

New Horizons



Canonbie United & Liddesdale 16th March 2014

Order of Service

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Call to worship All The Days Of Our Lives

All the days of our lives the Lord is with us

Come, let us gather in praise

All the days of our lives the Lord is with us

Come let us bring him our prayers

All the days of our lives the Lord embraces us

Come let us sing to his glory

May all the days of our lives be offered to God

Come, let us worship the Lord

Hymn

CH4 81 I To The Hills Will Lift Mine Eyes

I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
From whence doth come mine aid.
My safety cometh from the Lord,
Who heav'n and earth hath 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.

Approach

Static

Lord of eternity, you made time
And in doing so you made change
You created a universe whose laws tick out the moments of time
In change and growth and evolution.
You made us as creatures of time and change
As people who can grow and evolve
Lord of Creation you made a universe
Not in a single solitary moment of creation
But one in which your creative will works on
Moment by moment remaking the world around us
Reshaping it into new patterns
Lord of Heaven, you fashioned a world
One that keeps reaching and growing to be more than it has been before
You have fashioned us to keep reaching and growing to be more
But so often we have stayed static
We have clung to what is safe and comfortable
While our neighbours - our family - have suffered
We have seen their hunger and need
But have not addressed them
We have seen their fear and their loneliness,
But not gone to them
We have seen their pain and their grief
But have not tended to them
We have stayed where it is safe
We have stayed static
We have seen words of scripture as tablets of stone
Rather than as a challenge to be engaged with and reinterpreted
To speak to us in our times and invite us to grow
To change and to move on
Forgive us.....
Remind us, Lord, that we are a pilgrim church
We are not meant to be static
We are meant to journey through the world you have made
A world of change and growth and evolution
A world your Son came to change

May we journey all our days, stepping in his footsteps
Until we find our home in you

Address**You'll Never Walk Alone**

When you walk through a storm
Hold your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark

At the end of the storm
Is a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of the lark

Walk on through the wind
Walk on through the rain
Though your dreams be tossed and blown

Walk on walk on with hope in your heart
And you'll never walk alone
You'll never walk alone

Address

Packing For A Journey

Sometimes I take school pupils off on trips. In a couple of weeks I'm going with some pupils to London. What would you pack to go to London for 3 days?

A couple of years ago my son went off to Denmark with the Scouts for a week. What would you pack if you were camping for a week?

In some ways life is like a trip - just a much longer. The thing is you can't plan and pack for your whole life - that would be a very big backpack, wouldn't it?

What really matters is who you go with. The pupils on the trip to London will be going with me and with other teachers they can trust. My son went to Denmark with Scout leaders he could trust.

And as you go through life you go with God. Whatever happens you can trust him.

Hymn

One More Step Along The World I Go

One more step along the world I go,
One more step along the world I go,
From the old things to the new
Keep me travelling along with You.
And it's from the old I travel to the new,
Keep me travelling along with You.

Round the corners of the world I turn,
More and more about the world I learn.
And the new things that I see
You'll be looking at along with me.

As I travel through the bad and good
Keep me travelling the way I should.
Where I see no way to go
You'll be telling me the way, I know.

Give me courage when the world is rough,
Keep me loving though the world is tough.
Leap and sing in all I do
Keep me travelling along with You.

You are older than the world can be
You are younger than the life in me.
Ever old and ever new,
Keep me travelling along with You.

Reading(s): Genesis 12:1-4

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.

Romans 4:1-5

What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”) -- in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

John 3:1-10

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.”
Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God

without being born from above.”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”

Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?”

Brother, Sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, Sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

When the road seems long and hard

Give courage and strength

Lord, we all of us make the journey through life
And it has its bright sunlit uplands
But it has its valleys of dreich shadows too
We gather in prayer for those walking in those valleys

When the road seems long and hard

Lord we remember those who are in pain
Those who are sick in mind or soul or body
For whom there are long hours of frustration and hurt
We remember those who mourn the loss of someone they love
For whom the days stretch longer without their company
We pray for them and we pray for those who care for them
And sometimes that should be us

When the road seems long and hard

Lord we remember those who are touched by hatred
Those who are caught up in war and conflict
For whom each day brings fear
We remember those who are spat on and shunned for who they are
For whom the world is a cold hostile place
We pray for those who strive for peace - however distant it seems
For those who stand beside the outcast in defiance of convention
And sometimes that should be us

When the road seems long and hard

Lord we remember those who lack the basic necessities of life
Those who are hungry and thirsty
For whom each day is a struggle to survive
We remember those who are homeless and cast out
For whom a bed is the hard ground
We pray for those who try to make a difference
Putting in the leg work to raise money and gather aid

And sometimes that should be us

When the road seems long and hard

Lord we remember all those in need

Because we are the witness in the world of your love

Meant to care for those who are hurting

Meant to speak for peace and for the despised

Meant to serve the weakest and the poorest

And sometimes that's so hard

And so we pray for ourselves

When the road seems long and hard

All this we pray in the name of your son

Who took the long hard road to Calvary

Alongside the suffering and the hurting

Alongside the despised and the fearful

Alongside the hungry and the outcast

In his name we ask

When the road seems long and hard

Offering

Changed Days

Lord, we thank you that today is not like yesterday
And tomorrow will bring another opportunity to grow.
For the opportunity each day to set about putting right
the things which are wrong in our lives.
For the freedom of being shaped by the past, but not bound to it
We thank you for the possibility that there will be a better world
We thank you for the prospect that one day joy will be triumphant
In addition we thank you for all the everyday blessings of life
For food and homes beyond the wildest dreams of our ancestors
For the companionship of old friends
with whom we can laugh at our youthful follies
For families who will walk beside us into the dense mists of tomorrow
We cannot repay you for these blessings
We have nothing to offer save our love.
These trinkets on your table are not repayment - merely tokens
Tokens of our whole selves.
Here we rededicate them, and ourselves
To your work in the world, the building up of your church
and the bringing in of your kingdom

Bright the cloud and bright the glory,
brighter far than mere sun's rays,
opening up a glimpse of heaven
to disciples' awestruck gaze:
power past their comprehension,
splendour too profound for praise.
All was changed, all was changed;
and they would never be the same.

Bright the cloud but dark the glory
wrought by human enterprise,
opening wide with awful terror
stark new worlds before our eyes:
power grasped but far from mastered,
knowledge keen but not yet wise.
All has changed, all has changed,
and we shall never be the same.

From the cloud and from the glory
human need brought Jesus down:
down to death, then from death rising
to receive a victor's crown.
Lead us, Christ, to prize compassion
more than might, wealth, or renown.
Help us change, help us change,
that we may never be the same.

**Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.
(Genesis 12:1)**

It’s time to start planning for the Summer holiday again. It’s not always easy coming up with a destination for the family holiday because Sue and I have rather different approaches to holidays. Sue likes to chill out and relax. I like to go stomping about the lace looking at new things. It’s not that I’m not into chilling out and relaxing - it’s just that I can do that at home. I call it “sleeping”. For me the thing about going to new places is the experience of seeing new places, experiencing new things. It’s about new horizons.

The odd thing is, I’ve never been on a mystery tour - at least not since I was about seven when I was stuck on a bus for what seemed like days between Glenrothes and Aberdeen. A mystery tour, at its best, should be the ultimate in offering new horizons. In our text this morning you’ve got Abraham - or Abram as he still is - about to set out on the mystery tour of a lifetime - and I use that phrase literally. God tells Abram to get up and leave Ur - the place he’s known all his life - and set out on a journey. He doesn’t tell us exactly where he’s going. He doesn’t tell him what’s going to happen on the way. He just says that he, God, will show him the way. He doesn’t even tell him what to pack.

Abraham leaves behind all he has known in Ur. He leaves behind the life he has known and he sets out on his journey. It is a journey that will last him the rest of his life; a journey on which he will experience times of fear and doubt, of joy and astonishment. There will be times when he will do things that he really shouldn’t do, but there will be times when he finds new inner strength. As his journey to the Promised Land continues, day by day, he will experience new horizons, he will gain new insights into his relationship with this strange God who goes with him on his journey. And he will be changed. On his journey he will leave some things behind and gain new things. The man who ended his days at Hebron was a different man from the one who set out from Ur - he will truly be Abraham and not Abram.

It's perhaps something of a cliché to talk about life as a journey, but it's no less true for that. Each of us is on a journey to an unknown country - the land that lies beyond this life and which stretches out to eternity. There are those who will tell you they know what Heaven will be like, but we don't, except in the most general of terms that can be described only through symbols and metaphors. So we journey in faith, as Abraham did.

Which brings me to a question. If God wanted Abraham and Sarah in Canaan to start a whole new nation, why did he not just transport them there with a wave of his divine hand? Why did he not arrange for Sarah to conceive straight away? Because the journey is important. The new horizons Abraham experienced on the journey and the new insights he gained into his relationship with God as a result of them, changed him. The things he left behind and the things he discovered through his journey with God beside him changed him. He was, if you like, born again.

And so it should be with all of us. We are on a journey - the journey that God has set us out on through his engagement with us in Jesus. On this journey - the mystery tour of a lifetime - we have, and will, experience times of fear and doubt and times of joy and astonishment. There have been, and will be, times when we have done things we know we shouldn't do and times when we find new inner strength to do what is right. There have been, and will be, times to let go of things that perhaps have been good and useful for a while but we need to move beyond if we are gain new insights into our relationship with the God who goes with us on the journey. Day by day life offers us new horizons that will change us, as Abram was changed into Abraham.

Lent is the time to reflect on these things. What have our experiences in the last year taught us about our relationship with God? Are there things we need to let go of - even if they have been good and useful to us in our lives so far? What are the next steps we need to take on our journey to the unknown country that God will bring us to? How can we grow and make our faith relevant to the new horizons that God has shown us?

And what is true of each of us is true of the Church as a whole. The Church is no more infallible than its members. It is no more perfect than its members. The Church too is on a journey - the journey that its head, Jesus, is leading us on. On this journey - the mystery tour of a lifetime - there have been and will be, times

when the Church experiences doubt and fear. We worry, I think, about the emptiness of our churches and the finances; new scientific discoveries seem to undermine our interpretation of scripture. But there have been, and will be, times of joy and astonishment - let us embrace them and let them strengthen us.

There have been, and will be, times when we don't get things right - one thinks of the Inquisition, or those many times when the Church has been too interested in what people do in their bedrooms and has failed to denounce the greed and the power and the inequality that has warped our society. But there have also been, and will be, times when the Church finds its backbone and gains inner strength to speak up for what is right - let us embrace them and let them strengthen us.

There have been, and will be, times when we have had to let go of things - sometimes things that have been good and useful in their times. Sometimes these have been hymn books or church buildings. Sometimes these have been doctrines and teachings that we had thought eternal, but which spoke to a particular time and place. We, as a reformed church, for example, long ago left behind transubstantiation, for example. The discoveries of science concerning the age of the planet and evolution have also meant we have to review our understanding of scripture. But these new horizons have given us new insights into our relationship with the God who goes with us on the journey.

And that, I suppose, is the point. Paul speaks of Abraham setting out on his journey in terms of faith. Faith is not "belief". It's not a set of creeds and doctrines. It's not a willingness to set aside logic, reason, science or whatever to cling to what we have believed. It's trust. Trust in the God who loves us and who has set us out on the journey we, each of us, are on - the journey the Church is on. It is trust in the God who goes with us on the journey - the journey that is meant to change us and shape us and mould us. It is trust in the God who came to us in Jesus to show us how to make the journey we are on - the human journey that requires us to let go sometimes and change.

We are on a journey - as individuals and as the Church. A journey that every day will offer us new horizons, new challenges, new opportunities to grow and be changed. Let us embrace them and become, through the grace of God, what we are meant to be: God's children, made in his image and ready for the unknown country that we are headed for.

Lord, on the journey guide us. On the journey shape us. On the journey wipe away all that hides our glory as your children. On the journey be with us and guide us as you did, and do, in Jesus.

Hymn

CH4 248 For My Sake And The Gospel's Go

For My sake, and the Gospel's, go
And tell redemption's story";
His heralds answer, "Be it so,
And Thine, Lord, all the glory!"
They preach His birth, His life, His cross,
The love of His atonement,
For Whom they count the world but loss,
His Easter, His enthronement.

Hark, hark, the trump of jubilee
Proclaims to every nation,
From pole to pole, by land and sea,
Glad tidings of salvation;
As nearer draws the day of doom,
While still the battle rages,
The heav'nly Dayspring through the gloom
Breaks on the night of ages.

Still on and on the anthems spread
Of alleluia voices,
In concert with the holy dead
The warrior church rejoices;
Their snow white robes are washed in blood,
Their golden harps are ringing;
Earth and the paradise of God
One triumph song are singing.

He comes, Whose advent trumpet drowns
The last of time's evangels,
Emmanuel crowned with many crowns,
The Lord of saints and angels;
O Life, Light, Love, the great I AM,
Triune, Who changest never,
The throne of God and of the Lamb
Is Thine, and Thine forever.

Benediction

Walk With The Lord

Go now to walk with the Lord
On every road he will be with you
In every place he will be with you
At every moment he will be with you
Loving you with a love that is to be shared
Shared with everyone you meet