

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
28th June 2022

READINGS

The LORD says to them, "The truth is that at the same time you fast, you pursue your own interests and oppress your workers. Your fasting makes you violent, and you quarrel and fight. Do you think this kind of fasting will make me listen to your prayers? When you fast, you make yourselves suffer; you bow your heads low like a blade of grass and spread out sackcloth and ashes to lie on. Is that what you call fasting? Do you think I will be pleased with that?"

"The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives.

"Then my favour will shine on you like the morning sun, and your wounds will be quickly healed. I will always be with you to save you; my presence will protect you on every side. When you pray, I will answer you. When you call to me, I will respond.

Isaiah 58:3-9 (The Good News Bible Translation)

"Beware of the teachers of religion! For they love to wear the robes of the rich and scholarly, and to have everyone bow to them as they walk through the markets. ³⁹ They love to sit in the best seats in the synagogues and at the places of honour at banquets—but they shamelessly cheat widows out of their homes and then, to cover up the kind of men they really are, they pretend to be pious by praying long prayers in public. Because of this, their punishment will be the greater."

Then he went over to the collection boxes in the Temple and sat and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Some who were rich put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two pennies.

He called his disciples to him and remarked, "That poor widow has given more than all those rich men put together! For they gave a little of their extra fat, while she gave up her last penny."

Mark 12:38-44 (The Living Bible Translation)

"This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.

John 3:16-18 (The Message Translation)

REFLECTION

A friend shared with me a wonderful legend about a king who decided to set aside a special day to honour his greatest subject.

When the big day arrived, there was a large gathering in the palace courtyard. Four finalists were brought forward, and from these four, the king would select the winner.

The first person presented was a wealthy philanthropist. The king was told that this man was highly deserving of the honour because of his humanitarian efforts. He had given much of his wealth to the poor.

The second person was a celebrated physician. The king was told that this doctor was highly deserving of the honour because he had rendered faithful and dedicated service to the sick for many years.

The third person was a distinguished judge. The king was told that the judge was worthy because he was noted for his wisdom, his fairness, and his brilliant decisions.

The fourth person presented was an elderly woman. Everyone was quite surprised to see her there, because her manner was quite humble, as was her dress. She hardly looked the part of someone who would be honoured as the greatest subject in the kingdom. What chance could she possibly have, when compared to the other three, who had accomplished so much? Even so, there was something about her - the look of love in her face, the understanding in her eyes, her quiet confidence.

The king was intrigued, to say the least, and somewhat puzzled by her presence. He asked who she was. The answer came: "You see the philanthropist, the doctor, and the judge? Well, she was their school teacher!"

That woman had no wealth, no fortune, and no title, but she had given her life to produce great people. She had used her skills and gifts and care and kindness to shape lives that which in turn made such a difference in the world. There is nothing more powerful or more Christ like than sacrificial love.

How easily we overlook people and dismiss their value. How often we forget about people because they do not match up to our expectations of a good person or a worthy person. How fortunate then that what God sees is not just the outward appearance, but the heart. How wonderful to know that, whatever the value the world might place upon people, God loves each of us. God loves each of us enough to give everything for us. To God, we are, everyone of us, beyond price, just as John's Gospel reminds us in our reading this week.

Take comfort then from knowing that you are loved by God, just as you, with an eternal and unmeasurable love.

But hear also the challenge to see the value in others. Never discard a person as unworthy or unlovable, because God never stops loving a one of us.

Amen

PRAYER

Living God,
Loving Lord,
You don't sit isolated from us in some lofty, heavenly, ivory tower,
You get your hands messy with life,
You get involved in our celebrations and our catastrophes.
Just as Jesus shared special moments and awful times with friends and followers.

Lord,
Knowing our intentions as well as our actions
You love us and care for us.
So, forgive us when we do not share that love with others,
When we judge or dismiss, based on the value we place on someone.
Remind us again that every single person is precious to you.
And help us to see the worth in every person we meet, as someone loved by you.

As we experience your blessing in our lives,
May we share that blessing with all around us

In Jesus name,

Amen.

This is the last of our weekly devotions before the summer break. There will be no weekly devotions during July and August. Weekly devotions will return in September in a slightly different format. If you know of anyone who would like to receive our weekly devotions when we restart in September, please ask them to email the minister, Rev. David Stewart - DStewart@churchofscotland.org.uk

