

GODSPACE

Time for prayer and reflection

A grain of Wheat: 4.00pm Sunday 26th April

BEFORE THE SERVICE: *Find a plant as a focus for prayer or set some seeds next to a lit candle together with any names or situations on your heart.*

WELCOME, OPENING SENTENCES AND PRAYERS

Romans 6:5: For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also [in the likeness] of [his] resurrection:

Psalms 92:3: They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God.

God of the Past who has fathered and mothered us. We are here to thank you

God of the future who is always ahead of us. We are here to trust you

God of the present here in the midst of us. We are here to praise you

God of life beyond us within us. We celebrate your love (*Burgess & Galloway, Iona*)

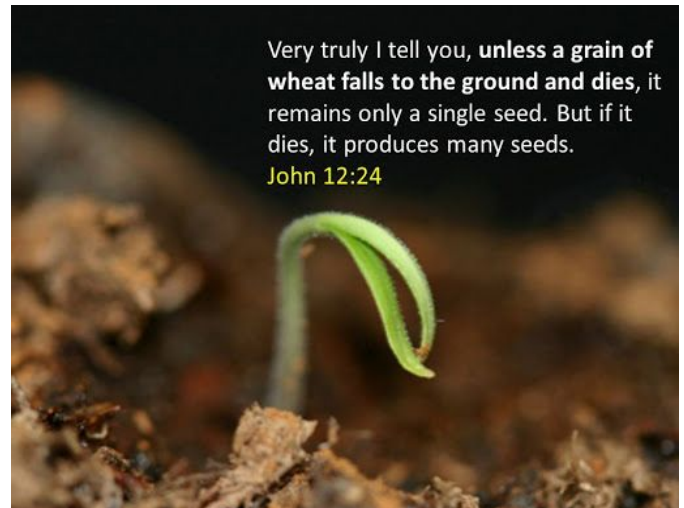
Confession: Wash me clean, God. Forget the sprinkling with gentle showers
Tip a bucket of your forgiveness over me. Tumble me in a wave of your mercy
Drench me in the sea of your love. Then hold me.
Wrap me round in the shawl of your grace. Warm me and name me.
And set my feet on the path that I should go. (*Burgess & Galloway, Iona*) **Absolution+**

READING: JOHN 12:20-26 NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

REFLECTION ON THE READING BY MIKE COX (Full text at the end of Order of Service)

RESPONSES: As winter Trees stretch out our arms to a dark sky
We stretch out in the darkness to find the touch of love
As snowdrops turn their gentle faces to the sun
We long to find in that warmth the promise of peace
As the fire breaks the shell of the seed
So may our pain break the shell of isolation that protects us from ourselves
In the security of darkness, the warmth of sunshine the promise of fire
May we blossom anew in the miracle of your saving love O God.



PRAYER-POEM

With my faith I reach out for the switch in the dark
With my hope I feel for it there in the dark
With my love I know that it is there in the dark
Then my faith was sorely tested in the dark
And my hope was soon depleted in the dark
And my love that's shrivelled slowly in the dark
For the bulb had gone, the fuse had blown, the flex
had snapped and the socket rattled in the dark
Then I remembered the matches in my pocket in the dark. (*Giles Harcourt*).

READING: Every moment and every event of every man's life on earth plants something in his soul. For just as the wind carries thousands of winged seeds, so each moment brings with it gems of spiritual vitality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of men. (*Thomas Merton*)

INTERCESSIONS AND TIME FOR INDIVIDUAL PRAYER

We come in this service to God: **In our need and bringing with us the needs of the world.**
We come to God who comes to us in Jesus: **Who knows by experience what human life is like.**
We come with our faith and with our doubts: **We come with our hopes and with our fears.**
We come as we are, because it is God who invites us. **And has promised never to turn us away.**
(*Iona*)

Time for individual prayer followed by short intercessions. You may wish to focus on seeds or a plant as you pray. We thank God for the seeds he has planted in our lives, our church, community and nation and pray for nourishment and growth and light in the days ahead, especially for those who are isolated, sick, anxious, facing challenges at work or home. We conclude with the Lord's Prayer.

CLOSING PRAYERS

Lord let us not dwell in the past. Nor worry about the future
We cannot undo what is done. We cannot foresee what will come
Let us instead dwell in your peace. Love and be loved, heal and be healed.
We give the past to you and rest in your forgiveness.
We give the future to you and rest in your love.
We live in your light, open our eyes to what we may see.
We love in your love, let your love flow through us, to the fulfilment of your Kingdom. Amen
God of life, **do not darken your light to us,**
God of life, **do not close your joy to us,**
God of life, **do not shut or door to us,**
God of life, **do not refuse your mercy to us.** (*Iona*)

O God of life, crown us with our gladness.
Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth.
Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust.
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace.
Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe and the blessing.....+
(*WCC*)

REFLECTION ON THE BIBLE READING - BY MIKE COX

A few Sundays ago I was due to lead Morning Prayer on a Sunday where the above text was the set New Testament reading. It was the end of March, a week into the lockdown, a time of year when gardeners would be looking to prepare their gardens for the spring, buying plants and sowing seeds into the soil.



The reading from John's gospel tells of the moment when "some Greeks", representing the gentile world, approached Jesus' disciples and, through them, Jesus himself. It is at this moment that Jesus realises that his time had in fact come, that the reason that he had been sent by God would now be fulfilled, having earlier been adamant that his time had not come. It was the interest of those outside the Jewish faith that provoked this realisation in Jesus. During this pivotal moment in Jesus' ministry, Jesus comes out with what perhaps must seem an odd statement: "unless a grain of wheat falls in the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

In this context Jesus was speaking of his approaching death, and that it was necessary if his purpose was truly to bear fruit – including the flowering of his own disciples and others who come to believe to take up the challenge: "Whoever serves me must follow me."

Whilst Jesus spoke about his own ministry and what must follow and why, it seems particularly poignant at this time of lockdown, when many must feel that the seeds of their own lives have been buried, either directly in the suffering that they or those they know who have contracted the covid-19 virus have experienced, or indirectly in the restrictions to their everyday lives. It must truly feel as if the seeds of their current lives have died and been buried, perhaps never to emerge again.

Whilst, as Christians, the gospel we proclaim is one of hope, as represented by Easter Sunday and the resurrection, it is also the bleakness and darkness of Good Friday that precedes it. We do not seek to hide, or, indeed to bury, these moments. There is no doubt that the seeds buried include loved ones lost to this disease, as well as businesses and jobs lost as the economy is mothballed – seeds, to adopt another parable, that have died never to bear fruit. But they also include our relationships with friends and families whom we cannot see physically, social lives, hobbies, interests, holidays and all the other things and more that made up our lives before lockdown. We can still hope that these seeds, businesses, jobs, our every day lives, our church gatherings, currently buried, will one day start to show shoots, sprout and grow again.

But perhaps we can also see those seeds more like those “surprise packets” that contain plant seeds that we sow and which flower into plants which are unexpected, but colourful and glorious for all that. That there are seeds within each one of us of things we did not believe are there, but which now planted are slowly germinating and which are currently flowering or may do so in time. Things like the appreciation of those whose work and dedication has been taken for granted, the chance to communicate in new ways, those volunteering or offering to help in whatever ways they can, our sense of community, the chance to read or take up new interests, the different ways those who can continue to work are finding to get things done, and our relationship with nature, with God’s creation. Many of us feel that we do not want everything to return as it was before, that there are things that have happened that we would like to keep.

There is no doubt that there will be much work to do in our national garden, to help tend those whose health, finances or jobs have suffered, but let us all consider how we can nurture the new shoots that are emerging or will emerge in our own lives or those of others. Above all, we can remember the words we sing at harvest festival from the well known first verse of the hymn:

“We plough the fields, and scatter
the good seed on the land,
but it is fed and watered
by God’s almighty hand.”

As we tend the seeds of our lives currently buried in the soil of the coronavirus, let us remember that it is with God’s help that we can feed and water them.