

Sunday Update
5th July 2020

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

16 *'To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the market-places and calling out to others:*

17 *"We played the flute for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn."*

18 *For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon." 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.'*

25 *At that time Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. 27 'All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 28 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'*

Expectations can be powerful. We have expectations in all sorts of areas of life, that can either be hugely fulfilling or desperately disappointing. If you are a football fan, you start the new season full of expectation that your team will do better than last year or will win the league again; only one set of fans can have that expectation satisfied and everyone else will be disappointed. We have expectations of work: the new job that we take on is going to be better than the one we've left behind, or the promotion is going to give us more power, more job satisfaction, more money. Expectations are complicated at the present time because we're not quite sure about so much: we expect to be able to go shopping, but there is a big queue to get into the shop; some people want to use the bus, but there are conditions – you have to wear a face covering and maybe you don't want to do that!

Expectations of people are even more complicated to work out. There is a friend you have, perhaps and you expect that friend to be supportive and helpful; they have offered to do shopping for you during lockdown and you are happy with that. But something has gone wrong; the promise has not materialised and you feel let down by your friend; your expectations have been disappointed and you're not sure about the quality of that friendship for the future. That question becomes more complex the closer the relationship. We expect things of ourselves: a certain way of behaving or speaking, a quality of being that we aspire to and want to achieve, a measure of achievement in exams or work or even simply in life! That level of expectation that we have of ourselves is maybe inherited from a parent's expectation on our behalf and may be healthy or may not be, but there are so many people whose lives are shaped by that sense of expectation and who live with a constant sense of disappointment because they never match up!

In the first part of today's Bible reading, the big theme is "expectation" and that is a coin with two sides! Matthew has been telling the story of John the Baptist: in prison John sent some of his friends to Jesus asking Him if He is the expected Messiah. Jesus' answer is all about what He is doing, knowing that when John sees with a clear eye the works that Jesus is doing he will know the answer to his own

question. Jesus is doing the works of Messiah! We hope that John sees what Jesus is doing and believes that God has sent Jesus to be Messiah. Jesus then sings John's praises as the voice preparing the way for Messiah; John's ministry has fulfilled its purpose.

But then we have this curious "song" about playing the flute and singing a dirge. I've seen two ways of understanding this piece. The first suggests that the people of Israel are the children singing the song and when they played the flute, neither John nor Jesus danced and when they sang a dirge they didn't mourn; John and Jesus didn't come up to expectations. The second way of understanding this suggests that John and Jesus were playing the music and the people of their generation didn't dance; John and Jesus sang a dirge and people didn't mourn; no matter what kind of ministry John and Jesus offered, the people refused to respond. I think I prefer the first version, but either way this is about expectations.

We see that in the comments that "people" made about John and Jesus, suggesting that neither of these men fitted the bill. They were very different men: John was wild, lived on his own, with a ministry full of judgement and repentance. Jesus lived a more "normal" life, associated with people, socialised with anyone and everyone, and brought good news of the kingdom of God to the world, surrounded with a mood of love and compassion. Neither of them came up to the mark in the eyes of those who were watching them, the religious leaders: John was criticised for having a demon; Jesus was criticised for being soft, eating and drinking too much, and with the wrong people. What did God's Messiah look like? He didn't look like either of these men, according to their critics. Neither of these men came up to expectations, it seems; for their critics, God wasn't at work in either of them.

What do we expect of Jesus? Amazingly, the thing for which people criticise Him is exactly the quality that draws us to Him. He is a friend to needy people: *"a friend of tax collectors and sinners"* (v.19) People are drawn to Jesus by His grace and compassion, by His concern to meet the needs of people like us. He is able to forgive our sin, yet guide and lead us away from wrong roads; He is able to help and strengthen us when we're weak; He is able to guide and lead us when we're confused; *"He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him"* (Hebrews 7:25); He *"is able to do immeasurably more for us than we ask or imagine"* (Ephesians 3:20). The proof of the pudding is in the eating: Jesus does what He came to do and lives are transformed; we are saved, helped, loved, guided, strengthened by Jesus.

Ultimately, we will not be disappointed by Jesus; He will give us everything that we need. It may take time and it may be a struggle, but we can come to see the grace and faithfulness of Jesus worked out in our lives, in our faith, in our experience, in our church and in our world. Sometimes we find that hard to see and struggle to understand that Jesus does care for us; that was true of people who saw Jesus in the flesh and has been true of people ever since; faith and life can be a struggle for all of us at times and no more so than in the last four months. But Covid hasn't chased Jesus away; He is still with us and is still able to love and care for us. Our expectations of Jesus should be high because He is able to meet them; open our hearts to Him and at the end of the day we will not be disappointed.

Prayer: Father, thank You for Jesus; thank you for all that He has done in the world to care for people who are weary and burdened; thank You that He is able to save us completely and answer our prayers; open our eyes to see and open our hearts to receive His grace; help us to trust Him in all that life has for us..

Day by day, dear Lord of you

Three things I pray:

To see you more clearly,

To love you more dearly,

To follow you more nearly,

Day by day.

Pray for:

- Grace to shape the way we think about God, life, church, other people, ourselves, free from the weight of overbearing expectations that we have of ourselves or that others have of us.
- People who are weak and vulnerable today, those who mourn, those who are sick, those who are isolated and lonely; those in hospital and families who can't visit; pray for people you know by name.
- NHS staff, care home staff, those caring in the community – God keep them safe.
- The opening up of lockdown, to be done carefully and not recklessly; for people to be wise in the way we behave, to observe social distancing and to take notice of people who may be weaker and more vulnerable.
- For our schools, now on holiday but with a new target for August 11th; for Head Teachers, management teams and teachers, to be able to have time off while still trying to find a way that meets the needs of our children and young people as much as possible.
- For the virus to go away completely; pray that science will find a vaccine.
- People whose hearts and minds are feeling “shut-in”, for whom the physical lockdown is affecting their mental health and sense of well-being and freedom. For victims of domestic violence, with nowhere to escape to.
- Children and young people at home, missing friends from school, missing the contact with other people. Parents working, looking after children, trying to care for other family members.
- Shops opened again this week; pray for sensible behaviour in shops and on public transport.
- Those who are furloughed from work and those who have lost their jobs and have no prospect of a new job soon pray for a sense of purpose when they are away from paid employment.
- Our community, caring for vulnerable people, helping those in need, for resilience and strength.
- Our political leaders, trying to make difficult decisions in the right way.
- Other parts of the world: Kenya suffering under a plague of locusts; Zimbabwe suffering the worst drought in years, towns and cities using unclean water; Syria and Yemen still suffering with civil war.
- Holiday Club beginning this week, run by Heather: pray for children to sign up; for Heather and the team as they tell the stories and help children have fun on Zoom; for the technology to work well; for the 90 other churches across Scotland who have signed up to this holiday club opportunity.
- For one another, sustaining our faith when there is nothing of the outward life of the church.

Here are some links to hymns you might know and love; go and have a listen.

All creatures of our God and King

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUZD0hgtSgE>

Name of all majesty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUeNwAVMHEA>

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoPlwPUYWaw>

Christ be in my waking

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4emG1gHPA>

How can I keep from singing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLPP3XmYxXg>

(this song is recorded in May 2020 by a virtual choir and orchestra, music carrying on despite Covid!)

Heather's A-Z of videos: the latest is R

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJQ_2dOvNIM

Favourite Bible passage:

Do you have a favourite Bible passage? Why not tell us what it is. Here's what to do: pick your favourite Bible passage, then video yourself reading it and in a sentence explain why you picked it. E-mail the video to me and we'll collect them on the Youtube channel or the church website. Give it a go! You can see the latest of these at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtAet-tORqo&t=1s>

Some other resources:

- Each Sunday at 10.30am, we will have a short time together using Zoom; a link has been sent out in the e-mail with this update which should enable you to join in.
- This reflection is available on our own church website under the "sermons" tab and there is an archive of sermon material there for you to read and links to the video reflections – www.jgpc.org.uk
- If you have a smartphone, the Bible2020 app will give you a short bible reading each day (from the Scottish Bible Society)
- Scripture Union daily bible readings can be found at <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive>
- The Church of Scotland website has prayers and reflections from the Moderator and details of lots of on-line streamed church services - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>
- Claremont Church in East Kilbride are making services available over a phone line: here are the contact details which you can share with people who are not on line: **Sunday Services @ 10:30 - same details every week** 020 3937 2973; PIN: 352 598 857#
- There will be a service on BBC1 at some time on Sunday morning.

DAILY BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS The next issue of " **EVERY DAY WITH JESUS**" Booklet for July and August 2020 is now available. Ian Aitken has the Booklets for July and August. Other **Bible Study materials** to give you a choice are available by contacting either Ian Aitken or Michael Merriman who will be delighted to arrange regular copies for you of any of the Bible Reading material. **Let the Bible feed you.**

Learn from me

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Pray

We are here today, Lord, to worship you.
As we bow our heads before you,
we want to be amazed by your wisdom,
bowled over by your love,
and completely lost in you.
Lord, open our hearts to receive you,
in ways beyond whatever we could ever
ask or even think.

Amen.



Question...



What does the word rest mean for you? What does it make you think of?

Read the Bible...

Jesus reassures us that no matter how busy life is, if we ask him, he will share our burdens and give us rest..

Read Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30.



Play together...

Find a selection of items around your house, eg. empty cereal boxes, toilet rolls, crisp packets, milk cartons.

One person is chosen to be the 'bearer of the burden' and everyone takes it in turns to pile the objects into their arms. When something is dropped, that person's turn is over. Who can be a burden-bearer the longest?

Talk together...

- This story takes place in a busy marketplace. Have you ever been somewhere really busy? What was it like?
- Think of a time when you have been really tired. How did it make you feel?
- What are some things you worry about or find difficult?
- What helps you to find rest when you're tired out by these things?
- Why are we often nervous about asking for help?
- What does Jesus tell us to do with our troubles and worries?
- How does it feel knowing God offers to provide rest from our burdens?



Pray together...

You'll need: a small stone each.

Hold your stone in your hand. Think about the things that worry you. As you think about them squeeze the stone as tight as you can. Say a prayer to God while still squeezing your stone, ask for his help and for him to share your burden. Once you've finished, loosen your grip on the stone, it should feel lighter now. Use this as a sign that God has heard your prayer and is sharing your load now. Anytime you feel worried pick up your stone and remember that God is with you and helping you.

Praise together...



He's Jesus:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baMFFeco>

What a friend:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6qXfZPtzsM>

What a friend we have in Jesus:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SCorW9r_Is

Make something...

Invite everyone in your house to create a unique place of rest that is as relaxing as possible eg. Using a chair, bed, beanbag. Spend some time trying out each other's spaces and discuss which you find the most relaxing and why.

Do something...

Offer to help a family member, friend or neighbour this week who is struggling with something – share their burden. Maybe there's something at home you could help with, perhaps you could help tidy someone's garden who struggles to do it themselves; or help someone carry their shopping if it's heavy. Be creative and thoughtful!

