

MORNING SERVICE

Sunday 19 July 2009, Kilcalmonell, linked with Killean and Kilchenzie

7th Sunday after Pentecost

preacher: Rev Martin Grashoff

hymns: Church Hymnary. Fourth Edition (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005)

Welcome & Intimations

Opening Hymn : 'Christ is made the sure foundation' (CH 200)

Children's Talk

Children's Hymn : 'Christ be beside me' (CH 577)

Prayer & Lord's Prayer

God in heaven,
who creates our world every day anew,
we thank you in Jesus' name,
for sending us out into the world
to seek your kingdom and to find others;
for giving us the skills to be clever and sensible,
the faith to be pure and innocent,
and the wisdom to know the difference;
for teaching us not to fear but to face,
not to flee but to fight,
not to despair but to hope.

Forgive us, O God,
if we walk away from our mission,
if we do not use the resources we have,
if we get trapped in fear and despair –
and more than that:
make us change our ways and try again.

And now as Jesus taught us, we pray:

OUR FATHER...

...AMEN.

Readings : 1 Kings 17:8-16 (*Good News Bible*) & Matthew 10:5-11:1 (*colometric translation*¹)

¹ A colometric-concordant translation. See: F.H. Breukelman, *Bijbelse theologie. I,1 Schrift-lezing*. Een verhandeling over de kolometrische weergave van bijbelse teksten als hulp bij het lezen en als grondslag voor de exegese (Kampen: Kok, 1980) – probably a good reason to learn Dutch. Some information about colometry, as distinguished from stichometry, in classical texts was already in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th Edition (1910 pass.), now on [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colometry). More can be found in: Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts Of The Greek Bible. An Introduction to Greek Palæography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), which is on [Google Books](https://books.google.com/books) now.

[Matthew 10:5-11:1:]

5a *These twelve Jesus sends out
instructing them with the words:*



5b On a road of foreigners you will not go
and a city of Samaritans you will not enter,
6 but moreover you shall go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;
7 and while you go you shall proclaim with the words: [cf. Jer. 50:6]
'the kingdom of heaven has come near'.

8 The sick you shall heal, the dead you shall raise,
lepers you shall cleanse, demons you shall throw out –
you received without paying, give without pay.



9 You will acquire no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts,
10 nor a bag for the road, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff,
for the worker is worthy of his food.

11 And whatever city or village you enter,
examine who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart; [cf. Num. 18:31]
12 when you enter the house, you shall greet it,
13 and when the house is worthy, your peace shall go to it,
but when it is not worthy, your peace shall return to you.

14 And whoever does not welcome you, do not listen to² their words,
and while you depart from that house and that city
you shall shake off the dust from your feet;
15 for sure, I say to you, more bearable it will be
for the land³ of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement
than for that city. [cf. Gen. 19:24f]

16 See! I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves;
therefore, be as clever as serpents [cf. Gen 3:1]
and as pure as doves. [cf. Gen. 8:8; Lev.
12:6]



17 Beware of the people,
for they will hand you over to councils
and in their synagogues they will flog you,
18 and before governors and kings you will be brought for my sake
as a testimony to them and to the foreigners; [cf. Deut. 31:26]

19 whenever they hand you over,
do not be anxious about what to say,
because it will be given to you in that hour what to say; [cf. Ex. 4:12]
20 for it is not you who speak,
but the Spirit of your father speaking in you.

21 And a brother will hand over a brother to death and a father a child, [cf. Mic. 7:6]
and children will rise against parents and hand them over to be killed,

² Or: hear.

³ Or: earth.

22 and you will be hated by all because of my name,
but the one who endures till the end will be saved. [cf. Dan. 12:12f]

23 Whenever they expel you in this city, flee to the other;
for truly, I say to you,
you will not have ended [going through] the cities of Israel
before the son of man will come.

❖
24 A follower is not above the teacher
and a servant not above his lord;
25 sufficient it is for the follower to become like his teacher,
and the servant like his lord;
if they call the master of the house Beelzebul,
how much more those of his household?

❖
26 Therefore, do not fear them,
for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered,
or hidden that will not be made known;
27 what I say to you in the dark, you shall say in the light;
and what you hear in your ear, proclaim it from the rooftops;
28 and have no fear for those who kill the body,
but they cannot kill the soul;
rather fear the one who destroys soul and body in 'gehenna'.
29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?
and will not one of them fall on the earth without your father's knowledge?
30 and are not the hairs on your head all counted? [cf. 1 Sam. 14:45; 2
31 therefore, do not fear – Sam. 14:11]
you are worth more than many sparrows.

32 Therefore, everyone who acknowledges me before the people,
I will also acknowledge before my father who is in heaven;
33 but whoever denies me before the people,
I will also deny before my father who is in heaven. [cf. 1 Sam. 2:30]

❖❖
34 Do not think that I come to bring peace to the earth;
I do not come to bring peace, but a sword –
35 for I come to divide *a man from his father,* [=Mic. 7:6]
and a daughter from her mother,
and a daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law,
36 *and the people's enemies are the members of their household.*

37 Whoever loves father or mother above me, [cf. Deut. 33:9]
is not worthy of me;
and whoever loves son or daughter above me,
is not worthy of me;
38 and whoever does not take up his cross and follows me,
is not worthy of me.

39 Whoever finds his soul, will lose it,
but whoever loses his soul for my sake, will find it.

❖
 40 Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me,
 and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sends me;
 41 whoever welcomes a prophet in name of a prophet, [cf. 1 Kings 17:9-24,
 18:4; 2 Kings 4:9-37]
 will receive a prophet's reward;
 and whoever welcomes a righteous person in name of a righteous person,
 will receive a righteous person's reward;
 42 and whoever gives one of these little ones to drink only a cup of cold
[water,
 in name of a follower,
 for sure, I say to you, none of them will destroy their reward.

❖
 1 *And it happens,
 when Jesus ends directing his twelve followers,
 that he goes on from there to teach and proclaim in their cities.*

Hymn : 'Jesus calls us' (CH 509)

Sermon

One day, some 35 years ago, I went to Amsterdam, the big and sinful city. With a couple of hundred young people we were going to do something about it. After a strong sermon, we went out on the streets and asked people if they new Jesus. The first person I asked said he was not interested, the second started swearing at me and the third man – long hair, long beard, very American – said, 'Hey man, good question, wanna have some grass too?' Only much later I understood that he was stoned like a nutter. Thus ended my first and only action of direct missioning.

A man told a story about Billy Graham in the late 1950s coming to a series of football stadiums, Glasgow, Hampden Park being one, and attracting millions. There was this teenager about to 'come forward' and commit his life to Jesus. But he didn't. His aunty pushed him back on his seat, saying, 'Don't be so silly.' Much later that man wrote a challenging, but very convincing book called *The Death Of Christian Britain*.⁴

But today we have read about Jesus teaching his disciples to go out and proclaim the Good News that God's Kingdom has come. If that is his command to his disciples, it is also addressed at us. We all – not only the minister or the elders – have to go out and proclaim the Gospel. What would that mean? What would our mission be?

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As The Herald revealed yesterday,⁵ the Church of Scotland is seriously considering to close down parishes that cannot support themselves financially. This concerns 65% of all Scottish parishes, mainly in rural areas like the Highlands and the Western Isles, and in the poor areas of our cities. Or more specific: this is about Clachan, Chleit and

⁴ Callum G. Brown, *The Death Of Christian Britain*. Understanding Secularization 1800-2000 (London: Routledge, 2001), p6. The boy not coming forward was Brown's cousin, the aunty his mother.

⁵ Brian Donnelly, 'Church set to abandon parishes in divisive closure plan' in [The Herald](#), 18/07/2009.

Carnwadic. The territorial church model – that each part of the country has its own parish, church and minister – which has been around since the Middle Ages, and was strongly reaffirmed by the Reformation, seems to face its earthly end. It could very well be that by the time I retire the Kintyre parishes as we have known them will no longer be there. I cannot at all be sure that I can end my ministry as I have just started it.

The most obvious reason for this is simple: the church does not have enough *copper in its belt*, not to mention *silver* or *gold*. For that simple reason all the great plans it has made for being church begin to falter – the mission plans, the fund-raising, the staffing and training, the upkeeping of churches and manses, the research programmes, the publicity, the websites, the structures of councils and presbyteries, Church Law itself.

Since the days of men like Andrew Melville or Thomas Chalmers⁶ we are so used to making profound plans first before we go into action. Targets, means and methods need to be sorted out before we act – and if possible we would like to have in advance a realistic estimate of the outcome as well. Of course it is necessary to think before you act, but that is not automatically the same as making a full-size plan of action. Actually, St Columba did not have any of that when he came to Kintyre and travelled on to Iona. Nor did St Francis when he set off with his brothers to live a life of poverty. Nor did Martin Luther when he wrote down his 95 Theses. And to be true, Jesus had nothing like our usual planning when he sent out his twelve followers. Yet, each of these movements had a huge impact on the history of God and the people. Admittedly a lot of clear thinking and planning was involved, but that was definitely not how it started.

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Before Jesus sends out his followers, he gives them directions and advice, the summary of which is found in verse 16:

*be as clever as serpents
and as pure as doves.*

The surprising element, and indeed the strength, is in the combination of cleverness and pureness, of being cunning and innocent. And of course the wisdom is in knowing the difference. Just setting off on the basis of a strong faith is foolish. Without realistic thinking and self-criticism such action will end in disappointment and frustration. But if only our insight and understanding are leading us, we will not move much further than half an inch, simply by lack of faith. It is faith that gets and keeps you moving forward, but clear thinking is there to prevent being carried away by piety.

The core of Jesus' teaching on the mission of his followers is found in verse 24 and 25:

*A follower is not above the teacher
and a servant not above his lord;
sufficient it is for the follower to become like his teacher,*

⁶ [Andrew Melville](#) (1545-1622) reformed Scottish universities and played a major role in the early Reformation. [Thomas Chalmers](#) (1780-1847) evangelized Glasgow and became a social reformer, but also was one of the leaders in the 1843 Disruption, becoming the Free Kirk's first Moderator.

and the servant like his lord.

This is the heart of any mission: trying to be *like* the One who sends us. We are not supposed to be better than God, or greater than Jesus. We are supposed to be ourselves, to use our own gifts and build on our own core of goodness. That one spark of God's Light within our heart is enough, and the white fire of God's Spirit will be with us to lead and enlighten us. Whenever we think we *are* Jesus, we need a doctor, for *the servant is not above the Lord.*

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So what would be our mission in Kintyre?

First of all we are being send to *the lost sheep* in Kintyre. That is: people who have lived here all their life, people who came later or who have just arrived, refugees and those who try to escape poverty elsewhere, and certainly all guests who come for holiday or family visit. Being lost means that people need rest and recovery. They seek healing and spiritual renewal. They long for belonging and a new community. From time to time each of us will be like a *lost sheep*.

Our mission to these *lost sheep* is *not* a grand programme of evangelization, it is *not* a major attempt to drag people into church. Our church should be as welcoming and open as possible to everyone, regardless age, gender, sexuality, wealth, criminality, nationality, mental illness etcetera. Our mission is to be open to all, not to drag them in. People are not lost because they do not go to church. They are lost because they lost their way trying to be and become the human beings God intends them to be. And people are not saved by learning christian truths, but through finding God's truth for themselves and converting their lives to live by that. The church's mission to the *lost sheep* of Kintyre is about renewing spirituality, doing deeds of kindness and building community. That is what we should offer.

To achieve that we should use all the wonderful resources Kintyre has on offer. That includes: the sea, the beaches and the hills, the sunshine and sunset, the mist, the rain and the storm, the dark at night and the silence all around. These are the things we often take for granted, but they really are gifts bringing grace to those who normally live in busy cities. It is our mission to make this all available.

Our resources especially include people. That is: you and those around you. People in Kintyre may sometimes think of themselves as 'low people', but that is not important. The way people simply help and care for each other, have a great night together in a Village Hall, or welcome newcomers and guests is rather special – I am telling you. In Kintyre we have unique human resources to build community and those who visit this region could take something home from that. It is our mission to share this with all who happen to come our way.

Welcoming people is a major issue. It is very important to all people we are tempted to call 'primitive'. It was a central thing for the Celtic people who colonized the British

isles, and for those who came after them. Only in modern times we seem to have lost it a bit, sacrificed to our beloved individual freedom. But whoever made a pilgrimage, visited a monastery or was part of an exchange with a so-called Third World country, knows how important hospitality is. And I believe that we have not lost these skills in Kintyre and that we can use it to the benefit of all. Like the widow who welcomed Elijah without hesitation and very much to the blessing of her family.

Our resources also include holy places. Perhaps the stronger of these are the unexpected ones, such as a field beside a cairn, ancient footsteps in a rock, a sandy beach, an ancient ruined church. The churches we still use become holy places if we use them well, but they are certainly not the only place where people can meet with God. It is our mission to find and foster our holy places, like pilgrims searching their destiny.

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But the most important thing is the wisdom Jesus shares with the prophets before him, like Elijah: *Don't worry! Do not fear others! Fear makes us count our coins and banknotes first, fear makes us worry if we will be able to pay for buildings and staff, fear prevents us from speaking out only not to upset anyone. Jesus said he came to bring ... a sword. Fear can easily make us like walking on eggs. Eventually these eggs will break anyway, so fear is a very poor adviser.*

Our mission in Kintyre is to leave fear behind, to acknowledge, value and use our resources. Whether that will be along the lines of the current parish system, or through a much more ambient ministry we will see. In these matters we need to use our cleverness as good as possible. But our mission rests upon the pillar of pureness and innocence. If parishes would be abandoned it would be a loss, but faith will move on from that. Jesus will move on, and all we have to do is to follow him wherever the Spirit leads us.

Amen.

Hymn : 'Jesus calls us here to meet him' (CH 510: 1, 2, 3)

Offering brought forward

Prayer of Intercession

I would invite you to be silent for a few moments and ask yourself which skill you could offer to be a missionary follower of Jesus. Just one common thing which you can do to the people in Kintyre. Don't feel ashamed if nothing comes to mind now, it will come later. If you can think of a skill, remember that for the week to come.

(1 min. silence)

Now let us pray.

God of mercy,

in prayer we remember
those who cannot see your Kingdom of heaven,
because they do not feel worthy of it,
because there is too much to undermine their faith,
because no-one ever told them about your Kingdom,
because fear holds them in its icy grip,
because their faith was betrayed by others,
because their imagination fails their thinking.

God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

God of creation,
abide with all your people
at the eventide of their life
and through the summerheat,
when lives go through valleys of darkness,
and when new horizons spread their light forward.

God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

So we pray,
through Jesus Christ
who sends us
and goes with us.
Amen.

Closing Hymn : 'Son of God, eternal Saviour' (CH 468)

Blessing