living, on one level for living a life of fulfilment; on another level for sharing a vision of fulfilment that is to be shared with all, including those whose life experience has been vastly different from our own. We may have to ask ourselves how that might feel.

In offering us living bread, Jesus offers himself, and in so doing sets a pattern for us all to follow.

(Mary's Meals: www.marysmeals.org.uk)

Sermon by the Bishop of the Diocese of Edinburgh Sunday 4th August 2024

Readings: Ephesians 4,1-16; John 6, 24-35

In the past week we have seen, played out on TV and on the streets of our cities, the characteristics of two sharply contrasting cultures; indeed, quite literally a clash of cultures. Two utterly different ways of responding to the horrific events in Southport.

On the one hand, a community in trauma, its peace and security invaded and undermined by the unthinkable atrocity of the murder and maiming of children. A community united in loss, reaching out in care and support of those whose lives have been ripped apart.

On the other hand, a collection (not a community in any real sense) of disaffected, angry people who have chosen to use others' misery as an excuse to express racist bigotry and to wreak mindless retribution on the very forces we rely on to keep us safe.

Two orders (although one is committed to disorder) in direct tension with each other – the one seeking to destroy, the other to defend and build up. This was evident in Southport, in Sunderland, and in several other cities and towns, in attacks on mosques and Muslim businesses. Yet we have seen too how many, of all faiths and none, have rushed in to defend and restore people of goodwill.

There's nothing new about such a culture clash. It's evident, writ large indeed, throughout the Gospels. We've just heard part of John 6, an extended reflection on Jesus as the Bread of Life, which begins when Jesus takes 5 loaves of bread and a few fish and feeds 5000 people. The people are so impressed that they want to seize Jesus and force him to become their king. John's Gospel doesn't recount the story of how Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, but here are those temptations in a nutshell. And just as Jesus eludes Satan in the wilderness, so he slips skilfully away here, avoiding their attempts to define him in terms of the only model of power they understand.

In today's Gospel they ask for a sign, for apparently the sign they've just been given – a superabundant feeding, 12 baskets left over – isn't sufficiently impressive. They seem to need something more dramatic and conclusive than a quiet feeding. But Jesus, as we hear, gently points them to himself. "I am the bread. I am the one who relieves hunger and quenches thirst."

A culture clash. A collision between one set of values and another. One thrives on violent action, "eye for eye" vengeance. We understand where this comes from, of course. Peoples under occupation, as Jesus' nation was, or mired in deeply ingrained injustices, as so many are in the present day, build up an understandable anger and need for release. Yet we also see that this can trigger a pattern of violence, a suspicion of difference, a desire to eliminate 'the other', which can tip

a whole culture into a downward spiral that intensifies from one generation to the next. In contradiction to this, however, we are also aware of an upward spiral, fed by a longing for compassion and a desire to heal and forgive; strong movements of the heart that surge upwards in hope. It's clear where Jesus places himself in all this and, as we hear in the gospel reading, it's where he invites us to join him.

The reading from Ephesians echoes some of this. St Paul's words are addressed to the church, yet they shine with a vision which is relevant to the whole world.

“Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called,’ he says, ‘with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.”

As we reflect on the terrible events of the past week, it's not hard to see where this spirit has been in evidence.

Jesus always invites us to look above and beyond our selfish ambitions, and here in our gospel reading he presents a picture of a God who transcends our human ways of understanding power. He invites us into an exploration of Godly truth that both includes and transcends the everyday. Our bodily hunger is satisfied by bread – and no one should go hungry – but our spiritual hunger too is real, it too must be satisfied if we, as human beings are to flourish.

Just as in the Lord's Prayer we are taught to ask for our 'daily bread', meaning actual food, yet we also recognise that the food we ask for is as much for our

souls as our bodies. It's what we mean by sacrament (and by the sacrament we shall share in a moment), that bread and wine nourish us outwardly in our bodies, yes, but also deep within.

The crowd asks Jesus, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" We might ask the same. "You could start," Jesus replies, "by believing that I am sent by God." In one sense, in other words, we don't have to do anything because everything has been done, with plenty to spare. But this will only begin to make a difference to us and those around us when our listening to Jesus and our courage to trust him, and our willingness to tune into the continuous movement of the Holy Spirit in this world, begins to align us with the upward call, the upward spiral of God's way of compassion, love and unity.

None of this is easy, it wouldn't be much fun if it were, but the events of Southport, devastating thought they have been, give us reason not only to admit that God's way of love may be the right way, but also to recognise that deep down it is what most human beings long for and are made for.

+John



Rev'd. Deryck Collingwood's sermon
Sunday 25th August 2024

Readings: Joshua 24: 1-2a, 14-18; Ephesians 6: 10-20;
John 6: 56-69



This photo of the 'Stone of Witness' comes from Basel, Switzerland, dedicated at Pentecost in May 1989. Basel is where that country meets both France and Germany on the opposite bank of the Rhine. Further upstream, a chemical factory had recently polluted the Rhine and all three countries.

It was the first gathering of the churches in Europe, Western and Eastern, since the Reformation – maybe 700 delegates and a couple of thousand attending the ‘fringe’, all celebrating a first attempt to speak with a common mind.

The focus that week was ‘Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation’: seeking what we can affirm together, rather than those more ‘churchy’ debates about tradition and belief that tend to separate and divide us.

As well as church leaders, there were experts in different aspects of JPIC speaking , including what was then already known about global warming and climate change – we were told that at that time the total area of land being deforested around the world every year was equivalent to the size of Switzerland.

A passionate activist from India, Aruna Gnanadasan, spoke of thousands of acres of trees were being cut down in northern India and being turned into wooden crates to be filled with Indian apples, exported around the world. Indian people were thereby denied access to Indian apples as well as contributing to climate chaos... all in the name of ‘development’.

Difficult choices were to be made, but these were essentially choices to satisfy western ideas of ‘development’ – everything now had to be ‘developed’ and familiar lifestyles were being destroyed in the process.

At the end of the week, when a common statement on such matters had been achieved, there was a big Jamboree and worship service. This included the 'Stone of Witness', which now sits outside the cathedral in Basel.

In our readings this morning we hear Joshua presenting the people with another difficult choice: you can follow the gods of your ancestors with that lot across the river, or follow the local gods here – or you can serve the One true God, the Lord: **choose** whom you will serve!

We might reflect on gods that we have created around us since those days: gods of wealth and development included. Ironically, I have often found myself saying that we have made something of a god of 'choice' itself. It seems everyone should be able choose who or what they wish to be. There **is** an upside of course, that a younger generation growing up expecting such choice is likely to be much more tolerant of people who choose differently, than many of an older generation.

We hear too of Paul writing to Christians in Asia Minor, people who suffered dreadful discrimination because they refused to buy into the associations and values of the Greek and Roman world. As a result, they lost livelihoods and status alike. It was a tough choice with sometime dire consequences.

And in the Gospel, Jesus poses another hard choice before his followers. They were more than happy

to be fed as part of the multitude, but horrified at the thought of eating his body or drinking his blood. What then would they make of seeing him ascend to heaven, where flesh and blood would have little meaning and, perhaps more importantly, he himself would be free to be available to **all** people, a universal Christ, coming about through his own suffering and death? It was a tough choice they were invited to follow.

Christine and I recently watched Mel Gibson's 'Braveheart' again. It struck me that we often have more time for the Bravehearts of the world who defend the idea of freedom with a ruthless determination, that becomes pure violence if necessary – whether that has to do with immigration and wealth-preservation or with national boundaries being crossed as in Ukraine and elsewhere. Resistance and protection are values that are happily passed on to younger generations.

It is so different with the choices Jesus makes and asks his followers to make. Do we, as 'church', truly believe that Jesus offers the answers that are appropriate to address the world's problems? Are we not also appalled by his example in calling us to follow the way of the cross, a way of suffering and death?

His is a way of denying self, putting the needs of others before our own, so eloquently spelled out in Philippians 2:1-11, where we hear of Jesus being content to give up any sense of equality with God and take human form. It sets the context for what we might know as the way of the cross.

But when we hear, as we have this week, from the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, the USA being offered the choice to live as each one wants to live, there is something serious at stake; we know there's more to it. The implications of such 'choice' make for ever-greater divisions between sections of that society and with other nations around the globe.

And when we hear, as we have, that despite an acknowledgement that Palestine and Palestinians should be free, another \$20 bn is being offered to Israel to perpetuate the destruction of what little remains of Palestinian civilisation, we recognise the hypocrisy and know there are implications stretching far beyond an American election...

... not to mention the fear that now seems to surround the use of that easily-monopolised "anti-semitic" accusation that is tinged as if only applying to the Jewish community, when any word or action against Palestine or Arabs more generally can rightly be labelled "anti-semitic", for they are all 'semitic' peoples, at odds with each other; or any desire to question everything that happened prior to October 7th last year, in terms of the steady, if more low-key, intimidation and disintegration of Palestinian communities in the West Bank as well as in Gaza.

Life gets very complicated, but it appears that we want to ask people to make choices as if in a straightforward and easy manner.

That 'Stone of Witness' in Basel was intended to demand our attention and call us to repent of the pain we cause one another. Had it been designed as a wall-plaque, it might indeed call our attention to stop and take notice and ponder. The fact that it sits in the ground outside a cathedral might make it look more like a gravestone, reminding us of past times long-since gone, however regretful that may be.

Jesus, however, offers himself that we may have life, and life in abundance, in all its fulness. We can choose. What choice, I wonder, would we prefer to pass on to succeeding generations?



Editorial end-note

Amidst all the news about Taylor Swift and Oasis, it should be mentioned that the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF), the Fringe Festival, and the Edinburgh Book Festival took place in August 2024, and will take place again in August 2025.

The EIF's Director since 2023 has been the world-famous violinist Nicola Benedetti; she is the first Scot, the first woman, and the first professional performing musician to be Director of this great festival, which brings together musicians, dancers, actors and many others – including visitors – from across the world.

Many performers are affected by the cost of renting property in Edinburgh. The following appeared in *The Guardian* newspaper on Tuesday 3rd September:

“Letting agencies are charging up to £7,000 a night for rentals in Edinburgh next August after Oasis announced three concerts at Murrayfield stadium during the annual festival period.

“Nearly all the city's hotel rooms have been reportedly booked up for the three Oasis concert dates, with the last rooms on offer for more than £545 a night for a couple.

“While reasonably priced small flats and rooms are still on offer on the outskirts of the city, prices in the centre start at £420 a night in a shared dormitory, or up to £2,639 in a suite at the W Edinburgh hotel.”

Church administration

Vestry Secretary: Christine Collingwood.
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Church Treasurer: Elaine Houliston.

Lay Representative: Philip Sawyer.

Alternate Lay Representative: Lily Johnston.

People's Warden: Lily Johnston.

Rector's Warden: Linda Hay.

Ordinary members of the Vestry: Lib Anderson;
Yvonne Fenwick; Sandra Fyfe; Kirsty Hamilton;
Martin Veart.

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Services in St. Barnabas' Church

(see the "Dates for your diary" section inside this magazine for a note of any additions and/or changes)

Sunday

1st Sunday of each month at 2.30 pm
Holy Communion.

All other Sundays at 10.30 am
Holy Communion.

Wednesday

1st Wednesday of each month at 12.30 pm
Holy Communion.

All other Wednesdays at 12.30 pm
Prayer Service.

During Advent and Lent each Wednesday 12.30 pm
service is a celebration of Holy Communion

