

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
18th January 2022**

READINGS

Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

Deuteronomy 31:7-8

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29: 11-13-40

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a human will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:9-14

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:16-20

REFLECTION

Last week I went out to visit someone and driving to their house I found myself in the extremely dense fog that blanketed Aberdeen. Though I know this part of the city very well and though I have been to this person home before, I found myself disorientated as I drove along. I could not see the usual landmarks until the last moment, and the place that I thought I knew so well became a strange and unknown landscape. All because of fog which changed my perspective of the world around me.

I was thinking about that experience as I reflected on all that we have been through over these months. And it seems to me that there are times when life seems a bit like driving in the fog. The pandemic has, for a time, taken away from us many of the things which we thought were impossible to lose. Our freedom to visit friends and loved ones. Our independence. Our opportunity to go to church. Our chance to join in the celebrations of family and friends at weddings and parties. Paying our respects and offering our support to loved ones who are grieving.

But such experiences are not isolated to the pandemic. We all experience, in the normal course of life, events which challenge and threaten us, such as illness, or broken relationships, or failure and self-doubt.

Such events in our lives can leave us disorientated, feeling lost and unsure. Just like driving through a fog, with no idea where we are and where we are supposed to go.

The promise of God's presence with us runs all through the Bible, from the promises made to the leaders of Israel in the Old Testament (*as in this week's first reading from Deuteronomy 31*), to the promise fulfilled in Jesus who is Immanuel - God with us (*as in John 1*), to Jesus' guarantee to his disciples at the end of his ministry (*Matthew 28*). Whenever we feel lost, we can rest in the security of knowing that we are not out of God's sight.

But not only are we never out of God's sight and God's grasp, God offers a purpose, a direction for our lives. And it's a purpose that is only good. God, through the prophet Jeremiah promises: "*For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*" (*Jeremiah 29:11*)

In those times when life feels like being lost in the fog, know that God is with you, and is certain of the way ahead, a way which leads to blessing and hope, meaning and purpose. The challenge we face is having the faith to trust in God, to trust that God knows the way ahead, to trust in God's way ahead.

Amen

PRAYER

God ever with us
God who sees all
Teach us to trust in you.

Protect us from the difficult times in life,

Save us from those times when we feel lost.

But when we do feel overcome
When we do feel lost
When we do not see a clear way ahead in life,
Be our guide
Direct us in your pathways,
Grant to us the faith to recognise your call
And to follow as you direct.

In Jesus name we offer our prayers,
Amen.

