

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – 1 July 2018

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Rev Tina Kemp, Minister of Helensburgh with Rhu and Shandon, for her thoughts on the sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

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2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27

David's grief at the deaths of Saul and Jonathan leads to this poetic lament, which is a tribute to the fallen father and son. Surprising is the fact that David eulogises so eloquently about his arch enemy Saul, who wanted him dead. These verses look at Saul from a completely human standpoint and remind us of his significance to Israel over the years; providing leadership, national unity, security and prosperity. The deaths of Saul and Jonathan embody disastrous defeat for Israel and the verses end on a note of despair with no hope for the future. While David's words are those of anguish – and significantly contain no mention of God – we know that the author himself will rise up to bring victory to the nation.

Psalm 130

This penitential psalm begins with a heartfelt cry to God from the depths of alienation. It is unattributed and the context from which it comes is unclear. In eight short verses, it moves quickly from intense desire to humble confession and repentance, to confident expectation and finally joyful expectation for the writer and for the nation. The individualism of the first six verses give way to a community-wide appeal for hope with the certainty of God's unfailing love and redemptive power.

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

This passage focuses around Paul's collection of funds for the Jerusalem church. The money would meet economic needs among the Jewish congregations, which tended to be less wealthy than their Gentile counterparts, but it would also emphasise unity between the two. These verses not only encourage readers to think about how we use our resources of time, talents and money but about how our actions might reflect Gospel values. The Corinthians are urged to give generously in the knowledge that God has already provided abundantly for them. Christ gave up everything so that others might receive the wealth of God's grace.

Mark 5:21-43

These verses are an example of the Markan Sandwich – a technique used by Mark whereby he interrupts a story with what appears to be an unrelated narrative. Here, the stories of the young girl and the woman come together to illustrate powerfully Jesus' supreme rule

over life and death. In the healing of Jairus' daughter, Jesus is revealed here for the first time as having power over death. At the same time, in the story of the woman with persistent bleeding, Jesus allows Himself to be defiled (in the eyes of the law) in order to make her clean and offer her new life. Culturally, the young girl was approaching the age customary for marriage. She was born in the same year when the woman began continuous bleeding. One stopped bleeding, which restored her life while the other had life restored, so she could continue to "bleed" and produce life. Here we are reminded that not only do we worship a God of infinite power, but one of immeasurable compassion and tenderness who is sensitive to our sufferings.

Sermon ideas

Our passages today are a reminder that God can use even the slightest thread of hope to do more than we can imagine. David, despairing in the loss of a friend and the defeat of a nation, rises to become the greatest of kings. The writer of the Psalm moves from anguish to certainty by trusting in God who keeps promises. In the Corinthians passage we learn that the smallest of gifts can reap riches if given in the spirit of Christ, who gave all that we might inherit the kingdom. In our Gospel passage, we see how words of simple faith—or perhaps desperation—transform lives. Our faith does not need to be refined, eloquent or shaped in the traditional wording of the creeds to be worthy of notice. We can be rich or poor, have everything or nothing, be distinguished or destitute, still God hears every sigh, every deep and heartfelt longing as prayer, even if it comes only because we have nowhere else to turn.

Time with children

Engage the children in a discussion about when they have been told '*don't touch*' (responses might be the cooker, a hot radiator, paperwork, a sibling's possessions). Explain that some things are not meant to be touched while other things are because they help us to learn about the world. Have some objects e.g. a shell, feathers, piece of fruit etc. Blindfold a volunteer and ask them to guess what the objects are. Tell the story of the woman who had been ill for 12 years who touched the cloak of Jesus because she believed it would make her well. She shouldn't have touched Jesus' cloak as it was against the rules of the time but she had so much faith in Jesus' power to heal that she did it anyway. And she was healed. Jesus did not say, "*Don't touch.*" He accepted the woman and showed kindness to her. She was healed because of her great faith. Jesus accepts each one of us and, although we can't physically touch Him, we can be touched, comforted and healed by His love.

Prayers

Prayer of approach and confession

Lord God of a new morning,
and of all our days and nights,
we gather here to praise You
in sound and silence,
in story and song
with voices and hearts eager to know You
and to move a little closer to You.

Life giving God,
You have called us from many places,
along many roads
and through many histories
to this moment and place,
that we might be reminded
of Your faithfulness.

You have heard the song of our souls,
mingled with tears and laughter,
burning with anger and shouting with joy
as we navigate life's pathways
with You as our constant companion.

You have shared flesh with us,
known blood pulsing through Your veins
and flowing from Your wounds;
experienced death and isolation
so that You might know for Yourself
our struggles and our sorrows.

You came back to us;
threw off the weight of dirt and stone,
to unearth a promise made before time,
and hand it to us, fresh and clean,
and full of life.

And You have stayed with us, Lord,
even as our song has fallen silent,
our minds have become closed
and our words have become sharp,
like a sword in Your side.

How can we help but seek forgiveness
when we have failed to recognise You?
How can we begin to understand grace
when it comes into even the hardest of hearts?
How can we not go from here,
amazed all over again,
at the mystery of a God
who sees potential in our reluctance
and has the patience to pursue it?

Lord God, You have blessed us and freed us
from all our failures.
You have put Your trust in us
that we might bring blessing and freedom
to others through Your word.

May our voices always be praising You,
may our actions always be sharing You,
may our hearts always be open to You,
and may our lives be a living sacrifice to You
so that all may see and hear Your glory.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession

We will never know, Lord God,
what makes us so worthy of Your attention.
Whether we are like Jairus
who threw himself at Your feet
in full view of the crowd;
or whether we are like the woman
who dared to brush against You
only because she was hidden from view,
You notice us.

You see our need.
You acknowledge our hope.
You glimpse the little bit of faith
that keeps us hanging on
in the hope of a miracle.
Thank You, Lord,
for recognising us in the noisiness of life
and the confusion of our souls.

As we pray now for our world,
as we pray now for Your people
in all their needfulness and searching,
notice us, Lord.
See our need for ourselves and for others,
recognise the hope we have for creation
and accept our faith,
whether it is rich in its abundance
or modest in its poverty.

We lay the world at Your feet now, Lord God,
the many places and situations
which seek Your loving influence
and liberating intervention;
the many people
who yearn for the certainty of Your presence.
Turn to face them, Lord,
That they might recognise You
and know comfort and consolation.
All this we ask in the name and for the sake
of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Musical suggestions

- CH4 180 – “Give thanks with a grateful heart” – a hymn of praise remembering Jesus’ gift of life to all.
- CH4 719 – “The one who longs to make us whole” – Jesus as reconciler and healer.
- CH4 350 – “When Jesus the healer passed through Galilee” – an account of Jesus’ healing miracles, including reference to today’s Gospel passage.
- CH4 351 – “Jesus’ hands were kind hands” – a simple call to practical mission.
- CH4 718 – “We cannot measure how you heal” – corporate call for healing for ourselves and the world.
- CH4 724 “Christ’s is the world in which we move” – corporate call for healing for ourselves and the world.
- “In Christ alone” – affirmation of Christ’s power and presence in all of life.*
- “I am a new creation” – the transforming power of God.*

*Can be found in various song books, such as *Complete Mission Praise* or *The Source*