

ORPHIR and STENNESS CHURCH
Service Orphir Church 25.09.22; Prop21C
Transcript

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Introduction and Intimations

Introduction and Prayer

Good morning. It's good to see you again. Welcome to our worship. Wherever you come from today, your presence enriches us all in this time of fellowship and celebration together.

This week we think about what it means to live by our Christian principles. Jesus tells a parable about an unnamed rich man and a poor man called Lazarus. In this life, one of them has all the comforts while the other has nothing; but in the afterlife, their fates are reversed. Jesus challenges his audience not to neglect the demands of justice in this life. Paul (or somebody writing on his behalf) warns Timothy that the love of money is the root of all evil and often leads to people abandoning their faith.

The readings today ask us to consider whether we walk the walk or just talk the talk. Can we begin to build the kingdom of God here and now?

In a moment of quietness, let us let go of the cares and the worries of the past week, and know the presence of God among us.

Pause

Gathering prayer:

Gracious and loving God,
as we meet together, inspire us by your word, renew us with your Spirit and unite us as we worship you, creator, redeemer and sustainer. Amen.

Call to Worship:

Praise the Lord! Come, praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord, all creation – sun, moon and shining stars,
Praise the Lord, sea and land, animals, birds and all nature,
Rulers and nations, young and old together,
Let everything in heaven and earth praise the Lord.
Let us worship God:

1st. Hymn: 286 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!

Opening Prayer and Lord's Prayer

We come together today before our God, a God of justice and of love;
our God who hears the cries of those in need,
and who calls us in our lives to show his love to others.
May we draw near to God, and may God draw near to us: Father, Son, Spirit.

To the God of kindness and compassion, of fairness and justice,
God of infinite love and boundless hope, who sees all and hears all,
who calls us to life in him, we bring our worship and our prayers.

In His presence,
we acknowledge that, too often, we have focused on the wrong things;
and, through thoughtlessness, or presumption, or fear,
we have turned away from people who need our help;

we have not shown the abundant life we claim to have in Jesus Christ.
May he re-tune our hearts and minds to his Spirit and his perfect love, motivating us to find ways of helping, even when we feel that we have little to offer.

May God restore us, and guide us, so that we may never turn away from doing *something* because we cannot do *everything*. Wherever we are, may we shine forth the light of his love and his generosity to everyone.

We rejoice that God is ever ready to forgive us when we go wrong, ever willing to help us begin again;
that it is not too late, because every day is a new chance to serve him by loving others, and by being the people he made us to be.

We give thanks that God reaches out to us all, caring about how we treat each other, encouraging us in our lives to work together to make our world a better place.
Thanks be to God.

We bring our prayers in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray, saying:
*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

Readings: Anne will read for us today:

1st Reading:

1 Timothy 6: 6-19

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

The Good Fight of Faith

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.

As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.
Amen.

2nd Reading:

Luke 16: 19-31

The Rich Man and Lazarus

'There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames." But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us." He said, "Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment." Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them." He said, "No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" Amen. Thanks be to God.

2nd. Hymn: 153 Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father

Message:

Maybe you remember the song, originally from the Andrews Sisters, but by lots of people since then:

Money is the root of all evil; Money is the root of all evil

Won't contaminate myself with it Take it away, take it away, take it away.

We often hear that saying, 'Money is the root of all evil'. It seems to suggest that money and the monetary system are responsible for all the evil in the world, and that men and women are willing to do terrible things to each other for financial gain. Certainly, people can be pushed to the limits of their morality, and beyond, in pursuit of money, but clearly it can't be true to say that money is the root of all evil. There is plenty of evil in the world not related to money: think of greed; envy; prejudice; discrimination, abuse

Money of itself is harmless: neither good nor evil. It is a means to an end. As George Bernard Shaw, and many others, have said, "**Lack** of money is the root of all evil." The reason 'evils' like world hunger and poverty exist is because of *lack* of money. Because of lack of money, or from fear of being short of money, people can forget their basic values, and commit all sorts of moral and criminal acts. Shortage of money, or the desire to obtain and amass money, lead people, and governments, to do evil things to one another.

In everyday life, valuing money, and what it can buy, above all else, as society has done throughout history, has created generations of greedy people, greedy companies, greedy administrations. As we learn frequently from TV and social media, people with plenty of money can indulge themselves as they please, and large companies and corporations, loaded with money, can do untold damage to the world and its peoples through negligence or through the pursuit of profit. On the other hand, equally clearly, money can increase our ability to do good in the world, as we see in a whole range of charitable operations.

Back to the song, and the saying, and to the point I hope you're anticipating: 'Money is the root of all evil': one of the most *misquoted* sayings in the Bible. The scripture doesn't say that money is the root of all evil: it says that *the love of money* is the root of all evil. Money is not the problem; the problem is people's love or lust for money. The Bible has a continuing theme that men and women worship false gods, including money, at their peril.

Paul knew, as Jesus knew, as God knows, that wealth can be a major stumbling block in the way of living the abundant life that Jesus offers, living life in all its fulness. Too much money can easily get in our way, and too little money brings its own problems and temptations. Whether through the song or the saying, or from the familiar story of the rich man and Lazarus, the obvious message of today's readings is clear: "You cannot serve God and wealth". Jesus states that fact categorically just before telling the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man.

The sin of the rich man - he is usually called Dives - was that he never noticed Lazarus. For him, Lazarus had become part of the Landscape. It was not what he did, but what he did not do that got him into hell. His was the punishment of *the man who never noticed*. There is a warning for us here too - we may not think of ourselves as either Lazarus or Dives, but we should consider the five brothers, and take careful note of the scriptures while there is still time.

The Letter continues with a tremendous challenge to Timothy, to 'fight the good fight of the faith'. The writer addresses him as 'man of God' - an honourable and encouraging title. He reminds him of the commitment to Christ that he has made, and urges him to step aside from money and all the rest, and to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Reminders and instructions here for us as well. Most of us, whether at baptism, or at confirmation or at some other time, have declared our faith, and made that same commitment. We are to keep the faith, remembering that our life and work and witness must be fit for Christ to see. The question we must all ask ourselves is not 'Is this good enough to pass the judgement of others?' but: 'Is this good enough to win the approval of Christ?' Can we hope to gain the accolade 'Well done, good and faithful servant'?

Our reading ends with advice to 'those who in the present age are rich'. We maybe tend to think of the early Church as being made up entirely of poor people and slaves, but it is clear from this passage, and from references elsewhere, that it had wealthy members too. Here they are not condemned for being wealthy, nor are they instructed to give all their money away, but they are advised about what to do and what not to do with it.

They are 'not to be haughty': their riches must not make them proud. They must not think themselves any better than other people just because they have more money. Nothing in this world, least of all the possession of wealth, gives anyone the right to look down on anybody else. Nor should they 'set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment'.

Every day we see evidence of how fortunes can be made and lost. Many people have lost property and businesses and sources of income during the Covid pandemic. Instead, they are to use their wealth to do good, and to be generous and ready to share with others less fortunate. By the wise use of their wealth, they will indeed store up for themselves the treasure that does not rust or decay, the treasure that cannot be stolen away, a good foundation in the world to come. Every time we are in a position to give help, and fail to do so, lessens the wealth laid up for us in the world to come. Every time we give helps us towards taking hold of 'the life that really is life'.

Christianity teaches that wealth is not a sin, but rather a great responsibility. Wealth that does nothing other than increasing personal pride, that enriches no one but the wealthy person, leads to ruin, because it impoverishes the soul. But if wealth is used to bring help and comfort to others, in becoming poorer, the wealthy person becomes richer. In time and in eternity, 'it is more blessed to give than to receive'.

The bottom line? Three things:

1. We must not make wealth the most important thing in our lives
2. Whatever we have we must be ready to share with those less fortunate;

3. We must not be the person who didn't notice, for whom the unfortunates and marginalised of our society become only part of the landscape.

Amen. Soli Deo Gloria.

3rd. Hymn: 544 When I needed a neighbour, were you there
During Hymn could I have the Offering brought to the chancel please.

Dedication of Offering

We bring our gifts to you, Lord God, with cheerfulness and a joyful heart.
Grant that with our gifts we may also offer a ready mind and a willing spirit;
the truth of the gospel; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Loving God,
As we give thanks again for our late Queen Elizabeth,
We pray for our new King, Charles III, and his family;
for our new Prime Minister and her government:
grant to them all your wisdom and guidance.

Into your hands, O Lord,
we place the victims of the ways of the world:
the poor, the homeless, the oppressed, the sick, the bereaved.
We pray for people affected by the devastating floods in Pakistan, and in other places as well,
for all who suffer through drought, or storm or fire.
We pray for people and nations torn apart by war, thinking especially of Ukraine, and Yemen,
and Sudan, and many other places. We pray for peace with justice.

We pray for those in our own country who have seen businesses close and jobs disappear
during the pandemic, and for all who struggle to make ends meet in times of rising prices.

As we give thanks to God for the comfort and security of our homes,
for the ready availability of food and water, clothing for our bodies, and shoes for our feet;
for our schools and hospitals, for all these things that we take for granted,
we pray for those for whom home is a tent or a doorway;
for those who struggle to grow food, who walk long distances for water;
who wear cast-offs and go barefoot in the cold;
for schools and hospitals struggling to survive;
for those who take nothing for granted, because they have nothing:
Lord, help us to help them.

May we not be blind to the needs of others, remembering that no fault attaches to them,
that they have not brought their troubles on themselves.
May we all be more aware of the marginalised, those on the edges of our own community.
May we remember those we have left at the gates of our own lives.

Let us bring to God the prayers we carry with us at this time.

Pause

All these prayers we bring in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Choir: 694 Brother, sister, let me serve you

'Tailpiece'

Two Horses in a Field: *an unknown author writes:*

Just up the road from my home is a field, with two horses in it. From a distance, each looks
like every other horse. But if you stop the car, or you are walking by, you will notice

something quite amazing. Looking into the eyes of one horse will disclose that he is blind. His owner has chosen not to have him put down, but has made a good home for him. This alone is amazing.

Listening, you will hear the sound of a bell. Looking around for the source of the sound, you will see that it comes from the smaller horse in the field. Attached to her headcollar is a small bell. It lets her blind friend know where she is, so he can follow her. As you stand and watch these two friends, you see how she is always checking on him, and that he will listen for her bell and then slowly walk to where she is, trusting that she will not lead him astray.

Like the owners of these two horses, God does not throw us away just because we are not perfect or because we have problems or challenges. He watches over us and even brings others into our lives to help us when we are in need. Sometimes we are the blind horse being guided by God and those whom He places in our lives. Other times we are the guide horse, helping others see God.

4th Hymn: 702 Lord in love and perfect wisdom

Blessing

Continue your journey with confidence.

Keep faith with God, for God keeps faith with you.

The Christ who has called us is able to complete what he has begun.

May God shield you in every steep place,

may Christ steady you on every rough path,

may the Spirit go with you through every dark pass.

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with you, and remain with you, now and always. Amen.

Doxology: Hy 786 (Tune: Ae Fond Kiss)