

Ceres, Kemback & Springfield Community Parish Church of Scotland

Ceres Church

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

31st July 2022

Let us worship God

Welcome

Call to Worship

‘Five Senses’

A Poem, by Hazel Aitken

Lighting the Christ Candle

All say: For every time we make a mistake and we decide to start again: we light this flame. For every time we are lonely and we let someone be our friend: we light this flame. For every time we are disappointed and we choose to hope: we light this flame.

Silence

Hymn 120 God we praise you. God we bless you

Prayers of Approach & The Lord’s Prayer

read by Margaret Matthews

Acts 9 v31

Reflection on The Acts of the Apostles

I asked Anne to read and repeat this single verse so as to make an impression on us ... it’s one of those verses in Acts which is short but which summarises a mass of activity ...

Can I suggest if we were writing such a verse today about ourselves we could write the following ..

Meanwhile, the Church throughout Scotland, especially in the area called Ceres, Kemback, Springfield and Cupar chose to focus on what God was asking them to do in their parishes ... they forgot to be suspicious and frightened ... they read their scriptures and were fired with enthusiasm to bring the good news of the gospel to their neighbours ... they chose not to be distracted by all the nay sayers and doubters both in the church and in the community ... they understood that giving away their goodwill ... their companionship ... their money ... the things they held dear and had held onto for a long time was powered by the Holy Spirit herself ... by prayer ... through meaningful discussion ... because of what they heard from people in their communities ... hearing the stories of isolation and growing poverty ... telling one another about the hardships and the keen hopes of their neighbours ... by consultation in cafe conversations they grew to understand what God was asking of them ... this took time and not a little courage and they were gifted everything they needed by God who realised they understood what she was asking of them ... and they started giving away and giving of themselves and their resources ... around them dangers and fears pressed in ... some were cautious and shook their heads - but enough of them realised their goal, led by the Spirit, they knew where their mandate came from ... and with all their being ... all their breath focused on bringing life and hope to their parish, empowered by their love of Christ Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit they grew in number and strength ...

Musical Interlude by Sheena

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and Sheena's own arrangement of Bach's, My heart ever faithful

Gospel St Luke 12 vv 13 - 21

Homily

All you need is love ... Really?

A Reflection by Rev Ron Ferguson

(summarised)

from 'Love Your Crooked Neighbour, Thoughts on Breath, Bread, Breasts and Brokenness'

St Andrews Press, 1999

Bread and breath

Bread and breath: that's what we need. In a sense that's all we need. It may not be all we want, but God isn't Santa Claus. This is for real: for the cold days, for the dark days, in the valleys.

Breath is fundamental to our life. Without breath in our lungs we literally cannot live. In the Old Testament, the word for 'breath' in the Hebrew is *Ruach*. It also means 'spirit'. In the New Testament, the Greek word for 'breath' is *Pneuma*. It also means 'spirit.'

So in the Bible, the words for 'breath' and 'spirit' are virtually interchangeable. Without this Godbreathed spirit, we are not human beings.

This notion goes right back to the ancient story of Creation.

... the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a human being. (Genesis 2 vv 4-7)

... What about bread? It's as basic as breath. And God provides it too. When the Israelite slaves made their escape to freedom in the Exodus from Egypt, they rightly wondered where their next meal would come from. God promised he would rain down bread from heaven.

It came in the form of *manna*.

Manna in Hebrew simply means, '*What is it?*' (translation by Angus Campbell)

Every mother knows what manna is. You know, you put down lovely meals for the kids, and they moan, 'What is it?'

The Hebrews kept complaining to Moses, 'Not manna again?' They had manna fried, manna poached, manna scrambled, manna raw. And it tasted like, 'What is it?' They couldn't even have manna and chips ... it was just, well ... manna.

The people got fed up with it. They remembered the good old days.

And the people of Israel also wept again, and said, 'O that we had meat to eat! We remember (as slaves in Egypt!) the fish we ate for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions and garlic ...

... But wait a minute. Weren't their memories just a tad selective? Cucumbers and melons? Were the good old days really that good? What about making bricks out of straw and being lashed by Pharaoh's men? ...

...In the Exodus story, God tells the people in the wilderness that there will be enough for everybody - but if they try to hoard it, it will go bad ...

... Today, there's enough bread going around to feed the world, but we've got it stored in our freezers. And it's going bad on us, spiritually, to the destruction of our souls and ultimately our bodies. We have more than our share of bread ... we even surround ourselves with barbed wire and floodlights to protect our extra goodies, and we don't realise we're in a prison of our own making ...

How can we be persuaded to release our grip on the extra bread we're hoarding? We can't live by bread alone. The bread goes bad on us if we have no spiritual vision. And this brings us back to breath. Without the God-breathed spirit, we are dead women and men ...

... In the Scottish Presbyterian tradition, at Holy Communion we pass the bread from one to another: this broken bread. 'This is my body, broken for you' The symbolism of this passing from hand to hand is important.

I can't receive the Bread of Life unless my neighbour starves spiritually. If I hoard the loaves in my freezer, my neighbour dies physically. What I don't notice is that I die spiritually in the process ...

... If we live in a society in which the neighbour is there to be ripped off or abandoned in the wilderness, our bread becomes for us what the Bible calls, 'the bread of bitterness.' Christ is in the neighbour, and Christ is in the bread. He is at the heart of the sacrament of the universe.

I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst ... Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread which came down from heaven, that a person may eat of it and not die ...

... And he promises, this Christ ... he promises, *Blessed is the one who shall eat in the Kingdom of God.*

Hymn 641 Seek ye first the Kingdom of God

Prayer of Intercession & Thanksgiving

The WCC Prayer cycle asks us to pray for the Republic of Congo. Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe ... the Christian organisation Open Doors which works to help persecuted Christians around the world asks us to remember Protestant Christians in Mexico who from time to time face serious opposition - and we pray for all Christians in that country ... for blessing and peace between and through them ...

This week can we have a moment's quiet while we pray for Ukraine and all her people wherever they are in the world ... for the Ukrainian tanker ship, Razoni sailing through a war zone loaded with corn out of Odessa to feed the world's poorest ... and let's pray for 9 years old Lillia Valutyte ... murdered in Lincolnshire last Thursday ... praying for her peace .. her distraught family and shocked community ... and for those we know who we quietly pray for ...

‘Reaching Out’

A Poem by Hazel Aitken

We sing: *Ubi caritas et amor, Ubi caritas, Deus ibi est*
(Where there is charity and love, God is there)

Hymn 153 Great is thy faithfulness

Sending out

M. As we go now from this place into the week ahead, let us be assured that the God of justice and truth is beyond time and space.

All: Let us hope and trust that God's love and compassion wants to prevail in us and through.

Benediction