

## **MORNING SERVICE**

Sunday 13 September, Kilcalmonell, linked with Killean and Kilchenzie

*15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost*

*preacher: Rev Martin Grashoff*

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

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### **Welcome & Intimations**

**Opening Hymn** : 'Morning has broken' (CH 212)

### **Children's Talk**

**Children's Hymn** : 'For the beauty of the earth' (CH 181<sup>1</sup>)

- Please sing the refrain as, 'Christ, our *Lord...*' – since that is how the Gospel would address Jesus.

### **Prayer & Lord's Prayer**

God of creation,  
we praise you for the sunshine,  
and for the harvest we can gather;  
we praise you for our schools,  
for what we learn and whom we meet;  
we praise you for the food we have,  
even in times of economic crisis;  
we praise you for the storm and the waves,  
because they teach us nature's power;  
we praise you for each other,  
and for the love and support we can give.

God of mercy,  
forgive us if we complain about the rain or school,  
forgive us when we forget the gifts of food and love,  
forgive us when we underestimate the forces of nature,  
– and more than that:  
make us admit our mistakes and failures  
in order to change our lives for the better.

And now as Jesus taught us, we pray:  
Our Father...  
...Amen.

**Readings** : 1 Kings 19:11-13 & Luke 3:2b-6 (*Good News Bible*)

**Hymn** : 'Hope is a candle' (CH 284)

### **Sermon**

Yesterday we did a pilgrimage around Clachan. With twenty kids we walked some 8 miles, along the seashore, over the hills, through the village and around the former Balinakil estate. At several points we stopped for a short reflection. We ate our lunch on top of Dun Skeig and Nelleke had the tea with Agnes's home baking ready at the church. And of course we chatted a lot. Mountains were an important part of our pilgrimage.

As some of you will know I made a pilgrimage in 1999, riding my bicycle from The Netherlands all the way up to Iona. After the flats of Norfolk came the hills of North England and beyond Stirling I met with my first real mountains. Actually I did not see much of it then, since they were covered in mist for days. But on my way back on the train I saw much of the Western Highland in full glory. Back home in Zeeland I already missed the mountains.

Mountains are important in the stories and religions of many peoples and nations. Rome was build on seven hills, the gods of the Greek lived on top of Mount Olympus, Jerusalem was founded on Mount Zion and the people of Israel received the Torah at Mount Sinai. The Picts fought the decisive battle against the Romans at Mons Graupius and the kings of Dalriada were crowned on top of Dunadd. Aboriginals in Australia consider Ayers Rock, or Uluru, as the most holy place they know. Mussorgsky composed a pretty disturbing work titled 'Night On A Bare Mountain', with an unexpectedly peaceful ending,<sup>1</sup> and there is even a song about the Dutch mountains.<sup>2</sup>

Today we read about Elijah seeking refuge and encountering God on Mount Horeb and about John quoting Isaiah's famous words *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.*<sup>3</sup> There are mountains all around.

A mountain is a big lump of granite, and if you cannot get around it, you will have to climb over it. It is unmovable, unchangeable and so ancient that any human age or even the total age of humankind become totally irrelevant. A mountain is a fact from which there is no getting away.

But more important than that is the meaning people have rendered to mountains. The mountain has become one of the strongest metaphors in culture. On the top of a mountain heaven and earth, gods and humans meet. Therefore to visit a mountain is

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<sup>1</sup> In various versions, as a tone poem, an orchestrated work and a piano piece ([Wikipedia](#)), which also featured in the Walt Disney's animation classic [Fantasia](#) (1940).

<sup>2</sup> The Nits, 'In The Dutch Mountains' (1987):

I was born in the valley of bricks,  
where the river runs high above the rooftops.  
I was waiting for the cars coming home late at night,  
from the Dutch mountains...

In the Dutch mountains.  
Mountains... mountains... buildings...

<sup>3</sup> Isa. 40:4 (King James Version).

to encounter visions and the start of a new road. On mountains people's lives change fundamentally. Also in Jesus' life the mountain acts as such a metaphorical place: from the mountain he teaches his followers and the crowds, on the mountain he reveals God's glory and in the end he prays on the Mount of Olives and is crucified on a bare mountain.

'Mountains symbolise strength, endurance, eternity and perseverance.'<sup>4</sup> When mountains move, the world is coming near to its end. But, says the Bible, even then Mount Zion will stand. Climbing a mountain requires a good effort and it can be dangerous. This symbolises the human path of life, which often has its difficulties and dangers. Then Isaiah's prophecy is remarkable: no more mountain climbing, no more crossing deep gorges, but life will be like a straight path.

Well, that's all very interesting to hear, but what does it have to do with our own life?

Yesterday we physically climbed a mountain. (OK, it wasn't a Munro, or even a Corbett, or a Graham, but we *had* to climb.) The reward was to stand on the top and have these wonderful views all around. But why are these views more special than the ones through the glen? Is it because the top of a mountain feels special? Probably. But why does it feel special? Why do we ourselves feel a bit special once we have climbed a big hill? If you listen to your own heart, you know that climbing a mountain does something with your mind. Something good, to be honest.

That is how metaphors work: they do something with our mind. They lift us up, just for a moment, from the grey every day reality and connect us to something greater than us. We should always be critical about it. We could deceive ourselves. But when we are honest, we can experience the power of metaphors.

Walking a pilgrimage is a simple thing. But it is also a way of learning to live with metaphors. I wish you all a real good metaphorical week.

Amen.

**Hymn** : 'When out of poverty is born' (CH 291)

### **Offering brought forward**

#### **Prayer of Intercession**

God of heaven and earth,  
we thank your for mountains,  
for footpaths and styles,  
for boots and rucksacks,  
for suncream and waterbottles,  
and most of all for being healthy and able to walk.  
Therefore we remember in prayer

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<sup>4</sup> C.J. den Heijer, P. Schelling, *Symbolen in de bijbel*. Woorden en hun betekenis (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2000) p45.

those who would love to walk, but cannot,  
because their health no longer allows them,  
because their age makes them fearful of going out,  
because where they live there are no places for a nice walk.

God of body, mind and spirit,  
we thank you for who we are,  
people with plans and dreams,  
people with friends and family,  
people who are able to achieve what they want,  
people who know of your presence and grace.  
Therefore we remember in prayer  
those whose bodies fail them,  
through disability, accidents, illness or age;  
those whose minds are troubled  
by the stress of keeping their jobs,  
or by the pressure of our society;  
those whose spirits are poor,  
because they cannot believe in God's kingdom,  
because they see no reason to trust in justice and peace,  
because the burden of daily life kills their imagination.

For us and for them,  
for all people and for ourselves,  
we pray to you, O God.

In silence we remember those we know  
who need us to remember them.  
*(silence)*

So we pray,  
through Jesus Christ,  
who prayed on his mountain.  
Amen.

**Closing Hymn** : 'Christ be beside me' (CH 577)

**Blessing**