

Barthol Chapel and Tarves Sunday 2 August 2020 9.45 for 10.00 am

Worship Materials



If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you.” (John 14:15-17)

INTRODUCTION

Several weeks ago I suggested setting apart a special space where you might spend time with God, both on Sunday mornings either on zoom or with the written worship materials from the web-site, and during the week.

Write down some words that describe what your community of faith means to you. Do you think these words fully and accurately describe that community?

Praise CH4 112 God whose almighty Word

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| <p>1. God whose almighty Word
Chaos and darkness heard,
And took their flight;
Hear us, we humbly pray,
And where the gospel day
Sheds not its glorious ray,
Let there be light!</p> | <p>3. Spirit of truth and love,
Life giving, holy dove,
Speed forth your flight!
Move o'er the water's face
Bearing the lamp of grace,
And in earth's darkest place
Let there be light!</p> |
| <p>2. Savior, who came to bring
On your redeeming wing
Healing and sight
Health to the sick in mind,
Sight to the inly blind,
Now to all humankind
Let there be light!</p> | <p>4. Blessed and holy Three,
Glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, love, might;
Boundless as ocean's tide,
Rolling in fullest pride,
Through the world far and wide,
Let there be light!</p> |

The Word of God: 1 John 4:1-4

4Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world. ⁴Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

Reflection

“I want to know the truth”. Although it is over twenty five years since the incident occurred, I ‘ve never forgotten those words. They were the words of a first year divinity student. And they were spoken in the Divinity Common Room at Aberdeen University. We were sitting drinking coffee trying to recover after a very complicated lecture in Systematic Theology! As any divinity student will tell you when you start University you discover there are more theories and understandings and interpretations of theology than you could ever imagine. And they don’t always sit comfortably with one another. And sometimes they seem to be in direct conflict with each other. It is not always easy to see through the theories to the truth behind. Hence those words, “I want to know the truth!” – honest heartfelt words spoken in the midst of a real struggle.

And it is a fact that truth can seem elusive. And sometimes in this world we have to make decisions and live and act as best we can on the knowledge we have at any particular time. We might think back to an age when people thought that the world was flat. That does not mean people were living a lie then. It is simply that greater knowledge has revealed that something different is true. And the reason that scientists continue to make new discoveries is that they recognise that what they know is not the full story.

But what does this mean when it comes to faith? What claims can we make to know the truth? What is the truth we claim to know? How confident can we be in our beliefs? What does this have to say to us about the Church and its mission?

There is a story of one minister who starts each of his enquirers’ classes with a jar full of beans. He asks his students to guess how many beans are in the jar, and on a big pad of paper writes down their estimates. Then, next to those estimates, he helps them make another list: their favourite songs. When the lists are complete, he reveals the actual number of beans in the jar. The whole class looks over their guesses, to see which estimate was closest to being right. The minister then turns to the list of favourite songs. "And which one of these is closest to being right?" he asks. The students protest that there is no "right answer"; a person's favourite song is purely a matter of taste.

The minister then asks, "When you decide what to believe in terms of your faith, is that more like guessing the number of beans, or more like choosing your favourite song?" Always, the minister says, from old as well as young, he gets the same answer: “Deciding what to believe is more like choosing a favourite song”. Perhaps you can sympathise with that. But of course as that minister concludes neither is a good analogy.

The bottom line is that while deciding what to believe in terms of our faith may not be like counting beans in a jar, nor is it like choosing our favourite song. We may not know all of the truth. But I believe that the God whom we worship today is true to his word and that this word points us to the deepest truth of all – the truth that gives life its purpose and meaning. And that truth is Jesus Christ.

Let me explain. Truth is one of the concerns of the author of the First Letter of John. Reading between the lines, it seems that in the early Church community there were people with all kinds of ideas and opinions about Jesus. In particular some were trying to argue that Jesus could not be both fully human and fully God. They said that Jesus only appeared to be human.

The writer of first John takes vehement issue with this. These false prophets as he refers to them in his letter are creating a division between the spiritual and the material. At its simplest they saw the spiritual world as being good and the material world as being evil. But to claim this was to ignore all that Jesus did and said and taught. It denies who Jesus was and is.

Over the last couple of weeks we have picked up key themes from the first letter of John. We have been assured by the writer that forgiveness and new life are to be found when we recognise that through Jesus life death and resurrection our stories are a part of God's greater story. We have heard how God's love revealed in Jesus has power to bring light into the darkest of places and times. It should come as no surprise then, to find the writer of that letter takes issue with the suggestion that Jesus was not fully human. After all if Jesus was not fully human, if Jesus did not share our human life and death, then how can his life, death and resurrection make any difference to us?

We may not have all the truth. We may not be able to understand some of the truths that God has revealed. We may get ourselves tied in knots as we try to explain them. But we can say these two things. Firstly, because God came into the world in the person of Jesus we can know that God loves and values this world. And secondly, because God came into the world and shared our human life and our human death we can share his risen life here and now, as well as for all eternity.

And we will be thinking a bit more about what this risen life looks like next week.

Pointers for Prayer

- Those suffering from or bereaved by the corona virus
- The NHS, its staff in hospitals and GP practices as well as the other emergency services and all care workers and volunteers
- The Government and Scottish Parliament and their advisers as they seek to guide us out of lockdown
- Those engaged in scientific research and development
- Those whose businesses are struggling and all who are facing redundancy and financial hardship
- Family, friends and neighbours, those most affected by the lock-down and those finding it difficult to move forward
- Those for whom shielding has paused
- Other people and situations who are in your hearts today
- The Church that we might offer a faithful witness to Christ through this time

Tarves Parish Church of Scotland. Registered Charity: SC 017161

CCLI: 2417487, 2417504, 241749

Barthol Chapel Parish Church of Scotland. Registered Charity: SC 010960

Praise 184 Sing to the Lord a joyful song

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| <p>1. Sing to the Lord a joyful song
Lift up your hearts, your voices
raise
To us his gracious gifts belong
To him our songs of love and
praise.</p> | <p>3. For strength to those who on him
wait
His truth to prove, his will to do,
Sing to our God, for he is great,
Trust in his name for it is true.</p> |
| <p>2. For life and love, for rest and food,
For daily help and nightly care
Sing to the Lord, for he is good,
And praise his name for it is fair.</p> | <p>4. Sing to the Lord of heaven and
earth,
Whom angels serve and saints
adore,
The Father, Son and Spirit, blest,
For whom be praise forevermore.</p> |

Blessing

Notices

Next Sunday 9.45am Joint Worship (Service commences 10.00am)

If you would like to be added to the e-mail list for the link to Sunday's live worship gathering on zoom or join in on your landline please contact:

Rob e-mail sessionclerk@bartholchapel.org or Susanna Tel 851345 or e-mail smbichard@aol.com.

Pastoral Matters

To contact the minister please Tel 851295 or e-mail aswindells@churchofscotland.org.uk

Care for the Community if you are aware of anyone in Tarves who needs help of any kind please contact Ruth 851887

Tuesday 10.00am Zoom Coffee Morning for the Totally Terrified! An hour of simple tech learning and conversation. Fun and laughter guaranteed! Tuesday 4 August 10.00am on Zoom. To register please e-mail aswindells@churchofscotland.org.uk and we will send you the link. All Welcome! Bring your own coffee! Please pass on the invitation to anyone you think might be interested.

Tuesday 11.00am Tarves Session Coffee Morning hosted by Susanna