



The Church of Scotland

Place for Pause

A WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHURCH AND COUNTRY
17th - 22nd August 2020

THURSDAY 20TH AUGUST • TO THE MOUNTAINS TO LOOK AHEAD

Reading - Deuteronomy 24:1-9

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the Valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. And the Lord said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, 'I will give it to your offspring.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord, and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day. Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigour unabated. And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended. And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Reflection

Seeing the future
but not allowed to touch it
so that it must live
within your imagination...

In such a place
Moses found himself
having reached Mount Nebo:
the whole promise of God
stretching out before him,
beyond daring,
a delicious treat
never to own...

...yet,
such a view
is the view faith offers.
Mountainsides stretch the distance,
but to get there
you descend
and travel.

May we,
with eyes of faith,
travel in the long promise of God,
with story and imagination,
trusting we journey within the promise
carried from one generation to the next,
honouring each other
in the passing.

Prayer

Good and gracious God, we have climbed and have reached the top.
We have set out and have arrived. We have aimed and have hit our targets.

When all goes well, when the sun is high, we praise you.

And then at other times, we have set out but got lost.
We've put our boots on the hillside but have run out of energy
and have had to turn back, disappointed - a feeling of failure dampening our spirits.

When it doesn't work out, when the sun is hidden, still we praise you.

Sometimes we get to look but not to touch.
Sometimes we get to walk but only in the valleys, the high places denied to us.
Sometimes we reach summit cairns but find that the mist obscures our view entirely.
Sometimes we see everything and yet find that it is not ours to have -
a promised land that will be for others but for us, only a distant horizon.

When certain of your promises remain, for us, unfulfilled, still we praise you.

Go in the strength of the Lord,
In paths he has marked for your feet;
Follow the light of his word,
Shrink not from the dangers you meet.
His presence your steps shall attend,
His fulness your wants shall supply;
On him, till your journey shall end,
Unwavering faith shall rely.
AMEN.

Daily Activity

High Places

As part of this week of prayer, the Moderator - along with two intrepid companions - is attempting a non-stop climb of Scotland's four Cardinal Munros; that is, the most northerly, most westerly, most southerly and most easterly of the Munros. The route will take them from Sutherland to Skye to the shores of Loch Lomond to the Angus glens.

No need to be quite so energetic!

But why not take yourself to the highest spot in your community?

What can you see as you look around you?

What are the key landmarks?

From such a spot, why not pray for your community, for the mission of the Church in your community and that God would bless your community?

(If for whatever reason you are unable to climb to that spot, why not go there in your imagination?)