

Cupar Old Parish Church

Where Everyone Matters

Newsletter 11 September 2020

Dear Friends:

The Earth around us turns to autumn and the farmers are working to bring in the harvest. We can feel the approach of winter, but there is a promise of a new spring to follow.

And, as always, the days, the seasons, and our lives rest in the care of the Creator who continually seeks to bring us again into new life.

With warm regards,
Jeff

From Our Prayer Team

This week the Department of International Development officially merged with the Foreign Office led by the Foreign Secretary. There had already been significant uncertainty about the future of the UK's aid budget. Please pray that this will be protected and will always be used to help serve people in extreme poverty.

Please pray for the homeless and those forced to live on our streets.

"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning" Luke 12 v 35

The prayer group continue to meet weekly to pray for our church family and the community of Cupar. If you require immediate prayer, would like someone to pray with you, or have a prayer request then please contact -

Jeff Martin - 01334 656181

jmartin@churchofscotland.org.uk

or

Janice Geddes - 01334 652957

janice.geddes2@btinternet.com

Reflection from Peter Meager

I hope you've been enjoying studying the Genesis creation narratives in church. How reassuring it is to hear again that God looked at his handiwork and concluded that it was all 'very good!' Coincidentally, at the same time our services resumed, one of our grandsons passed on to me a book he had been reading. He wanted to know what I thought about it. It was 'Brief Answers to the Big Questions,' by Stephen Hawking. He posits that the universe was created out of nothing; that most people think of God as a 'human-like being, with whom one can have a personal relationship;' and that, 'when you look at the vast size of the universe and how insignificant and accidental human life is in it, that seems most implausible.' (p 28)

While the science is fascinating, to me, the universe he describes is a cold, unfriendly, hopeless place. He totally discounts the possibility of God revealing himself to us as a Father, Saviour and Friend as experienced by countless children, women and men, throughout human history. He may be right, but I think he merely shows that science cannot answer all the big questions in life. The Christian author, J.B. Philips, wrote a book called, 'Your God Is Too Small,' which is helpful in understanding more about this.

There is nearly always music in our house. Christine loves to sing as she goes about and has a vast repertoire of sacred and secular tunes. The other day I heard a very cheery melody which took me right back to childhood birthday parties. The only words we could remember were, 'There was a jolly miller, and he lived by himself, As the wheel went round he made his wealth.' Answers on the back of a digital postcard, please.

However, the memory triggered another one of another jolly miller, one who lived with his cook. Things were going well, to the extent that, over his fireplace, the miller had a banner that read, 'The happiest man in the world am I.' But that was all to change. When the king was doing a tour of his kingdom, he saw the sign and asked himself, 'What right has this miller to be so happy when I am weighed down by all the affairs of state?'

So, he spoke to the miller and said, "Miller, I have four questions for you. I want you to come to my palace in seven days' time and, if you answer any of the questions wrongly, I'll cut off your head. The first question is, 'How many stars are there in the sky at night?' The second is, 'How far is it from earth to heaven?' The third is, 'What value would you put on the king's life?' Finally, I want you to tell me 'What am I thinking?' when you see me"

The miller was all of a quiver, but his cook said, 'Leave it to me. I'll disguise myself as you and answer the king's questions and all will be well.'

A week later, the king posed his first question, 'How many stars are there in the sky at night?' 'Well, your Majesty,' replied the cook, 'this was a very difficult question so I sat down outside the mill one starry night and, for every star I saw, I put a grain of flour in a sack.' Emptying the sack of flour on his shoulder onto the floor he said, 'This, your Majesty, is how many stars there are in the sky at night.'

The king didn't argue but moved on. 'How far is it from earth to heaven?' 'Well, your Majesty, when thinking of this, I recalled that Jesus told one of the thieves on the cross that he would be with him

that day in heaven. As there were no more than six hours of the day left, the distance from earth to heaven can't be any more than six hours.' Again, the king didn't argue, feeling sure he would catch him with the remaining two questions.

'Very well. Then what value would you put on the king's life?' 'Your Majesty, I recalled that Jesus was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. As your life can be second in value only to our Lord's, I would put the value of your life at 29 pieces of silver.'

The king huffed and asked, 'What am I thinking now?' 'You're thinking I'm the miller,' was the reply, 'but in fact I'm the cook!!'

When the cook returned to the mill, the sign above the fireplace was amended to read, 'The happiest pair in the world are we!!'

Perhaps the point of the legend is that we will never get the right answers if we ask the wrong questions. The Bible is adamant that our Creator knows and cares for each one of us and wishes to have a personal relationship with us. Remember Matthew:10:29-31 *'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.'* This has certainly been my experience.

This idea is also central to the hymn, 'His eye is on the sparrow.' Which is printed below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CS5vKFSPtM&feature=share>

Why should I feel discouraged,
Why should the shadows come,^[SEP]
Why should my heart be lonely,
And long for heaven and home,^[SEP]
When Jesus is my portion?
My constant friend is He,^[SEP]
His eye is on the sparrow,

And I know He watches me,^{[L] [L] [SEP]}
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.

Chorus:

I sing because I'm happy,^{[L] [L] [SEP]}
I sing because I'm free,^{[L] [L] [SEP]}
For His eye is on the sparrow,^{[L] [L] [SEP]}
And I know He watches me.

“Let not your heart be troubled,”
His tender word I hear,^{[L] [L] [SEP]}
And resting on His goodness,
I lose my doubts and fears,^{[L] [L] [SEP]}
Though by the path He leadeth,
But one step I may see,^{[L] [L] [SEP]}
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me,^{[L] [L] [SEP]}
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.

Whenever I am tempted,
Whenever clouds arise,^{[L] [L] [SEP]}
When songs give place to sighing,
When hope within me dies,
^{[L] [L] [SEP]}I draw the closer to Him,
From care He sets me free,^{[L] [L] [SEP]}
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me,^{[L] [L] [SEP]}
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.

Join me in this prayer.

Lord God, you were there before time, space and matter existed.
You will be there when the world is long forgotten. You created
everything that is in your own image; able to live in community and
harmony with you. Your hands, that cast stars into space, were
surrendered to cruel nails on the cross that a fallen universe might

be redeemed. You open the way to forgiveness, reconciliation, purpose and hope for each of us, for our church, and for the whole cosmos. May we trust in you and know your presence and your strength today and always. Amen

meager52@btinternet.com

Holy Communion

Please contact Jeff directly jmartin@churchofscotland.org.uk if you would like to join one of the Zoom communion services in the coming week. The minister is also happy to have a distanced, in-person home or garden communion for those who do not have internet access.

Worship

If you are comfortable being with others, please join us for one of our in-person worship services in the Old Parish Centre:

Thursday, 10:30am

Sunday, 11:00am

Sunday, 4:00pm

The worship service is recorded and uploaded to our YouTube channel on Sunday morning. You can access it through our website: www.cuparold.org.uk

Donations

If you wish to make an online donation to our congregation or to the broader church, you may do so at the Church of Scotland website. After you click on "Donate," you will be directed to a page where you can select the recipient and the amount you wish to give via PayPal.

www.churchofscotland.org.uk