

Worship at Home—Sunday 12 September 2021

Call to Worship

Almighty God, Creator, and Ruler of all,
we come this day to worship You
and to ask Your guidance upon our lives.

We come to be still,
we come to listen,
we come to be noisy,
and we come to offer ourselves to You.

Prepare our hearts to receive Your word
and up lift our spirits as we spend time together worshipping You,
so that when we leave this place of worship
we may feel renewed and refreshed.

Opening Prayer

Loving God,
we thank You for Your constant guidance in our lives
and for all the ways You encourage, challenge, strengthen and renew us.
We thank You that we still hear Your quiet words
whispering to us in the silence of our own hearts.
We thank You that through song, prayer, preaching, worship mission and service,
we are still able to hear Your voice.
Through fellowship and community,
we can feel Your presence in what we do and say.

We thank You that when we see the fields of corn
and hear the birds singing,
we are hearing You
and when the wind blows,
we feel You.

We thank You that through Christ's life,
work, teaching, death and resurrection
You speak to us
and that Your Holy Spirit inspires, comforts and empowers us each day.



It is with great sadness
that we have to
intimate the death of

Margaret Gordon
6 Stewart Crescent

Please pray for the
family

We thank You for the times we have felt lost
and have felt Your hand take hold of us
and lead us forward – through difficulties, life problems and illnesses.
We thank You for Your healing touch.

Be with us now, directing our ways
so that we may glorify You in all that we do and say.

All this we pray, for the sake and in the name of Your son Jesus Christ

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

The Scriptures

Psalm 62: v1-2; and 5-8

Truly my soul finds rest in God;
my salvation comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken

Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.
My salvation and my honour depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.
Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.

Luke 5: 12-15—Jesus Heals a Man

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him.

Then Jesus ordered him, “Don’t tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”

Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Sermon

Our reading from Luke 5 v 15 today tells us about the life of Jesus. “so much the report went abroad concerning him that great multitudes gathered to hear him and to be healed by him”.

Jesus was a very, very busy man, in much demand. Despite the busyness, and many exhausting hours healing, feeding, and preaching to multitudes, the next verse tells us “*Then he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed*”. In different translations of the bible, it says that he withdrew to the lonely place and prayed or in another translation, he withdrew to the desert and prayed.

Throughout his three-year ministry, we read in all four gospels how Jesus regularly went off by himself, leaving the disciples and the crowds behind him to be alone or by himself. In fact, after his baptism, and before his ministry began, he spent a long time in the wilderness by himself.

When we look at all the great leaders of the bible, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, Esther, Ruth—they were all people who spent time alone in Prayer. King David, the author of the Psalms prayed in Psalm 62:

“For God alone my soul awaits, in silence. From Him comes my salvation”.

I wonder how often each of us take that time to wait, to be alone, in silence.

Yet, I know that sometimes the appeal to go to the quiet place, or to be alone or just to wait can be off-putting.

That word . . . to wait! Just the very word irritates many people because it implies a potential waste of our time. We wait in queues; we wait for results—we wait for an operation . . . waiting seems to take too long. In fact, this whole experience of Covid has been one long experience of waiting—waiting to get to hold a grandchild, to get an operation, to have a holiday, to be allowed into our church.

But I think the words that really trouble many people most in this idea of going off to a quiet place to pray as Jesus did, are the words alone and lonely. The idea of going off to a deserted place or a wilderness might seem a bit scary.

In his book, “*Reaching Out*” the Christian author, Henri Nouwen explains the difference between what he defines as loneliness verses what he calls solitude.

Henri Nouwen writes that loneliness is indeed a universal cause of human suffering. Psychologists speak about it as the source of poor mental health from headaches or back pain to drug use, depression and even suicide.

Loneliness, according to Nouwen is like an empty, gnawing feeling, a needy, even desperate feeling. A difficult experience of isolation. Many people may experience loneliness after a loss or a bereavement. But we can even feel lonely in a big crowd or a big city, or anywhere we may feel different or excluded or unwanted. We wonder where the inspiration came from the Beatle's song lyrics "All the Lonely People, where do they all come from".

Nouwen understands that real loneliness can be painful. Nouwen described how silence and stillness is a place where many people are afraid to go because some people fear that the quiet will be like a meaningless abyss, an empty void of nothingness—so they avoid this in case it is painful. It is no wonder that people live restlessly to avoid the potential for loneliness: we distract ourselves with endless activities and Netflix, games on our phone . . . all to keep our minds occupied. Some people are genuinely afraid of feeling lonely.

A friend of mine shared with me that a secretary in her office had moved in together with a man who worked in the office downstairs. Over the course of a few months, she had remarked that she was not in love, nor did he treat her well, but it was better than being alone.

Just through Covid we have all tasted a little bit of such isolation. By our nature, human beings need to be in relationship and communion with others because this gives us a sense of meaning, belonging and purpose. We need love and connection and so to be starved of these things can be the root cause of real inner turmoil.

When we read of Jesus going off to the desert to be alone, we might decide it is easier to stick with our busyness and immerse our lives in copious distractions.

However, Henri Nouwen's book, "*Reaching Out*" clearly explains that being lonely and being alone are not one and the same thing. He articulates the real difference between what he calls suffocating loneliness and receptive solitude.

In solitude, we can find in being alone something entirely different from being lonely. It does not have to be a negative experience—in fact it can be entirely rewarding, fulfilling, and healing.

If loneliness is an emptiness, but solitude involves being fully present and in communion with ourselves and God. Solitude is to practice the presence of God. In our solitude we are not distracted, not running away, not afraid. We are able to be still, to take pleasure in and be fully aware of our own company and be fully at peace.

Because in our solitude we are not alone. When Jesus went off to the desert, to the quiet place or to sit in silence, he was not alone. He was tuning out the noisy demands and distractions in order to be fully present in the Spirit of God.

Throughout our bible scripture all faithful men and women spent time alone with God. Jacob wrestled with God, Amos walked with God, Esther fasted to focus on God.

A favourite teacher in Seminary encouraged all of us going into the ministry to understand that one must enter that quiet place, that complete stillness before one can meet the next dimension, the place where God is—where we find intimacy and communion with God. This is very different from our ideas of loneliness, but it is still something we learn. To be alone can be a marvellous thing. And it is not only marvellous, but it is essential to the Christian life.

There is a story of the priest who felt that his spiritual life was lacking. So, he went to a monk for spiritual advice and the monk said, “Go to your study each day and spend time along with God”. Well, he tried this for a few weeks, and it didn’t seem to be working. He told the monk; I went to my study, and I read lots of books about God, but I do not feel close to him. Then the monk said, “do not read books, just spend time with God” and the priest went off and a few weeks later, he said “No, I don’t feel much closer to God. I took some of my favourite religious records up to the study and I played them, but I don’t feel close to him”. The monk said, no music, no books. Just sit in silence with God.

Nouwen identified with this—how we frequently go from door to door, book to book, new fads, but real fulfilment can come when we leave the hustle and bustle of the world ‘out there’ and enter the world ‘within’ and practice being truly present with ourselves and with God who is love. This is why Jesus went off to the quiet place. Because prayer is like food. We can’t live without food. Food nourishes our bodies, but God’s love is the source of our whole life and who can live without that.

I came across a funny story about a sailing voyage that took place two hundred years ago. A large sailing vessel had just docked at Plymouth harbour after crossing the Atlantic. As the Captain stepped ashore, someone asked him, “Did you have a good voyage?” The captain replied, “Yes, we had a great voyage. The weather was so good that we only had to pray twice.”

Prayer is not just for getting through bad times. Prayer is about harnessing spiritual power that feeds our souls. I wonder is there any single one of us that does not yearn for that kind of power—the kind of spiritual power that was concentrated in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in Ephesians that in prayer we “having the eye of our hearts enlightened so that we truly know the hope to which God calls us”. Let us never underestimate the good that can come from sitting still in the quiet place.

Like the Psalmist, like Jesus, like so many Christian contemplatives, when we go to be with God alone, we too can have the eyes of our hearts enlightened by God. We can come to know ourselves as we really are. And we can listen to the source of life—God.

When our aloneness become solitude, we are able to invite God we are faced with truth. All our lies and self-denial about life fade away. He can heal us, forgive us, reframe our self-perspectives, our identity. To show us what we really need as opposed to the things we think we need because the world

convinced us. We can be whole. We can catch sight of the person God intends us to be when we go to the desert places to wait upon him in silence. And when we wait on God, we will find that it is God himself who leads us into prayer and enlightens the eyes of our hearts. Thomas Merton puts it, "God will invite us to participate in the intimate life of God himself".

I will simply finish with some words from James Montgomery who wrote:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire
Uttered or unexpressed
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast
Prayer is the Christian's vital breath

Prayer of Intercession

A Prayer after the Second Summer in a Pandemic By Jay Blossom

Creator of the stars of night:
You set the seasons and the tides
You set the planets in the sky.
You water the earth with refreshing rain
And bless us day by day with moonrise and sunset

Give us, we pray a renewed appreciation for your handiwork
Whether at home or away, grant us zeal to love our neighbours,
To lift the downcast and encourage the faint hearted.

Redeemer of a suffering world:
You see our sin and frailties with unblinking eye.
You mourn our petty jealousies and unchecked greed,
You weep at our hard-hearted tolerance for injustice,
And offer yourself as our guide, our friends and our saviour.

Make us, we ask, into your hands and feet.
As we forge new connections and repair old ones,
Empower us to Serve Christ, live Christ
and be Christ wherever we may be.

Sanctifier of the faithful:
You bless our celebrations and longed-for-reunions,
Our birthdays and graduations, our childbirths and weddings.
You meet your children at postponed funerals,
At the bedsides of the sick and in the lonely hours-
You transform turmoil into peace.
And dry every tear-filled eye.

Refine us and purify us, we beg,
Strengthen us to become more wholly your people:
Loving and beloved, forgiving and forgiven,
Caring and cared for, life-giving and alive.

And, at all times, and in all places, draw us ever closer to you, the author and finisher of our faith, who lives forever and ever. Amen

Blessing

The God who called us here
is now sending us out into the world
to put the words we have heard into action.
As we have worshipped together
now let us leave here renewed and refreshed
to share the good news with those we meet.
Amen

If you plan to attend the Kirk please let Nina know by phoning or emailing her between 10 am and 12.30 pm on Thursday—this is for “track and trace”.

Current regulations require:

- ◆ face masks must still be worn.
- ◆ worship still requires that we stick to the one-metre social distance rule.
- ◆ There will be sanitizing stations.



Currie Kirk Guild

The Guild made a triumphant return to face-to-face meetings in the Gibson Craig Halls last Tuesday with a total of 37 attendees. It was wonderful to see so many faces albeit masked. However, we shared teas and coffees in our socially distanced seats and caught up with each other. Our speaker was Canon Mike Parker who spoke movingly about the work being done by Bible Societies in many different parts of the world. In some cases very risky work that has to be done secretly. How lucky we are to live in a society in which we are free to worship.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 21 September at 2pm when we will be learning about the Water of Leith. If you would like more information, please contact me on 0131-466-3472 or email elf.lamont@blueyonder.co.uk.

Louise Lamont
Guild President

National Giving Day

Over the weekend of 25th and 26th September we are running events to help rebuild Currie Kirk in the community. This is part of the Church of Scotland National Giving Day.



Saturday morning will be a fun event for families with the magician Tricky Ricky then in the afternoon we'll be serving tea and cakes whilst being entertained by the Currie Community Choir and our very own comedian Ronnie Moyes. There will also be a few stalls, raffle and a hamper to be won.

On Sunday afternoon the Kirk will be open to look round or enjoy a tour with Louise or Hamish. There will also be a treasure hunt for the children.

All events are free but due to Covid restrictions tickets need to be booked in advance through Nina in the Kirk office.

Throughout the weekend we are offering the opportunity to buy a brick (or part of a brick) for £10 in your name or in memory of someone.

Donations can be made by cash, cheque, card or get in touch with the Treasurer (Eddie Pigott).

We're looking forward to a dry and sunny weekend and being able to meet again in person.

If you want any further information, please contact Nina at the office or Fiona Pigott on 466 1459.



Kirk Contacts

Minister: Rev Dr Easter Smart—Tel: 449 4719 email: esmart@churchofscotland.org.uk

Family worker: Heather Merriman email: Familyworker_JVP@outlook.com

Pastoral Coordinator: Gordon Clephane—449 2313

Nina at the Kirk Office—451 5141

email currie_kirk@btconnect.com if you need anything.

Website: [//www.curriekirk.org/](http://www.curriekirk.org/) or [//www.facebook.com/CurrieKirk/](https://www.facebook.com/CurrieKirk/)

All sermons from Currie Kirk can be found on the Kirk's website and on YouTube—search Currie Kirk