



Working to see what Christ will do in Scotland tomorrow.

**Stornoway
Reformed Presbyterian
Church of Scotland**

part of a global church with a glorious heritage



September 2017 Newsletter

HE HIMSELF BORE OUR SINS
in his body | on the tree

THAT WE MIGHT **DIE TO SIN**
& **LIVE**
TO RIGHTEOUSNESS.

by his wounds you
HAVE BEEN
HEALED.

1 Peter 2:24



WELCOME

LORD'S DAY

Morning Worship—11.00am

Evening Worship—6.30pm

PRAYER MEETING

Thursday—7.30pm

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Word from the Manse.....2
Communion Report.....2-4

CONTACT DETAILS

Stornoway RPCS
Coulregrein Mission House
C/O 9 Perceval Road,
Stornoway, Isle of Lewis,
Scotland, HS1 2UG

www.stornowayrpcs.org

info@stornowayrpcs.org

Scottish Charity No: SC043043

WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation,

We look back on a Communion season with gratitude to God for His mercies to us. *“O Lord my God, full many are the wonders thou hast done; Thy gracious thoughts to us ward far above all thoughts are gone.”* (Psalm 40:5a). Any time we think of Christ’s atonement we can’t help but be filled with gratitude and praise. He is a great Saviour!

I also wish to express my gratitude to you for your prayers for me during the Communion Season. There are times in our lives when we are very well aware of the saints praying for us. I have felt that amongst you, but particularly at my ordination and at this Communion season. Recently I finished reading the diary of Kenneth MacRae. Towards the close of his ministry he felt particular liberty preaching in the mission house at Melbost. He says, “This is not the first time I had that experience at Melbost. As a matter of fact I always get liberty there. What is the explanation? Is it someone present or someone praying at home?” This is one of the mysteries of Christian experience. Who knows when or how God will answer your prayers?

Prayer is both a duty and a privilege. It is a good thing to be able to bear one another’s burdens before the throne of grace and then hear how God answers. We can be assured that God uses our prayers even though He is free to work without them. Let’s cultivate hearts of fervent prayer.

In Christ,
Stephen

COMMUNION REPORT

Our congregation partook in the Lord’s Supper on Sunday 27th August 2017; we were pleased to have our own Minister, Rev. Stephen McCollum, taking the services over this weekend.

THURSDAY

On Thursday in the first of the preparatory services, Rev. McCollum took as his text Ezekiel ch. 18. The Minister introduced us to the Jews in exile at a time when they were under God’s judgement; so bold in their unsubmissiveness that they challenged the word of God. They used the proverb found in v2 *“The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children’s teeth are set on edge?”* to blame God for what they perceived to be His unfair treatment of them. God responds by correcting the proverb to show that each soul is accountable to Him – the soul that sins shall die but the soul that does not shall live. Ezekiel gives us three men as examples of this:

- 1) [v 5-9] The first man is righteous and just; he worships rightly and doesn’t engage in idolatry. He has not engaged in adultery and doesn’t oppress the poor. This man is found just and shall live. Some may ask if this advocates works righteousness but Scripture does not give any place to this – his good works are evidence of the faith of a man who has claimed God as his own.
- 2) [v 10-13] The righteous man’s son engages in all the abominations which his father shunned. For this, God’s judgement was that he would surely die.
- 3) [v 14-17] The second man’s son considered his father’s way and found it evil, instead he followed his grandfather. He shall surely live.

“God looks at us individually and we must give account for our own actions .”

God looks at us individually and we must give account for our own actions. The Jews were continuing in the sins of their father’s and did not want to let them go. If you are a wicked person, your wickedness is not passed on; just as your righteousness cannot be shared. God is fair, not fatalistic. Rev. McCollum noted that there was the possibility of turning. Firstly the way of repentance being turning from the worse to the better. None of your years of sin will be remembered against you. Secondly the way of apostasy being turning from the better to the worse. The impenitent person because of his sin will die. The Jews were unwilling to heed this sober warning but in His mercy God repeated the call [v 25 & 29] just as He repeats the call of the gospel to us. Ezekiel reminds us of God’s judgement – one day these mercies will run out. Only the penitent may sit at the Lord’s Table, there is no room for the apostate. Take heed – turn and close the door firmly on transgression, turn and live.

FRIDAY

For the second sermon, Mr McCollum took as his text 1 John 3:14 *“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.”* Many Christians lack assurance but the Lord does not want us to doubt or waiver thus John gives us marks to look for – doctrinal, practical and grace. Grace is loving the brethren. The world speaks often of love but is ignorant to what the word of God says about it; God is love and He bestows love on us, He gave us the example of the greatest love ever manifest in Christ’s sacrifice for us. We are to love as He loved us. Do we see the love of Christ in His sacrifice? That He had the full wrath of God poured out on Him for your sake. When we understand Christ’s love it is easy to love our brethren. This mark distinguishes us from the world: you are either a child of God or a child of the devil and if you do not have love you are a child of the devil. Love is the fruit of the Spirit and it is impossible for the regenerate not to love. Mr McCollum posed the question; how can we tell if our love is genuine? Firstly, **genuine love arises out of the work God has done in your heart**; the natural man has no real love. Secondly **genuine love is a spiritual love** motivated by who your brother is in Christ. You love them for their godliness. We are all members of Christ’s body so we mourn and rejoice together. Finally **genuine love is sincere love**, born out of pure motives. It is love for your brother’s eternal good. It is universal, it is constant, it is fervent, it is forgiving and it is contented in the fellowship of God’s people. In closing we were reminded that our preparation in coming to the Lord’s Table requires us to examine ourselves for true love for the brethren.

SATURDAY

On Saturday morning the Minister’s text was Hebrews ch. 10 v 19-22, he focussed on the privilege afforded to Christians which is boldness to enter the Holiest; the presence of God. We have a confidence and a right of access – all Christians have this boldness whether they choose to use it or not. There are several forms of God’s presence which we may enter into; His physical presence at death, His presence when gathered worshipping with His people, and His presence at the Lord’s Table. It is an on going right of access and there are three parts to the privilege:

- 1) The privilege is by the blood of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament there was no entering into the Holiest without the shedding of blood, likewise there is no remission from sin without the shedding of Christ’s blood. It is the blood of Christ that redeems.
- 2) The privilege is by the flesh of Jesus Christ. It is a new way. Christ’s flesh is new in that it is always fresh – we don’t need continual sacrifices because He is sufficient. It is a living way; because He lives, He imparts life to His people. He consecrated this new living way for us.
- 3) The privilege is by our High Priest who represents us before God. Rev. McCollum pointed out that the word used here for High Priest could also be translated as “great priest”. Higher than the high priest, Christ is from a different order. He put Himself on the alter and fulfilled all righteousness.

It is because we have this full and complete privilege we have the boldness to enter into God’s presence. We are exhorted to draw near [v 22] but we must first have a true heart – a heart set purely on Christ. We draw near in full assurance of faith; our hearts must be sprinkled and our bodies cleansed. We therefore draw near to God on the basis of the blood, the flesh and the priesthood. We are welcome to come to the alter with our guilt but we are not welcome to come into the Holiest without privilege. We were reminded in approaching the Lord’s Table to set our minds on the privilege by which we come, to determine to draw near, and to stir up the graces in our hearts.

LORD’S DAY MORNING

The service on Sunday morning took as it’s text 1 Peter ch. 2 v. 24 *“...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed.”* Peter was writing to Christians across various regions, having their pilgrimage on this earth in common. They needed to learn submission, particularly in the master-slave relationship. At times we will find ourselves dealing with masters – those in lawful authority over us. There are good masters and bad masters. If you find yourself under an unduly harsh master you are to remain patient and give him an example. Peter takes us to the example of Christ who also suffered [v 21]. This is what we have been called to – patient submission. Rev. McCollum drew on his experience as a teacher to illustrate this - just as a child who is learning to write, we are to copy Christ with our squiggly handwriting. Peter notes that Christ had done no wrong and yet He suffered. When He was mocked He did not mock in return, instead He committed Himself to God. He did far more than that. He bore our sins in His body, He became sin for us. There was no substitution for

Christ; He bore our curse as well as our sins. You only have two options; you bear your own sins or Christ bore them for you.

LORD'S DAY EVENING

On Sunday night Rev. McCollum preached on the cities of refuge, taking as his text Joshua ch. 20 v 1-9. These cities were designed that if somebody accidentally took the life of another they could flee there. The next of kin of the one killed was known as the avenger of blood and they could pursue justice until the accused reached one of these cities where they became safe. There is a spiritual significance to these cities; they represent Christ.

- 1) The cities were prominent. They were mostly built on mountains so they could be seen. No matter where you were you couldn't miss your nearest city of refuge. The Lord has provided to us a place of refuge that is easy to find – Jesus has been made known.
- 2) The cities were near. There were three cities on the west of the Jordan and three on the east. Every Israelite was close to a city of refuge so they didn't have to travel far. Christ is close to us because the Word of God is open to us.
- 3) The cities were open night and day. Most cities at the time were closed at night to keep intruders out. Christ has been open to us and is open to us still, nobody is excluded – He was so open that sinners gathered around His feet.
- 4) The cities provided safety. The avenger of blood could not touch them inside the city. It is the same as Christ; when we are inside nobody can touch us.

The refuge of Christ far exceeds these cities. They were for only those who killed accidentally but in Christ there is refuge for all sinners. He is not just for the “clean” “acceptable” sins. Christ gives us liberty, not confinement.

God gave the plan for these cities but He did not name them – the people appointed them. Yet the names of the cities show something of Christ. Kedesh (holy), Shechem (shoulder – burdens are borne by the shoulder), Hebron (fellowship), Bezer (stronghold), Ramoth (high place – He has been exalted and exalts us) and Golan (captivity/exile – we are exiles in this world, pilgrims passing through seeking a better city).

There is an urgency involved, the avenger of blood – the Lord Himself – is on our heels. We don't know when He will catch us but when we are in the city of refuge, that is salvation, He becomes the kinsman redeemer.

MONDAY

On Monday night we had a thanksgiving service in which Rev. McCollum preached on Isaiah ch.12 v 1-6 which contains a poem of thanksgiving. We have reason to thank Him both individually and corporately. This poem is split into two parts which both begin by speaking of the day of Emmanuel. There is a duty and an obligation for us to give thanks but there is also a promise that we will have reason and enabling to do so.

What are we to say? The first part of the poem [v. 1-3] looks at our individual thanksgiving. The Lord has turned away His anger from you and brought comfort instead. His anger has been turned because of Christ. If He had stopped at turning away His anger we would have reason enough to thank Him for the rest of our days but in His mercy He added comfort. He has His fatherly displeasure with us, He may temporarily remove His countenance but in His mercy He returns. We should thank the Lord when He deals well with our souls. He is more than my Saviour, He is my Salvation and I must continue to trust Him daily. He provides water from the well of salvation and it is a joyful thing for us to draw the waters – the measure you draw is the measure of your joy. The second part of the poem [v. 4-6] looks at our corporate thanksgiving for which we receive 7 exhortations, symbolising the completeness of worship. (1) We praise the Lord. (2) We call upon His name in prayer – it is right to give thanks in our prayers. (3) We declare His deeds and make known what He has done for us. (4) We are to make mention that His name is exalted- make it to be remembered. (5) We are to sing to the Lord. (6) We are to cry out. (7) We are to shout out for we have victory in Christ.

He is in our midst and our souls are full because the Lord is kind.

We have joyed together as a congregation this weekend, enjoying communion and fellowship together and we were pleased to receive Mrs Brenda McCollum into membership by certificate of disjunction. We have been especially thankful to have herself and Rev. McCollum sharing Communion with us for the first time since they joined us and they have been a blessing to us. Once again we are most thankful to God on High for His continued goodness and mercies to us and pray that He would continue to be in our midst and bless us as He sees fit.