

Dryburgh District Churches
(United Congregation of Maxton, Mertoun, Newtown & St Boswells)
SC013481, SC000575, SC010210
Reflections for Sunday 13th June 2021



Welcome and Church News:

Good morning and welcome to our service here in St Boswells Church. On Wednesday this week we shall have our Zoom worship time at 10.00am. The details of joining in can be found on our website. And our Bible Study continues on Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm.

Call to worship: Psalm 92: 1 – 4

¹ It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High, ² proclaiming your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night, ³ to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp. ⁴ For you make me glad by your deeds, LORD; I sing for joy at what your hands have done.

Hymn: 210 Awake my soul and with the sun (verses 1, 3 and 5) - https://youtu.be/DMF5e_8dd_w

1. Awake my soul, and with the sun your daily stage of duty run; shake off your sleep, and joyful rise to pay you morning sacrifice.

3. Lord, I my vows to you renew; disperse my sins as morning dew; guard my first springs of thought and will, and with yourself my spirit fill.

5. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, you heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Thomas Ken (1637 – 1711) Melody by François Hyppolyte Barthélémon (1741 – 1808) arranged Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810 – 1876)

Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Creator eternal Lord our God, we praise you for all the blessings we are given, yesterday, today and tomorrow. As we gather this day to praise and give thanks, we bring you our prayers for the growth of your kingdom, within us and around us, for you to bless and nurture. We bring you our prayers for

the initiatives in our Church nationally and locally, and in our communities for justice multiplying among nations, thinking especially of the summit that has been happening in Cornwall for you to bless and nurture. We bring in our prayers Lord, the hopes and dreams, tiny and big of all your children around our world for you to bless and nurture as we know you want the best for all your children. As creator and Lord of all, we know you are here with us, and in this time of worship, we know that we need to make time for you in our lives. Lord we know too that you do not force growth in us, but you nurture us in your time, so forgive us when we want too much too soon. You do not start big, but start small, so we ask your forgiveness for our impatience when we want the big things first. Lord you are gracious in your sowing, forgive us our ungraciousness and lack of care. In our prayers too Lord, we come before you in the silence, to seek your forgiveness and grace for the sins we confess are in our hearts and on our lips, the ones that prevent our hearts been truly open to your word and your will for our lives. We give praise and thanks Creator Lord our God, for your forgiveness, for your grace. From a mustard seed to a tree, from I to we in you we grow. In the mystery of the unseen, from brown fields to green, in you we grow. By faith and not by sight, by day and by night in you we grow. Forgiven and renewed, through word and deed in you we grow. As we sow and reap, as we laugh and weep, in you we grow, may your kingdom come Father, Son and Holy Spirit as in you we grow, and as we pray the prayer your Son taught us, we come with one voice in prayer and praise – Our Father.... Amen

Reading: Psalm 92: 12 – 15 (NIV)

¹² The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;

¹³ planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God.

¹⁴ They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, ¹⁵ proclaiming, 'The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.'

Reading: Ezekiel 17: 22 – 24 (NIV)

²² "'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³ On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches. ²⁴ All the trees of the forest will know that I the LORD bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish.

"'I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.'"

First Thoughts

Think about a tree – Imagine touching the bark, looking up at the branches, seeing the leaves, the birds perhaps. Imagine you are the tree, the changes you go through with the different seasons and the life that is contained within your branches. All the time being held in being by God just as all creation is. The Old Testament prophet certainly gives us a special image of the tree and Gods loving nature. As a tree what do you see? How does a leaf 'work'? And what is its purpose? what about a seed, isn't it just amazing how a seed can become a plant or tree. For those of you who are gardeners

you nurture and spend time with your creations. So when the everyday has given way to wonder – through explanation and discovery or contemplation – can we see these things as images of God’s power and a metaphor for the process of growth in our own spiritual life? Perhaps we could if we spent more time just sitting with a plant or beside a tree?

Hymn: 138 Nourished by the rainfall, the earth can come alive (verses 1 & 3)

1. Nourished by the rainfall, the earth can come alive; woodlands swell with splendour, the moors and meadows thrive. Flowers of every colour now raise their heads in pride, praising God their maker throughout the countryside. Each flower has its purpose, and every petal its place, each celebrates glory, each speaks of God’s good grace. All, all of creation delights to worship the Lord, Let those in God’s image respond in deed and word.

3. Every land and nation, each woman, child and man, find their root and reason before the world began; all by God were destined to hear the Saviour’s call, and choose to give him nothing, or gladly give him all. Each soul has its purpose, and every child has its place, each celebrates glory, each speaks of God’s good grace. All, all of creation delights to worship the Lord, Let those in God’s image respond in deed and word.

Pablo Fernandez Badillo (b1949) English version John L Bell (b1949) Music: Pablo Fernandez Badillo (b1949)

(Website) 140 Lord your hands have formed this world - <https://youtu.be/8YrXcZtxGU4>

Gospel Reading: Mark 4: 26 – 34 (The Message) Never Without a Story

26-29 Then Jesus said, “God’s kingdom is like seed thrown on a field by a man who then goes to bed and forgets about it. The seed sprouts and grows—he has no idea how it happens. The earth does it all without his help: first a green stem of grass, then a bud, then the ripened grain. When the grain is fully formed, he reaps—harvest time!

30-32 “How can we picture God’s kingdom? What kind of story can we use? It’s like an acorn. When it lands on the ground it is quite small as seeds go, yet once it is planted it grows into a huge oak tree with thick branches. Eagles nest in it.”

33-34 With many stories like these, he presented his message to them, fitting the stories to their experience and maturity. He was never without a story when he spoke. When he was alone with his disciples, he went over everything, sorting out the tangles, untying the knots.

Reflection

May the words of my mouth, the thoughts and meditations of all our hearts and minds be acceptable to you our Lord and Saviour, Amen

In Canticum of the Sun, St Francis reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us: “Praise be to you, my Lord,

through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruits with coloured flowers and herbs”.

And Thomas Merton says: A tree gives glory to God by being a tree. For in being what God means it to be, it is obeying him. The more a tree is like itself it is like him. And this lovely poem by Wendell Berry gives us further reflection:

I go among trees and sit still.
All my stirring becomes quiet
around me like circles on water.
My tasks lie in their places where I left them, asleep like cattle.

Then what is afraid of me comes
and lives a while in my sight.
What it fears in me leaves me,
and the fear of me leaves it.
It sings, and I hear its song.

Then what I am afraid of comes.
I live for a while in its sight.
What I fear in it leaves it,
and the fear of it leaves me.
It sings, and I hear its song.

After days of labour,
mute in my consternation,
I hear my song at last,
and I sing it. As we sing,
the day turns, the trees move.

In his book – *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* Thomas Berry, Christian ‘geologist’ and prophet wrote ‘Earth was God’s great work and to serve in that great work is humanity’s highest calling’ and as we know from watching programmes like the Blue Planet, hundreds of species a week are becoming extinct because of how we are choosing to live. We need to remember that we too are earthlings, after all Adam was sculpted from *adamah*, which is the Hebrew word for ‘earth’). We may not have the knowhow or the power to save the earth alone, but we can serve the earth and nurture it as best we can. As a Church and as individuals we can do our bit in stirring the hearts of people to the growing awareness of earth’s interrelatedness and sacredness in order to create an environment in which God’s ‘nature’ flourishes and there is a better balance to ecosystems.

In her writing, Sallie McFague suggests imagining the world as God’s body. This is not intended to describe God – it would be a very limited description! – but rather, an invitation to think of God’s creation in a fresh way, as sacramental with the presence of the invisible God. We might then see ourselves more as gardeners, caretakers, co-creators and friends of a world that gives us life and sustenance, for the trees and other creatures are dependent on us to do this for itself and for us. In the recreation of an environment in which God’s ‘nature’ flourishes.

After all the natural world, when we look to it can teach us about the nature of God, as well as our place in creation. When we are present to nature, God teaches us through its seasons. The readings today describe the place of trees in the cycle of being. From the tiniest of seeds a great mustard scrub can grow up and provide a home for birds. When I was out walking last week and thinking about the service today, I took a couple of photographs of trees, one of which will appear on the website, on You Tube and in the paper reflections. The trees are so full of colour just now and I stood and watched the birds zip in and out for a while too. The reading from the prophet Ezekiel reflects on some of the qualities of trees, especially as a symbol of hope. Trees appear throughout Scripture and are a cosmic symbol of wholeness. The tree of life that appears in the Genesis story reappears in the last chapter of Scripture when its leaves will be for the healing of the nations. In my walk I also saw a group of 3 trees, which I should have taken a photo of, but will do hopefully soon as it reminded me of the story that I told in school assemblies some years ago about 3 trees. After they had reached their full growth, one became a feeding trough, the other a treasure box which held gold and one became the cross on which Jesus was crucified.

Thomas Merton said: 'A tree gives glory to God by being a tree. For in being what God means it to be it is obeying God. It consents to God's creative love. It is expressing an idea which is in God and which is not distinct from the essence of God, and therefore a tree imitates God by being a tree.'

Trees as we may know can live for 100 or more years. Think about a tree that you are familiar with, whether in your garden, or even the ones that line the drive into St Boswells, if in your garden how old is the tree. There are a three in the manse garden, they are just young things though two were planted when the house was built, the other was put there one year that the St Boswells Primary 7's did an assembly about growing and had been thinking about trees. All the staff, which included me, were presented with young Witch Hazel trees – and Hugh kindly planted mine in the manse garden. This like all the other trees we have was once a small seed, a seed that trusted itself into the act of letting go into death, as it sank into the soil, its outer shell cracking open as it absorbed water and nutrients and, of its very nature, began to grow. Roots went down, shoots up. And over many years they have become the trees you are thinking about and know. Some trees of course have roots going as deep as the trunk and branches are high, roots giving its trunk stability to endure through all kinds of weathers, storms and sunshine, wind and rain. Trees also provide homes to the birds that I am sure you have seen sheltering in their branches along with other creatures, or you may be thinking about another kind of tree, some of you are fortunate to have trees that produce fruit. But whatever the kind of tree, the tree 'IS' by letting itself be itself, allowing itself to be the organism God created it to be. And that is all that God asks of any of us – even us human beings. As each year another circle of growth adds a ring to the trunk, it continues to offer a welcoming home to nesting birds, and perhaps fresh fruit and/or berries.

In the same way as we entrust ourselves to God's wisdom, allowing God's life to unfold at its own pace within us, we give glory to God by being ourselves, by consenting to be who God created us to be. Over the past year people have talked about seasons more in terms of daily life, we talk in Church about the season of Lent and Advent, the season of harvest, and at times there is also a season of giving and of stewardship. the seasons reflect what we do in our gardens and in our homes. We also speak about seasons in terms of life, someone may be in the spring, summer, autumn or winter of their lives. Having just had a birthday, I don't feel like spring, but perhaps think of myself as late summer season! What season of your lives are you living in at the moment? What sort of seasons or weathers are enfolding us?

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession (Fran)

Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we thank you for our worship this morning and the opportunity to read your word and hear the preaching that touches our hearts and minds and leaves an image of TREES.

Thank you for our roots, found deep in your love and care; and in our relationship with you as our loving Lord. Our roots of church and fellowship, of home and family, and friends and neighbours, all part of the community you give to each one of us.

We thank you for the trunk, showing our growth and development as people and as Christians. We thank you for your nurturing and your provision of people throughout our lives who travel the path of faith with us.

We thank you for the branches, that flow in different directions as our paths travel through life. Each person with their own gifts and abilities, each with their own life story and experiences: each moving to the call of God.

We thank you for the leaves, blossom and fruits that remind us of your blessings for all people, especially those who hear and acknowledge your call.

We thank you God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit for your place in our lives and our refuge in your loving kindness.

You are our God, almighty and approachable. Beyond our total understanding, but ever attentive and close and we give you our praise and thanks.

Loving God, we would pray for your world and our neighbours in it, help us to believe in the glorious possibilities that you open up for us: help us to believe that men and women can be healed: that sorrow really can be turned to joy: that hunger, poverty, injustice and oppression can be done away with, and that peace and goodness and love can be firmly planted in the world to make human relationships, helpful, creative and joyful. Save us from giving in to despair; save us from struggling too hard for the right ends by the wrong means; save us from selling our souls to false dreams of grandeur and power. Set us free from selfish ambition, from the desire that all men should think well of us, from the wrong use of power, from all exploitation of other people.

Give us instead of these things, faith in you and your love, on which we can build and grow and develop our own lives and all our relationships with other people. Let this faith be the mark of the Church so that with failures and the arrogance of the past forgiven we may fulfil your purpose for us again, and create hope and joy in a troubled world.

Loving God we would make our offering to you with prayer: Living God, the world is yours, all human kind is yours, we are yours. WE bring our money, talents, bodies, and brains to you Father, for the sake of all mankind, until the universe rings with undistorted praise to you and we and all humanity stand at your side triumphant; with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: 181 For the beauty of the earth (verses 1, 3 and 5) - <https://youtu.be/hh4WlpxxUMo>

1. For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies, for the love which from our birth over and around us lies:

Christ, our God, to you we raise this our sacrifice of praise.

3. For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's delight, for the mystic harmony linking sense to sound and sight.

Christ, our God, to you we raise this our sacrifice of praise.

5. For each perfect gift and sign of your love so freely given, graces human and divine, flowers of earth and buds of heaven:

Christ, our God, to you we raise this our sacrifice of praise.

Folliot Sandford Pierpoint (1835 – 1917), Music: David Evans (1874 – 1948)

Blessing

Living God, open our eyes to the goodness of your creation. Help us to care for it like a gardener, with times for planting, watering, harvesting and rest. Help us to live in the rhythms of nature, treading lightly and hearing your voice call softly in the evening and be with us as we Go in peace to love and serve your beautiful world, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit..

Amen, Amen, Amen

Thank you for listening or reading on our Churches website and our Church You Tube Channel - [Four Kirks on The Tweed - YouTube](#) - (Uploaded on a Sunday afternoon). You can also listen to these reflections by phoning our broadcasting phone link on: 01896 404491 which will be recorded during the service and uploaded later in the day. There are Reflections on the Quay on BBC1 and a Service on BBC Scotland channel (9) also.