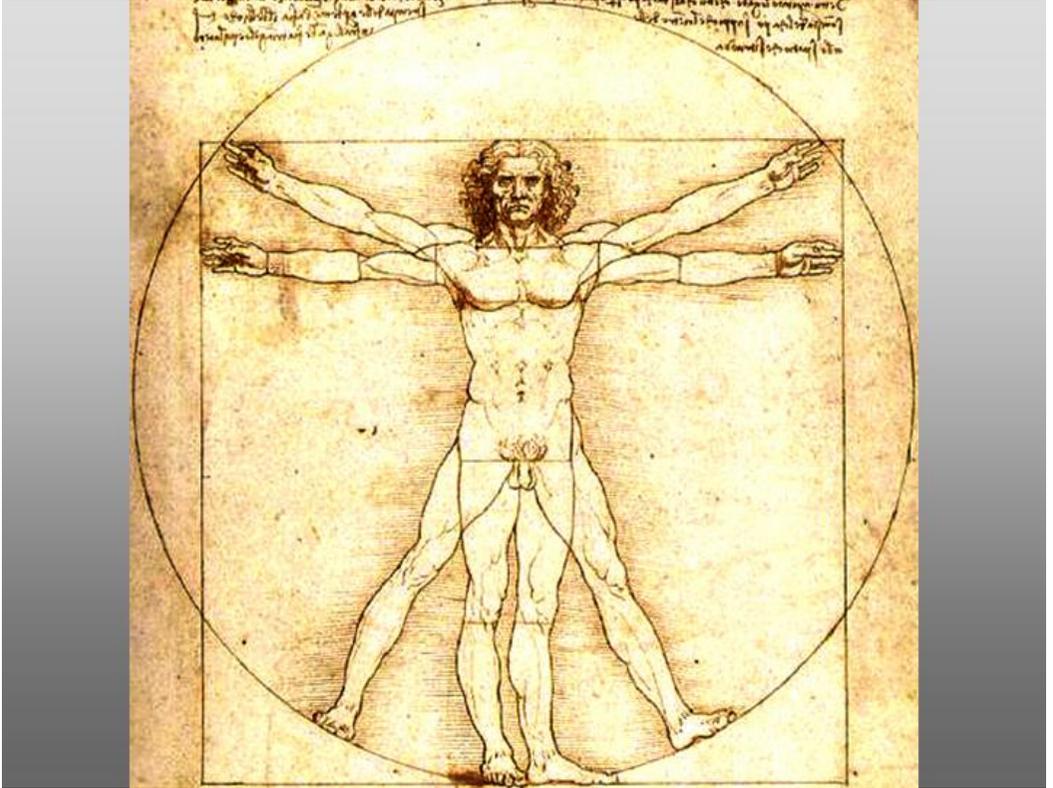


Bag Of Mostly Water



Canonbie United & Liddesdale 6th April 2014

Order of Service

Canonbie United 6th April 2014

Call to worship	However Small
Hymn	CH4 147 All Creatures Of Our God And King <i>(Omit vv 3-4)</i>
Approach	Only Human
Address	What Are You Worth?
Hymn	CH4 502 Take My Life And Let It Be
Reading(s):	Ezekiel 37:1-8 Romans 8:6-11 John 11:32-44
Hymn	CH4 308 Behold The Great Creator Makes
Intercession	Still Your Children
Offering	Wonderfully Made
Hymn	CH4 308 Behold The Great Creator Makes <i>(Tune: St Stephen (Newington))</i>
Sermon	Bag Of Mostly Water
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Benediction	The Lord Has Made You

Call to worship However Small

However small we think we are
The God of Heaven sees us and calls us into his presence
However weak we may think we are
The arms of the Lord are around us and he guides us
However unimportant we may think we are
The love of God surrounds us and calls to our hearts
Let us lift up our hearts
Let us praise with all our strength
Let our voices swell in praise
Let us worship God

Hymn

CH4 147 All Creatures Of Our God And King

All creatures of our God and King
Lift up your voice and with us sing,
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou burning sun with golden beam,
Thou silver moon with softer gleam!
O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou rushing wind that art so strong
Ye clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise Him! Alleluia!
Thou rising moon, in praise rejoice,
Ye lights of evening, find a voice!

And all ye men of tender heart,
Forgiving others, take your part,
O sing ye! Alleluia!
Ye who long pain and sorrow bear,
Praise God and on Him cast your care!

And thou most kind and gentle Death,
Waiting to hush our latest breath,
O praise Him! Alleluia!
Thou leadest home the child of God,
And Christ our Lord the way hath trod.

Let all things their Creator bless,
And worship Him in humbleness,
O praise Him! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three in One!

Approach

Only Human

Lord God

You have made us as we are

You made this world on which we live

The laws of nature that have brought all this about are your laws

The will that sustains them is your will

Lord we praise you

You have given us a sense of awe to rejoice in your Creation

You have given us intelligence to understand your laws

You have given us compassion to watch over our neighbours

You have made us in your image

Lord we praise you

You have made us in your image

How often we forget that

We talk instead of being “only human”

And we use that phrase to excuse so much

Our selfishness in the face of poverty

Our silence in the face tyranny

Our readiness to hate when the drums of war are sounded

Our intolerance of those who are different

Lord forgive us

For we have used our humanity to excuse so much

Internment and enslavement

Lies and deceit

Infidelity and corruption

Lord forgive us

Here we are gathered to honour your Son

Who was human and sinless

Make us more like him

Ready to make being human not an excuse, but a challenge

To be better than we have been

To be kinder, more truthful, more just and more loving

To be your children

Address

What Are You Worth?

A man once heard that he could get money for giving blood, so he went to a doctor and asked what he was worth. The doctor replied "If we could somehow break down the chemical composition of your body I could tell you your worth. You have within your body enough iron for a nail; enough sugar to fill a sugar bowl; enough fat for seven bars of soap (that may vary from person to person); enough lime to whitewash a chicken coop, enough phosphorous for 2,200 match heads, enough magnesium for a dose of magnesium; enough potassium to shoot a toy cannon, all mixed in with a little sulfur. In today's inflated market I'd reckon you are valued at about £3.50. That is how much we are worth."

The man was shocked "£3.50!! Is that all?"

By way of a second opinion the doctor directed him next door. Next door was an employment exchange. There they said "Let's see - you've got virtually no qualifications. No experience, few skills. Let's say £8000 a year" Well, things were looking up. So he sought a third opinion and went next door.

There was a church next door. The clergyman sat him down in the front pew and listened as the man told him he'd been offered £3.50 then £8000 a year, so his real value must be somewhere in between. "No" said the minister. "You are more valuable than an African gold mine and an Arabian oil field rolled into one. You are worth dying for." "Don't be ridiculous" said the man. What makes you think that?"

"Not my idea" said the minister. Then, pointing to a picture of a man nailed to a wooden cross "It was his".

Hymn

CH4 502 Take My Life And Let It Be

TAKE my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King.
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart-it is thine own;
It shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for thee.

Reading(s): Ezekiel 37:1-8

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD." So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them.

Romans 8:6-11

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law-- indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

John 11:32-44

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews

said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me."

When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Behold the great Creator makes
Himself a house of clay,
A robe of virgin flesh He takes
Which He will wear for ay.

Hark, hark, the wise eternal Word,
Like a weak infant cries!
In form of servant is the Lord,
And God in cradles lies.

This wonder struck the world amazed,
It shook the starry frame;
Squadrons of spirits stood and gazed,
Then down in troops they came.

Glad shepherds ran to view this sight;
A choir of angels sings,
And eastern sages with delight
Adore this King of kings.

Join then, all hearts that are not stone,
And all our voices prove,
To celebrate this holy One
The God of peace and love.

Intercession

Still Your Children

We are still your children

May we bring love

Lord God

You are omnipotent, you are omniscient, you are omnipresent

So many “omnis”

And yet you have made us in your image

You have called us to care for one another

You have called us to stand up for truth and justice

You have called us to model righteousness

That’s a big ask, but we bring those in need before you

We are still your children

We bring those who are hurting

We bring the sick and those who rage at their body’s limitations and those who heal

We bring those who have lost people they loved

We bring those who are facing death and those who counsel

We bring the lonely and the bullied and those who find them

We bring those who are known to us....

Lord, we don’t know what difference we make but

We are still your children

We remember here those who are so often forgotten

We bring the poor - and those who seek to feed them

We bring the homeless and the outsider and those who welcome them

We bring the child in the sweatshop and the trafficked woman

All those who so often cross our consciousness only because they have died

Lord, if we can make a difference to these people, remind us

We are still your children

We bring before you those caught up in violence

The kid concealing a knife and the victim of that same blade

The politician who calls up the troops and the families that grieve

We bring those who strive for peace

We bring the medics who risk their lives to serve in war zones

Lord, if we can bring a little more peace to the world, remind us

We are still your children

Lord we pray for your church

Fallible and broken

Uncertain and hesitant

Sent to work for those in need

We reach out for you and ask you to strengthen us for

We are still your children

Offering

Wonderfully Made

Lord we are fearfully and wonderfully made
You have given us thought and insight
You have given us language and reason
You have given us compassion and will
Lord we thank you
You have given us spiritual insights
You have given us ideas like truth and justice
You have given us purpose
Lord we thank you
You have given us your Son
Born as one of us
Teaching and guiding us
Dying along with us
Rising as a promise for us
Lord we thank you
For these things and much more we thank you
And we bring these offerings in thanksgiving
We ask you to bless them and bless them
To rededicate them and to rededicate us
To your work in the world
To the building up of your church
To the bringing in of your kingdom

Hymn

CH4 358 The Great Love Of God

The great love of God is revealed in the Son
Who came to this earth to redeem everyone
That love, like a stream flowing clear to the sea,
Makes clean every heart that from sin would be free.

It binds the whole world, every barrier it breaks
The hills it lays low and the mountains it shakes
It's yours, it is ours, O how lavishly given!
The pearl of great price and the treasure of Heaven

I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. (Ezek 37:8)

I was watching an episode of Star Trek a wee while ago. The crew had encountered a silicon-based life-form - you get more of those in Science Fiction than in most other branches of television drama. When the crew at last managed to communicate with this life-form it described them as “bags of mostly water”, which seemed a little discourteous. But in a sense that’s what we are - that’s what our bodies are. We have a skin that keeps our insides inside, and our insides are mostly water, with a little calcium, phosphorus, a fair amount of carbon and nitrogen and some sulphur. I’m a chemistry teacher - I know these things. We are, physically, bags of mostly water. Nothing wrong with that. Nothing wrong at all. The mistake might be to imagine that’s all we are.

See, Ezekiel has this amazing vision in the valley of dried bones. Down in the valley there’s thousands of bones, and - after he’s done a bit of prophesying - these bones join together; muscle and sinew develops on the rebuilt skeletons and skin regrows on them. I’ve seen that done in CGI in films. It’s very impressive. And yet. And yet it’s not enough. These rebuilt bodies have no life in them, they have no breath as Ezekiel puts it. The physical structure of the body is not enough - to be truly alive these bones need something else. And I’m not talking about the soul here - the idea of a separate body and soul wasn’t part of the mindset of the Old Testament writers. What Ezekiel does here is throw down a question and a challenge - one of the really big questions - what does it mean to be alive? What does it mean to be human?

Now there are some who would say that such questions are meaningless. There are some who would say that life is just a set of chemical processes, of respiration and the interactions of enzymes, of DNA molecules replicating in our cells. And, at one level, life is a set of chemical processes. Science tells us that. To suggest that life is “just” a set of chemical processes, that it is “only” respiration, or the interactions of enzymes or the replication of DNA - that’s not just contrary to our instinctive sense of what it means to be human, or what

Christian teaching suggests; it's crassly bad science. Look around you now. Human imagination shaped this building, as it has shaped so many beautiful things down the millennia. Human thought and skill built it; a human sense of beauty made sure that its fittings are not simply functional - as a human sense of beauty has produced so many wonderful things in the course of history. To suggest that life - our lives - are "just" or "only" chemical processes - you might as well try to understand Shakespeare by analysing the carbon used in the ink on the page. Ezekiel knew better - there is more to life than the sinews and the muscles of our bodies. And the questions remain - what does it mean to be alive? What does it mean to be human?

Now, there are some who would say that there is no meaning. We are simply the products of evolution. We are no more than the working out of evolutionary forces over millions of years. There are those who would say that we are nothing more than "lumbering robots" within which our genes survive by replicating themselves. And, at one level, we are the products of evolution. At one level we are the expression of our genes. But to suggest that we are "just" that, or "nothing more" - that not only flies in the face of what we instinctively feel to be true and in the face of religious belief - it's crassly bad science. The operas of Wagner; the poetry of Homer; the paintings of Rembrandt - do you really think they are nothing more than genes expressing themselves. No. Neither do I. You might as well try to understand the novels of Dickens by analysing a bacterium. Ezekiel knew better - there is more to life than the process by which we evolved. And the questions remain - what does it mean to be alive? What does it mean to be human?

These are the big questions - the ones humanity has tried to answer for as long as there's been humanity and I don't imagine I have the answers, but I think it has something to do with this. We are not "just" or "only" anything. There are no "nothing buts" or "simplys" about it. Paul is right in his letter to the Romans - we are not just our bodies and our bodies do not define us; our biology does not define us; our biochemistry does not define us. We are more - infinitely more - than all of those things. Paul speaks of the Spirit of God dwelling within us - an image that reflects Ezekiel's prophecy. We are not "just" or "only" anything. There are no "nothing buts" or "simplys" about us. We are nothing less than the children of God.

Biologists call us homo sapiens, we are a species. Yes we are. But we are an incredibly complex and richly diverse species. We have the gift of being able to express our individuality - our specialness - and communicate it to one another. In all of Creation - across all the echoing corridors of eternity - no one and nothing exactly like you has ever existed before, and never will again. Every man, every woman, every child is unique and therefore special. Each is known and cherished and remembered by God; and if there is a meaning to life, if it means anything to be human - I believe it involves living in a way that treats every human being as special, unique and loved.

We are human beings - we are also the children of God. We are an incredibly creative species. While other species build nests and hives that are awesomely beautiful, we have the gift of recognising beauty and truth and justice and hope and joy - things that cannot be held in our hands or seen with our eyes, but things we strive for and can create. The ability we have to hear of someone on the far side of the planet suffering hunger or pain and to want to make the world a better place for them; the ability we have to look at the way others are treated - sometimes people very different from us - and still feel that it's wrong and to want to make the world a better place for them; these reflect our Heavenly Father - they reflect God's creative Spirit in the world; and if there is a meaning to life, if it means anything to be human - I believe it involves living in a way that tries to make this world a better place for everyone - to take our place in God's purpose for humanity.

We are bags of mostly water. We are also the product of God's love for his creation. Perhaps above all other gifts we have the gift of love. We can - and often do - love our enemies. We can - and often do - care about people simply because their need touches us. We can - and often do - recognise that whatever differences there are between us; differences of race and creed, of wealth and status, of tribe or culture, there is something that binds us all together. There is something that allows us to love one another. And if there is a meaning to life, if it means anything to be human - I believe it involves living in a way that speaks of God's love for all his children. We are not just "bags of mostly water"; we are not just assembled bones. We are the species that loves. We are the children of God.

Lord God, your love for us confounds any attempt to reduce us to formulae or statistics. Remind us always that we are your beloved children, meant to love all your other children and to see them in their rich complexity and beauty

Hymn

CH4 566 When I Receive The Peace Of Christ

When I receive the peace of Christ
My loneliness shall end
And I must reach a hand and take
My brother as a friend
My brother as a friend indeed
Who has an honoured place
Where he may stand before the Lord
In dignity and grace

When I receive the peace of Christ
My loneliness shall end
And I must reach a hand and take
My sister as a friend
My sister as a friend indeed
Who has an honoured place
Where she may stand before the Lord
In dignity and grace

When I receive the peace of Christ
My loneliness shall end
And I must reach a hand and take
My own self as a friend
My own self as a friend indeed
Who has an honoured place
Where I may stand before the Lord
In dignity and grace

When I receive the peace of Christ
My loneliness shall end
And I must reach a hand and take
My Christ Jesus as a friend
Christ Jesus as a friend indeed
Who has an honoured place
Where now he stands among us all
In dignity and grace

Benediction

The Lord Has Made You

The Lord has made you

More than flesh and bone - he has made you his children

Made by truth to be truth

Made by joy to be joy

Made by love to be love

More than flesh and blood - you are the light of the world

Go now to touch the lives of those you meet

May the breath of God the Father be ever at your backs

May the teachings of his son, our Lord Jesus Christ, be ever in your minds

May the presence and comfort of the Holy Spirit be ever in your hearts