THE SUNDAY FOCUS

Weekly Worship from Gladsmuir & Longniddry Parish Churches
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Today's Bible readings

Psalm 148 ("Praise for God's Universal Glory")

Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!
Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!
Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.
He established them for ever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,
fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!
Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!
Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!
Young men and women alike, old and young together!
Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven.
He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him.
Praise the Lord! Amen. *(NRSV)*

John 13:31-35 ("The New Commandment")

When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come." I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' Amen. *(NRSV)*

Today's hymns

Every new morning (CH:213) *God is love, his the care* (CH:193)
One more step along the world I go (CH4:530) *The Lord is King* (CH:129)

This week Robin is "preaching in" the vacancy at Prestongrange Parish Church, Prestonpans, where he has started serving as interim moderator.

This week's sermon comes from Frances.

My parents were keen dancers and avid country music fans. Many a Saturday night found us dancing with family friends in our sitting room to the velvet voices of Jim Reeves, Marty Robbins, Hank Williams and the like. But it's the poignant words of Hank Snow that are etched in my memory and stay with me even today:

Rocking alone in an old rocking chair,
I saw an old mother with silvery hair,
She seemed so neglected by those who should care,
rocking alone in an old rocking chair.

It wouldn't take much just to gladden her heart,
just some small remembrance on somebody's part.
A letter would brighten her lonely life there,
rocking alone in her old rocking chair.

I look at her and I think what a shame,
the ones who forgot her, she loves just the same.
And I think of angels as I see her there,
rocking alone in an old rocking chair.

That song came to mind the other night as I cuddled my toddler granddaughter down to sleep in her cot. Her wee face looking up at me she gave me my order, "Ganny, lie down on mine elephant and rub my handy till I sleeping".

I gently took the offered hand as I lay down on the floor with my head and shoulders on this rather large soft toy. As I soothed her to sleep, it came to me, that there's many guises to caring.

We're all familiar with the care given by doctors, nurses and teachers. We know all too well about care homes. There are day care centres, there are unpaid carers, childcare providers, even doggy day care. Caring is acknowledging Jesus in commonplace activities of life as we walk through the day and affect those we meet.

Many of you may remember the images that broadcast around the globe from the World Triathlon Series in September 2016 in Mexico. Brothers Alistair and Jonny Brownlee were tipped to be in the top three places. Jonny was leading comfortably but the heat began to take its toll leaving him weaving across the course in the final few hundred metres. A dazed Jonny was helped by brother Alistair who shunned the chance to win the race to come to the aid of his younger sibling, putting his arm around him and all but carrying him over the finishing line.

In an interview later, Alistair said: "If he had conked out before the finish line, medical aid might not have got to him in time, it was a dangerous situation. It was an immediate reaction to do it for my brother but I would have done it for anyone".

Police officers work in an environment of forced care. No matter what call officers are sent to, they are forced to provide care to victims of theft, car crashes, murders, assaults, domestic violence…. you get the idea. Whenever they go, they are expected to be at 100 per cent, providing excellence in care and carrying out the letter of the law. Regardless of who they find when they get out of their car, they are charged with a professional oath to provide respect and dignity to whoever needs assistance because their profession demands a culture of helping others.

That's a pretty tall order.

Remember when we used to write letters? We took time to think over what we were trying to say: the cherished love letters tied with ribbon; the letters of condolence that meant so much. Sadly, it's so easy to fire off a text or e-mail without stopping to think what the consequences might be.

A Church of Scotland minister who is a regular columnist in *Life and Work* wrote recently: "These days I spend a reasonable bit of my time supporting leaders in a variety of faith-based charities and churches. That experience gives me an insight into just how brutal and wounding words can be. And that, tragically, includes for people in leadership roles in the church. I am thinking about incredible and inspirational people who are doing all that they can in profoundly challenging circumstances to navigate through choppy waters. Their inboxes are often full of toxic bile from those who claim to care. I admit to having been a recipient, it very nearly broke me had it not been for the care of family and friends."

The words caring and compassion go well together, don't they? The word "compassion" encapsulates the idea that care isn't just looking out for ourselves but also expressing kindness towards others. Hopefully, care is an integral part of how we interact with those around us. It's good to be aware of everyone's best interests. We are all interdependent so it's important to care both for ourselves and those in our lives.

Caring is a powerful expression of love and kindness. As Christians, we are called to care for one another and our communities, but what does that really mean? Over and over again, Jesus teaches us to show compassion, from acts of service like washing his friends' feet to loving words spoken with intention, the encouragement to "remain in my love".

Whether we support someone when they're down or by simply being a listening ear, caring for others is the greatest gift we can give. Just by being there for each other serves as a reminder that we are not alone and that we are living our lives as Jesus commanded.

"Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another". Amen.

May the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace;
singing, share our joy with all;
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

God will be our Shepherd as we go our way
and will not forsake us when we go astray.
Even though the load of life is hard to bear,
we must not forget that God is always there.

(CH:256: Spanish traditional hymn; translated Alvin Schutmaat)

Praying for others

Lord Christ,
you commanded us to love one another.
We sometimes despair at the hatred rather than love that we see in our world:
Israel, Gaza and across the Middle East are especially in our prayers today.
We ask that your people may hear this commandment above the clamour of war and through the fog of distrust and suspicion.

We ask that everyone who is working for peace in troubled regions – whether in high-powered political talks or by working quietly with others from across their perceived divide – be blessed by you so that their work may prosper.

Though we thank you for the blessings of modern technology – the internet, email, texts – we recognise its dangers. We pray you help us think before we press send and challenge us to ask ourselves if our communications are written with your Son's greatest commandment in mind. We pray that those keyboard warriors, hiding behind the anonymity of the internet, remember the one they are about to abuse and that they are their brother or sister.

We also ask you to bless those who suffer vile abuse over the internet:
the politicians receiving death threats, those who speak out for what they believe in who are met, not with reasoned argument from anyone who disagrees with them, but with hate-filled bile. Support them and encourage them in continuing their work despite the abuse.

We ask all this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

Weekly Updates ...

Christian Aid Coffee Morning: The Longniddry Christian Aid team will be holding a coffee morning on Saturday 4th November from 10am until noon in Longniddry Church halls. Tea, coffee, home baking and chat to be enjoyed by all. Donations will go to Christian Aid. We hope you can join us.

Gladsmuir Craft Group: Wednesdays from 10.30am each fortnight (next meeting 8th November) in Gladsmuir Church. All welcome!

New Age Kurling: Tuesdays from 2-4pm in Room 3, Longniddry Church. This is for anyone who might like to exercise their mind and body while making new friends. All ages and levels of physical ability most welcome.

Wednesday Club: Wednesdays from 2.30-4pm in Room 3, Longniddry Church. Come along and enjoy a variety of activities, entertainment, chat and tea/coffee. (Contact Janet 07766574123)

Sporting Memories Group: Thursdays from10.30am – 12 noon in Room 3, Longniddry Church. Come along, listen and share sporting memories with other older sports fans.

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