

Using Your God Given Gifts

If you knew Jesus was coming back tomorrow, how would you live your lives today?

That's the question that our readings ask of us.

The world is not heading for disaster, but for the return of the King of Kings. We do not know when it will be, but one thing we do know is that Jesus was certain it will happen.

This is not pie in the sky, but is linked to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the ground for Christian optimism.

This we know because Jesus took the full weight of sin, evil, pain and death and it could not hold him down. God raised him to life eternal. Christian hope rides high because Jesus has triumphed over the grave. It could not hold down the author of life.

What difference does hope make to Christian living?

Jesus shows us in five powerful parables at the end of Matthew's gospel which form the crowning and climax of his ministry.

He tells his disciples what to expect and how to live in that expectation.

The first parable is about a thief breaking into a house, if only the householder was ready. This parable is a call to be expectant – be ready – be prepared. We are encouraged to anticipate the coming again of Jesus. Be ready for it!

The second parable is about reliability – can he rely on you – will you be a faithful servant when the Lord returns? Can he rely on us to do his work?

The third parable is of the ten virgins – 5 foolish and 5 wise, This was a common practice in Jewish weddings, the virgins would wait until the bridegroom arrived at a time of his choosing. In this parable 5 were prepared and 5 were lazy.

Jesus is asking us *are your lamps full of oil?* – in other words, are you shining bright for Jesus? – are you prepared for him coming back to this world?

The fourth is our reading today, are you using the gifts that God has blessed you with? Are you industrious for the Lord, will he find you using the gifts that he has blessed you with?

The fifth and final one, the sheep and goats, are you loving like Jesus? – reaching out to the least and needy?

If the King was to pay us a visit here at Cadder Parish Church, and his entourage and the media were to follow him, I guess we would hold an emergency Session Meeting right after this service to discuss immediate plans of getting the church ready for the King; we would look our best, we would put our best face on, and we would show to the world, how compassionate we are as a Church.

It's along these lines that Jesus is making his point. “I am coming” – you don't know when or how, but trust me I'm returning and what will I find?

Will I find people who are anticipating my coming? People who are faithful, shining their lights, people who have used their talents and people who have worked for me and used their talents and gifts to the best of their abilities.

In a few weeks time we will have our Gift Service, and this year we are supporting the work of Daisy Chain with sensory toys and also Woman's Aid, where we will give pyjamas to those.

But I wonder if it's a service where we can think about our own gifts and how we are using them for Jesus.

At our Early Morning Fellowship on a Tuesday and Thursday morning, which I would encourage you to either attend in person or join on zoom, there is no expectation for you to speak, its an opportunity to hear God's word, to be led in prayer, to find out more about Christian work, like Daisy Chain, and other projects throughout the world. Each time we meet, we use the CrossReach prayer diary and we love to find out about CrossReach projects and their prayer requests.

Daisy Chain Early Years caught my eye for several reasons

1. It is based in Glasgow, in Govanhill, arguable one of the neediest community in Scotland.
2. It reaches children and offers hope in the midst of challenging situations.

So, when our former Chris was here as a student, one of the things that I was keen that we did was visit Daisy Chain to discover more about this project.

When we entered the building, there was a feeling of compassionate outreach.

We met with Miriam and immediately we connected with her. Within minutes we were speaking the language of the Christian faith and I sensed here was someone with a calling to serve those children. Miriam explained to us about the project and gave us a tour of the premises.

I wasn't surprised when Miriam told me that Daisy Chain was the team of the year at CrossReach; chosen out of 70 projects.

It is a project that reflects the values that Jesus calls us to have.

To see him in the least and the weakest.

Jesus calls us to be humble servants, to be shining bright, to be watchful, ready, and prepared to meet him at any time. Faithful in the use of his gifts and opportunities, and above all full of his self giving sacrificial love for the people of this world.

There is no higher calling and it is open to the humblest disciples.

Thank you to Miriam and Daisy Chain Early Years for giving us the opportunity to serve and to see Jesus in your work. When you go back to your work, please pass on our best wishes and do assure the staff that we are praying for you.