

## A warm Welcome to Worship on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July

### Hymn CH4 81 I to the hills

I to the hills will lift my eyes.  
From whence shall come my aid?  
My safety cometh from the Lord,  
who heaven and earth has made.

Thy foot he'll not let slide, nor will  
he slumber that thee keeps.  
Behold, he that keeps Israel,  
he slumbers not, nor sleeps.

The Lord thee keeps, the Lord thy shade  
on thy right hand doth stay:  
the moon by night thee shall not smite,  
nor yet the sun by day.

The Lord shall keep thy soul; he shall  
preserve thee from all ill.  
Henceforth thy going out and in  
God keep for ever will.

### Prayer

Lord of the day and night, we thank you for the beauty and wonder of this lovely part of your world in which we are now privileged to live, for the great variety of colourful flowers in gardens and by the roadside, for stars in the night sky and the grandeur of mountains, for majestic landscapes, for flowing rivers, for cooling breezes on a warm day, for food to eat and fresh water to drink. Father you have called us to be custodians of your creation, to protect the natural world. Help us to do what we can to repair the damage that we humans have done to our planet in the past, and still thoughtlessly do today.

We thank you also today for the renewing quality of sleep, for the rhythm of work and rest, the lift of a friendly voice, the visit of a dear friend, the warmth of a child's trust and smile, the excitement of a shared purpose. We thank you also for the faith that urges us to call you Father. Forgive us for often falling far short of knowing how rich we really are, by gauging our wealth by the wrong things, property owned, money amassed and people impressed. In the weeks ahead may we be more open to the needs of our neighbours, more respectful of other people's rights, and more aware of the suffering and poverty of millions whose problems are so much greater than ours. By so doing may the lives of others and our own lives be greatly enriched.

Amen

## Sir Frederick Tieves story

The story I want to share with you this morning is about Sir Frederick Treves who was the surgeon to King Edward V11. He was once travelling across Canada, when the train in which he was travelling was involved in a terrible smash. Travelling, as he was, first class in the middle of the train, he escaped unhurt, but many of those in the carriages near the engine were very badly hurt. Having got out of the train, he informed the rescuers that he was a surgeon, and that if he could do anything to help, they should let him know. The first person they brought to him was a man with very serious injuries. Having examined him, he was seen to wring his hands and say, "If only I had my instruments". What a difference he could have made if only he had had his surgical instruments.

I sometimes picture God saying as he looks at our broken world, "If only I had my instruments", if only I had people who instead of pursuing self-interest, were willing to use their time and talents to enrich the lives of those less fortunate than themselves.

Recall the prayer of St Francis of Assisi who spent his life caring for the underprivileged

**Lord make us instruments of your peace  
Where there is hatred, let us sow love  
Where there is injury, pardon  
Where there is discord, union  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy**

Though the Coronavirus epidemic resulted in countless problems for countless people, I was heartened by the fact that it resulted in a greater sense of community and a greater number of people willing to be instruments of help and healing . I think of the 400,000 offers of help the NHS received. I

think of city hotel owners offering free accommodation to those working long hours in hospitals. I think also of the offers of help Helen and I received because of our so-called advanced years. Regarding the question of age, though I am well into my eighties, I don't feel all that old. In fact the question that has occupied my mind is whether the card I will receive from Buckingham Palace on my 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, will be from King Charles or King William!

The generous offers of help we have received meant we did not have to go to the shops to pick up our morning paper or get groceries. The impression I got from the phone calls and smiles of the helpers, who stood at a distance of 2 metres, that being of help gave them a warm feeling of satisfaction. I am sure it is the same with those volunteers in the Health Service.. Loving other people as we love ourselves is a much happier way of living than simply pursuing purely private goals.

### **Reading --John's Gospel Chapter 21v 14-19**

<sup>14</sup> This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

#### **Jesus reinstates Peter**

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?'

'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'

<sup>16</sup> Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'

<sup>17</sup> The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup> Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you

will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.’<sup>19</sup> Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, ‘Follow me!’

## Sermon ‘Responding to God’s Word’

***“When you are young you went anywhere you wanted to; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you and take you where you don’t want to go.” John 21 v 8***

I find it fascinating to watch young children in their thoughtful moments—a little girl sitting on a wall with a far-away look in her eyes, thinking perhaps about what she wants to be when she grows up, or a little boy watching a plane fly overhead. As his eyes follow it into the distance, his mind is carried away into the world of his future. He dreams of doing great things in faraway places, acclaimed by thousands, honoured by his country. Our text says, “*When you are young you went anywhere you wanted.*” Unlike many young people today, who are often just grateful to get any job, many of us were fortunate in our youth to be able to choose whether we would be a teacher or a nurse, a banker, a mechanic or a minister. We were also free to choose whether to remain single or get married, whether to stay in Bankfoot or Biggar, Dornoch or Dingwall, Aberfeldy or Aberdeen.

The choices we made in our youth often restricted our later choices. Having chosen to become a farmer, or a doctor or a plumber or a banker, many of us were in that profession the rest of our working lives. Radically changing careers in later life is not easy. I recall an assistant minister I once had. He had for years been the headmaster of Inverness Royal Academy. Though he was a lovely man, he did not find it easy to change from being a headmaster to becoming a minister. One of several problems he had with the change, was finding it difficult in the pulpit to stop speaking like a headmaster.

Or again, in adolescence we have freedom to choose who we will live with or marry. Once we decide on that, and have a family, our aim thereafter ought not to be to look for someone who will please us, but to please the one we have chosen. Again once we have chosen to settle in a certain community and put down roots, moving can be a traumatic experience. Growing older involves a narrowing of choice—in youth many choices, going where we would; in middle-age

the choice more limited, and in old age more limited still. Life in many respects resembles a game of chess. To begin with, we have all our pieces on the board and freedom to make almost any move we choose. But once we have decided on our opening moves, we are not so free thereafter. The consequences of these opening moves are with us until the end of the game. A traveller tells how one Spring he was in the North of Canada when the frost was breaking up and the roads were well-nigh impossible. At one cross-road he saw the sign, "Take care which rut you choose. You will be in it for the next 20 miles." It can be strangely similar in life. The highways of yesterday can become the ruts of tomorrow. Hence the importance of young people choosing carefully which way in life they will follow.

### Hymn 502 Take my life and let it be

Take my life, Lord, let it be  
consecrated, glad, and free  
take my moments and my days,  
let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move  
at the impulse of your love;  
take my feet, that I may run  
bearing news of Christ your Son.

Take my voice and let me sing  
always, only, for my King;  
take my intellect and use  
every power as you shall choose.

Take my will – your will be done  
may my will and yours be one:  
take my heart - it is your own;  
it shall be your royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
at your feet its treasure-store;  
take myself, and I will be  
all for you, eternally.

A friend of George Gershwin, tells how he once asked the brilliant, but very self-centred musical composer, whether if he had to live his life over again, would he fall in love with himself again?" For me the most tragic funerals I have conducted have been those of people who have never

lived, because they have never really cared for anything or anyone other than themselves. When a person dies without having made a contribution to the lives of others, that is tragic.

The first words Jesus spoke to Peter as he mended his nets by the lakeside were "Follow me... Come and learn from me." Steam cannot drive anything until it is confined. Waterfalls cannot generate power until the water is channelled. The resulting tragedy of a life without dedication and discipline, has been most effectively set forth in our day, not by preachers, but by novelists and television script writers. Seldom in their novels, plays or soap operas do we find attractive heroes or genuinely happy characters. In Hemingway's book "The sun also rises", there is little self-discipline and scarcely a trace of real happiness. Doing simply as we please has proved time and time again to be a discredited abracadabra.

In Shakespeare's play "King Lear", when the Earl of Kent goes to the exiled king to offer his allegiance, he says, "You have that in your countenance which I would fain call Master." That is how it was with Peter when he first met Jesus. He was attracted by the ideals, goodness, and integrity of the Galilean carpenter. When Jesus said to him, "Follow me and I will make you", the rough-hewn Galilean fisherman left his nets and followed Jesus. And Jesus did remake Peter. Before our eyes we see a man being shaped, clay turning to rock. Jesus brought out what was finest in the Big Fisherman. He stamped much of his own likeness on him. He taught Peter a new and better way of living. After the Resurrection, thinking of the time when Peter would be an old man, Jesus again said to Peter "Follow me"

Though sometimes in our middle years we complain about the responsibilities being laid on us, in old age we often look back with yearning to just these days. In old age we have less responsibilities, but are more of a responsibility. There are temptations in youth, but there are no less temptations in old age—the temptation to be critical of whatever is new or different, to be ungrateful and impatient, to lose our enthusiasm and idealism, and become cynical, hard and self-centred.

Though on the night Jesus was arrested, Peter denied Christ to a kitchen maid, in his later years, rather than deny Jesus again, he was prepared to die bravely for his faith. The Emperor Nero, in need of a scapegoat for the fire which had destroyed large parts of Rome, blamed the members of early Church. With many other early church members, Peter was arrested and taken out to die where he did not choose. He was a hero for Christ in old age. Lord

Shaftesbury was another such hero for Christ in old age. Having fought in his middle years to reform the factory laws, and highlight countless forms of injustice, he might have been excused, if in the evening of his life, he had rested from his labours. But no. When he was nearly 70 he launched a crusade to help young children working in the brickyards 14-16 hours a day. At the age of 83 he agreed to become the President of what was called the Ragged School Union, an organisation aimed at providing education for the poorly clad children who roamed the streets of London.

When in the 1930's Martin Neimoller was arrested by the Nazis and sent to Dachau concentration camp, for speaking out against the Nazi treatment of the Jews, his old father, who had been a Protestant minister in Germany, emerged from retirement to proclaim the same truths as those for which his son had been arrested. What a hero for Christ in old age. I think also of numerous heroes today, ordinary folk ,who despite advancing years continue to tirelessly love and support others. I will never forget visiting an old lady who had a seriously invalid husband. Though for years, she had struggled to care for him and get him to the toilet countless times every day, she seldom complained. What a heroine she was.

What a debt the world owes to those who are heroes in their later years.

**Hymn 533 v 1,2 and 5** Will you come and follow me

Will you come and follow me  
if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know  
and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown,  
will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown  
in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind  
if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind  
and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare  
should your life attract or scare?  
will you let me answer prayer  
in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see  
if I but call your name?

Will you set the prisoners free  
and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean  
and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean  
in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide  
if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside  
and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around  
through my sight and touch and sound  
in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true  
when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you  
and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go  
where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow  
in you and you in me.

### ***Benediction***

Go in peace to serve the Lord, with the love of Christ in your heart. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you now and forevermore. Amen.