

# Service of the Word 30 August 2020

## Pentecost 13

---

### Welcome

Good Morning and welcome to our service. As some folk are enjoying the last days of summer holidays we in the Scottish Highlands have had our first taste of autumn. Cold nights and grey days have been with us most of this week; but the sun is coming out at last. The news this week has been full of highs and lows as well as the pandemic continues to be with us. Some folk are looking forward to the treat of enjoying live sport while others face the imminent prospect of further restrictions. In this climate of uncertainty which is our new normal we lift our voices virtual and present to God in worship.

---

### Gathering

We are gathered together as the family of God  
to offer praise and thanksgivings  
to ask forgiveness of our sins  
to hear and receive God's holy Word  
to pray for the needs of the world  
and to seek God's grace  
that through Jesus Christ our Lord  
and in the power of the Holy Spirit  
we may give ourselves to God's service.

### Penitence

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit.  
Lord, have mercy.

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart.  
Christ, have mercy.

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided.  
Lord, have mercy.

O Lord, all we long for is before you;  
and our deep sighing is not hidden from you.  
But we acknowledge our wickedness;  
we are filled with sorrow at our sin.  
Be pleased O Lord, to deliver us;  
O Lord, make haste to help us.

May the Lord forgive what we have been,  
help us to amend what we are  
and direct what we shall be,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Praise

Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to God's people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
with God the Son, Jesus Christ,  
and God the Holy Spirit,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world;  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.  
For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High,  
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

---

## Collect of the Day

Almighty and merciful God,  
by whose grace alone your faithful people offer you service and praise;  
grant that we may hasten without stumbling  
towards the things that you promise;  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
ever one God, world without end. Amen

---

## First Reading Jeremiah 15:15-21

Lord, you understand;  
remember me and care for me.  
Avenge me on my persecutors.  
You are long-suffering – do not take me away;

think of how I suffer reproach for your sake.  
When your words came, I ate them;  
they were my joy and my heart's delight,  
for I bear your name,  
Lord God Almighty.  
I never sat in the company of revellers,  
never made merry with them;  
I sat alone because your hand was on me  
and you had filled me with indignation.  
Why is my pain unending  
and my wound grievous and incurable?  
You are to me like a deceptive brook,  
like a spring that fails.  
Therefore this is what the Lord says:  
'If you repent, I will restore you  
that you may serve me;  
if you utter worthy, not worthless, words,  
you will be my spokesman.  
Let this people turn to you,  
but you must not turn to them.  
I will make you a wall to this people,  
a fortified wall of bronze;  
they will fight against you  
but will not overcome you,  
for I am with you  
to rescue and save you,'  
declares the Lord.  
'I will save you from the hands of the wicked  
and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel.'

---

## Second Reading Matthew 16:21-28

**21** From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

**22** Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'

**23** Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.'

**24** Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **25** For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. **26** What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? **27** For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. **28** 'Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'

---

## Reflection

The Prophet Jeremiah is a favourite character of mine and to understand these Old Testament prophets you have to understand a little bit of their background, where they are coming from so to speak.

Jeremiah was probably born about 650 BCE in Judah, a tiny insignificant country whose capital was Jerusalem. This country was at the mercy of the power politics of the day, with Assyria and Babylon to the north and Egypt to the south trying to control the territory. If this sounds all too dismally familiar then that is no surprise this part of the world, what we call the Middle East, has been fought over for thousands upon thousands of years. Jeremiah lived and preached for four decades, about 40 years, of the most turbulent times. It was a very bad time for this small country at the mercy of large global powers. King Josiah tried a short lived and largely unsuccessful reform of both politics and religion, always complexly interwoven for the Jewish people. He was replaced by a King who restored the old order and allowed pagan gods to push Yahweh out even from the temple in Jerusalem.

This is the situation that Jeremiah speaks to in the first chapters of his book of prophecy. The Babylonians are on the horizon advancing to swallow up Judah which they eventually complete dragging the rich and powerful into exile in Babylon leaving the poor and destitute to fend for themselves. Jeremiah, speaks for himself and for God in expressing intense sorrow over the Babylonian onslaught that the people of Israel are having to experience.

Jeremiah is often referred to as the *weeping prophet* or the *prophet of doom*. He wrote, or most likely dictated to a scribe, not only this Book of Jeremiah

this collection of his prophecies but also the Book of Lamentations. So you can see where his nicknames come from. He is usually better known for doom & gloom, for weeping & wailing than he is for praising & singing or for joy & happiness. Our lamenting prophet embodies the words of the lamenting God deeply affected by the disaster, partly external and partly of Israel's own making, the prophet laments all that Israel is going through.

Despite his gloomy reputation the Books of Jeremiah contain some of the most hopeful passages in the Old Testament. Somehow in the midst of all the turmoil Jeremiah manages to find hope in God. Searching out these nuggets can be a helpful antidote to all the doom and gloom. Some of these are familiar, others less so. This morning's passage however dreary and doom laden it appears at first glance contains a nugget of hope, verse 16 is a verse of encouragement.

*When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Eating words seems at first a strange image but the English translation does not do it justice. The word *ate* means to devour, to feast on, to savour and relish each and every bite. When the world seems so full of doom and gloom to find something, the very word of God in Scripture, to savour and relish with joy is a gift indeed.

Jeremiah is clear that his joy and delight is in God alone, the words of God in scripture and in his personal life of prayer. He lived through terrible times and he was not afraid to speak truth to those in power. His prophetic ministry was to say honestly and clearly the path you are on will lead to destruction. But Jeremiah always balanced the hard message with the reassurance of God's love. His prophetic message says clear that our only salvation is turning back to God who receives us with mercy and forgiveness.

It seems to me that life just now is all about finding the nuggets of joy to delight our hearts. When the big schemes and grand plans fall through we are left with the small things to give us joy. But sometimes they are few and far between and often hard to find. That should not stop us looking for and savouring the small things of joy when we do find them. The new skill we need to learn in the midst of this pandemic is to look for the small things that give us joy. It is all too easy when caught up in the storm of lament and loss

to lose sight of the nuggets of joy. Jeremiah reminds us that God is with us whatever disaster that befalls us.

29.11

*For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD . “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.*

---

## Apostle’s Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by  
the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Let us pray, for the church and the world, thanking God for the blessings in  
our lives*

---

## Intercessions

---

## Blessing

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen

### Act of Dedication

Almighty God,  
we thank you for the gift of your holy word:  
may it be a lantern to our feet,  
a light upon our paths,  
and a strength to our lives.  
Take us and use us to love and serve all people  
in the power of the Holy Spirit  
and in the name of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Praise

You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; \*  
you renew the face of the earth.  
You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; \*  
you renew the face of the earth.  
May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; may the Lord rejoice in all his  
works.  
You renew the face of the earth.  
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.  
You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; \* you renew the face of the earth.

### Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and  
minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our  
Lord: And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy  
Spirit, Be with you and all those for whom you have a care this day and  
evermore. Amen