

ST. MARGARET OF SCOTLAND ANGLICAN CHURCH

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Sunday, January 24, 2021 Epiphany Four

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SUNDAY JANUARY 31, 2021
Epiphany Four Morning Prayer

10:00 a.m.

THE GATHERING OF THE COMMUNITY

Officiant: Lord, open our lips,

People: And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Officiant: O God, make speed to save us.

People: O Lord, make haste to help us. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

All: Alleluia!

*The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us:
O come, let us worship.*

Venite

Psalm 95.1–7

Come, let us sing to the Lord; let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and raise a loud shout to him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great king above all gods. In his hand are the caverns of the earth, and the heights of the hills are his also. The sea is his for he made it, and his hands have moulded the dry land. Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, and kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice!

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us:

O come, let us worship.

People: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be for ever. Amen.

The Psalms

Psalm 111

Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.

Full of honor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.

He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the LORD is gracious and merciful.

He provides food for those who fear him; he is ever mindful of his covenant.

He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.

The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.

They are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. **Amen.**

The Proclamation of the Word

A READING FROM DEUTERONOMY 18:15-20

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." Then the LORD replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak--that prophet shall die."

The word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

A READING FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13

Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him. Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "no idol in the world really exists," and that "there is no God but one." Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth--as in fact there are many gods and many lords-- yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. "Food will not bring us close to God." We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be

encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

The word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE HOLY GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
ACCORDING TO MARK (1:21-28).

People: Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching--with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

The Gospel of Christ.

People: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SERMON

Dealing with dispute

As the centre of a series of trade routes around the Roman Empire, Corinth was a profoundly multicultural world punctuated by cultural and religious diversity. They had developed social mechanisms to live in this world that was fraught with potential conflict. The introduction of Christianity created a whole new layer of potential conflict both within the newly emerging church and the broader society. Key to this potential conflict was the relationship between the temple and the market around the slaughter of animals as sacrifice that then entered the market for consumption. It was almost impossible to buy food or wine in the market that was not – in some form or other – associated with some Greco-Roman god or other.

Jews who had moved to the City of Corinth as part of the Diaspora had developed their own mechanisms for dealing with this world while retaining their adherence to the Jewish Law. Jews simply did not eat animals that were driven into the temple, slaughtered as an offering and exited into the market, because they were viewed as products of divination and sorcery.

The added complexity came when both Jews and Gentiles became followers of Jesus and members of the same church. For some of those Jews becoming a follower of Jesus was no different to being Jewish and they kept the Law. Other Jews who became followers of Jesus this was pure liberation from the constraints of the Law. To some Gentiles who became followers of Jesus it meant in essence that they became Jewish. And for other Gentiles who became followers of Jesus it never substantially altered their cultural practices at all. In the church in Corinth that meant one thing – a substantial conflict of opinion.

So how did Paul resolve it?

Firstly, Paul suggested that social ethics was not to be determined by who could stack up the most amount of information on something, but rather on our capacity to love God. “Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him” (I Corinthians 8:1-6).

Paul starts with the simple recognition that all of us “possess knowledge” of some form or other and therefore have an opinion. The problem with knowledge is that it makes us feel superior or inferior in an argument. But the foundation of ethics for a follower of Jesus is about how much we love God and are known by God. This forms the root of our unity, not whether we agree with each other or not or whether we share the same perspective on an issue. To even suggest that God only loves those who agree with me is to make a mockery of the very love and grace of God and tries to limit it. It is when we recognize ourselves as equally dependent upon the love and grace of God that we recognize that our opinion matters no more than any other person’s opinion or issue over which we might disagree today.

Secondly, Paul suggests that our ethical choice is not determinate of our proximity to God. “It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. “Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.”

It is so easy for us to assume that because we get “life right” that God loves us more and wants to be nearer to us than to anybody else. All too often in the life of the church I see and experience this one-up-manship that suggests that because we “get it right” that “God is on our side” and – by implication – has withdrawn from those who “got it wrong”. If we really believed the Bible is the Word of God we would see how profoundly mistaken we are in assuming that.

Finally, Paul suggests we seek out the benefit of those with whom we disagree. “But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? So, by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.”

We could understand the first two points that Paul is making and then go, “Oh so it doesn’t matter then.” But no, it does matter. In fact, it matters a great deal. Why? Because our choices and actions impact others, particularly those who we might think of as “weaker”.

Whichever one of us sees our self as the stronger (and therefore in the right) should accommodate our practice in order not to offend those we think of as weaker than ourselves. Why? Because we have the capacity to destroy the faith of another by our arrogance and lead them astray by our practice.

All too often in ministry I meet people who have left the church because of the arrogance of others and harm caused to them by those who acted as if they were “stronger Christians”. All too often I hear people say, “Why would I belong to a church where my opinion or view does not count.” All too often I get the sense that people are bullied out of the church by those who “know they are right”. In contrast, says Paul, when we work or behave in a fashion that benefits those with who we disagree we strengthen their faith and build them up as followers of Christ. The point is not whether we agree with each other or not or whether we think of ourselves as stronger believers or not; but rather whether we have the capacity to so love – to “believe in” each other –

that we will put our opinion to one side in order to build faith in others. That is truly what the Creed means when it says, "I believe in the church".

People: Amen

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH - THE APOSTLES' CREED

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

INTERCESSIONS AND THANKSGIVINGS

Litany 13 Incarnation

Officiant: In joy and humility let us pray to the creator of the universe, saying, "Lord, grant us peace." By the good news of our salvation brought to Mary by the angel, hear us, O Lord.

People: Lord, grant us peace.

Officiant: By the mystery of the Word made flesh, hear us, O Lord.

People: Lord, grant us peace.

Officiant: By the birth in time of the timeless Son of God, hear us, O Lord.

People: Lord, grant us peace.

Officiant: By the manifestation of the King of glory to the shepherds and magi, hear us, O Lord.

People: Lord, grant us peace.

Officiant: By the submission of the maker of the world to Mary and Joseph of Nazareth, hear us, O Lord.

People: Lord, grant us peace.

Officiant: By the baptism of the Son of God in the river Jordan, hear us, O Lord.

People: Lord, grant us peace.

Officiant: Grant that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; hear us, O Lord.

People: Lord, grant us peace.

THE COLLECT

Living God, in Christ you make all things new. Transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

People: Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Officiant: And now, as our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

People: 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Officiant: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

NOTICES

Blessing

Officiant: The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make his face shine on us and be gracious to us. The Lord look upon us with favour and grant us peace.

People: Amen.

Assisting Father Simon Bell today:

Officiant/Preacher: Fr. Simon

Video: David Paradis

This morning in our worship we remember in our prayers those of our family and friends who have immediate needs and concerns:

Brennan Family; Derek; Rachelle Belleghem and her family; Teresa & Pete; Jaxon Croft; Ron & Jane Lewis; Staff and Residence at Roberta Place; Michelle & Ian Sinclair; Sean; Brian W.; Kevin H.; Diane M.; Cecilia Mowat; Bill Snow; Deborah Hall; Owen; Sophia L; Marianne S.; Amanda Stewart; Kathryn; Kadeem Broomes; Anna Sellers; Marty; Brenda & Brian.

The names below are people in need of ongoing prayers for various reasons so we ask you to please continue to pray for them and their continuing need of God's healing touch and grace:

Brenda Jessem; Jen Galicinski; Sheri Scott; Arlene; Joan Gough; Lorraine W; Stephanie; Fr. Murray; Amy P. & Family; Marg Abbott; Livia & Neil Purcell; Jordan; Margie Mills; Eunice Merrett; Jean Wallace; Nancy Dodds; Lee & Jeannie Martin; Bill & Cathy Gray; Wendy Goodyer; Michelle & Ian Sinclair; Donna Wilson;

Garn Mennell; Margaret & Gordon Kennedy; Paul & Rose McIntyre; Jim Tomkins; Do Saunders; Jefferson Jr.; June Osolin; Martin & Stephen Bertelsen; Tanya Wade-Vargas.

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer we pray for:

The Dioceses of Lucknow (India) and Guatemala

In the Toronto Diocesan Cycle of Prayer we pray for:

Eglinton Deanery