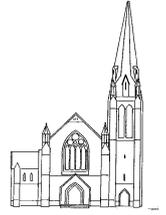




THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND NORTH PARISH CHURCH, GIRVAN Ayrshire.



**Interim Moderator - Dr James Anderson
Locum - Glenn Ronald**

February 2021 Newsletter

A Reflection for Burns' Season

- from the Interim-moderator.

This is the season for Burns Suppers, and there may be some people who feel deprived. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused them to miss out on the annual celebration of the poet Robert Burns (1759-1796).

It seems that the first Burns Supper took place on 21 July 1801 when a group of nine men, at the invitation of John Ballantine, an Ayr banker and patron of Burns, met in Burn's birthplace in Alloway, which had been sold and turned into an alehouse. During the course of the evening Rev Hamilton Paul read an Ode for the occasion and before the party broke up they resolved to meet the following year on 29th January, which was thought to be Burns's birthday. The correct date was discovered – 25th January – and thereafter the Supper was held on or around that date.

The key speech in a Burns Supper is the Immortal Memory. There are always a number of questionable supporting toasts, but the Immortal Memory should be a fully researched appreciation of some aspect of Burns's life and qualities as a poet.

By this event the memory of Burns is perpetuated; no one is allowed to forget his contribution because the celebration comes round year after year. In this way Burns is immortalised.

We might wonder what relationship being immortalised has with Christian immortality? We need to begin by admitting that our ideas of immortality are sometimes not much different from being immortalised. We live in a society that places considerable store by the way in which we will be remembered. In its simplest form it may be a name carved on a headstone, or an entry in a Book of Remembrance, and by that simple act the person is not forgotten, but immortalised.

On the other hand there are men and women who by the quality of their contribution to art, literature or music have ensured their immortalisation; I need only mention Turner in painting, Dickens in literature and Beethoven in music, and of course Robert Burns falls into this category.

Another way in which a name is immortalised is when it is given to something. Diseases frequently commemorate the discoverer as, for example, Alzheimer and Parkinson. In Girvan we have the McKechnie Institute, we used to have the McMaster Hall, and street names have commemorative value – Henrietta and Louisa were the names of the daughters of the land-owner when the houses were built over 100 years ago.

The desire to be immortalised is deep-seated in our culture. We want to be able to make some mark on the community, to do something for which we will be remembered, to contribute something of lasting value. The desire to leave some legacy is embedded in our human nature, even if it is just the wish to carry on the family name through children and grand-children. Now we must ask how this natural desire to be immortalised corresponds to what we call Christian immortality?

1. First, Christian immortality is the gift of God. The memory of Robert Burns is kept alive by the enthusiasm of a group of supporters.

With Burns Suppers stretching over 260 years, a tradition has been established that ensures that the poet is not forgotten. His memory is perpetuated.

Of course some people have no interest in Burns and never attend a Supper. If the memory of a particular person is kept alive it is because of human effort and action. Those who make significant contributions to sport, the arts, science, medicine are immortalised by us as humanity. People want to remember significant contributions made by others.

Christian immortality, on the other hand, is offered by God, and it comes in the form of his kingdom. At the moment our vision of life in that kingdom is clouded; we have only occasional hints and vague foretastes. But we have heard Jesus say – ‘Where I am you will be also’ and we have been assured that he goes ‘to prepare a place for us’.

We believe that it will be a condition in which there will be no pain or suffering or sadness, and where we grow in holiness and perfection, more like God the Father. We shall be what we are here seeking to become - persons in full and conscious possession of our own personality, and able to enter into a relationship

with those whom we have loved, in a more perfect way than ever before - all under the sovereignty of God, whom we shall see 'face to face' and know 'as he is'.

2. Secondly, Christian immortality is not restricted to an elite. It is a great thing to win an Olympic gold medal, but only one person wins it in each competition. There is a silver and a bronze and then a number of other competitors who run the race but get no prize. The winners in the Olympic games are a highly selected elite group. Some countries place so much kudos on winning a large number of medals that they scour their vast populations to identify potential winners. Olympic immortalisation is for a small number of special individuals.

In Ayrshire, in the days of Robert Burns, to be a rhymer, to write poetry was not uncommon, but only Robert Burns has an enduring status. Over the years many people have written music, but it is only the great men such as Brahms, Mozart and Beethoven that have emerged as outstanding composers. Humanity is highly selective in the individuals it chooses to remember.

The immortalisation given by human-kind is limited to a relatively small number of individuals whose contribution has endured in the public imagination. Most men and women do not make a contribution in an area of endeavour that results in lasting recognition, only a small elite fall into this category.

The distinctive feature of Christian immortality is that it is available to all. Nowhere in the New Testament does it suggest that God's gift of eternal life, of fullness of life, is restricted to an elite. Physical fitness, mental ability, social status, ethnic background, gender orientation are all irrelevant to entrance into the immortality of God's kingdom. His promises are made to all his children, his care extends to each individual, his love is for good and bad alike. He has no favourites who are assured of a place in his kingdom.

Heaven, as we popularly call immortality, will not be full of superior people, highly selected on the basis of some unusual characteristic; it will be full of ordinary people, because Jesus' call to follow him is made to all men and women without exception. Jesus is not looking for men and women who 'have already attained', but those whose ties of affection and sincerity and loyalty to him, and whose willingness to learn, would make them like their master.

3. Finally, Christian immortality is unearned but must be appropriated. No one would suggest that a gold medal can be won without a great deal of hard work. Perhaps only the immediate family of the competitor knows just how many hours of training took place in preparation. A gold medal is undoubtedly earned.

The same is true in other fields of endeavour. The musician spends hours practicing her instrument, the writer researches her topic extensively before repeatedly revising the text, the scientist does experiment after experiment to prove his hypothesis, the campaigner works tirelessly for her cause. Behind every person who achieves eminence, fame or success there is a history of hard work. The immortalisation given by humankind almost always comes as the result of a great deal of hard graft; it is earned.

It is very different with Christian immortality; it cannot be earned. There is nothing that we could do that would cause God to bestow immortality on us. The truth is that in our thoughts and acts we fall far short of his holiness, we do what we should not have done and we fail to do what we should do. At our best we are conscious of our faults and failings, we repent of them and ask for forgiveness. In other words, we stand at the foot of the cross with nothing in our hands.

God's gift of immortality cannot be earned, but it must be accepted or appropriated – and we do that by faith in Jesus Christ. God's gift does not become ours while we are asleep, as it were, we must put out our hands and receive the gift, consciously uniting ourselves with the Saviour. Those who confess their sins and look to Jesus for forgiveness, those who find in the cross a perfect atonement, those who try in their daily living to put into practice what they discern as the mind of Christ, put themselves in the way of the gift through faithfulness. Paul says, "God gives freely, and his gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Of course we should keep alive the life and poetry of Robert Burns by our annual Suppers, he has earned it. But let us remember that God offers immortality as a gift, available to each of us, and resting only on faith in Jesus Christ as the way, the truth and the life.

jca/jan21

February Newsletter for Girvan North.

Dear friends, the story in John's Gospel of Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman at the well is always a story which is important for us to return to. Despite Jesus being a Jew, he overturned convention when He asked a Samaritan woman for a cup of water to drink. As the passage in John's Gospel, chapter 4, explains, the Jew and the Samaritan did not associate with one another. Jesus however explained to the Samaritan woman, no one was excluded from the "living water" which Jesus offered. This "gospel of inclusiveness" is one which we should preach to others today.

The woman is confused. She does not know how Jesus could draw the "living water" out of a well which was so deep where He had no means to extract the water. She doubts Jesus' Messiahship when she fails to accept that He could be greater than her ancestor Jacob. The woman still does not grasp what Jesus is telling her. It is not simply water which will only quench the thirst temporarily but the "living water" which Jesus provides which will completely quench her thirst spiritually. Again, the woman is not quite on Jesus' wavelength believing that this "living water" will save her ever returning to the well again. This should not be her motivation when acting. Is it ours?

Jesus knows she has been married many times and this fact alerts the woman that Jesus is a prophet. How could Jesus know these details if He had never met the woman before? Jesus explains to the woman that it does not matter whether we Worship God on a mountain or in Jerusalem. What does matter is that we Worship God in the Spirit and in Truth. Initially it was the Jew who could achieve Salvation but now it is the Gentile too. At least the woman was aware that Christ was coming, and this Christ could answer the questions the woman needed answered. This Messiah however had already arrived and was in her presence as they spoke.

Just like Cleopas and his companion on the "Road to Emmaus", and now the "Samaritan woman at the well", how often do we forget that Jesus is always with us, in times of celebration, and in times of crisis? This time of corona virus has been one of crisis when all the normal activities which we do every day have been upended. We have struggled to find a "new normal" which keeps us safe and keeps our anxieties away. Particularly when church services stopped, and when church services, and Worship resumes, Jesus is our constant companion and friend who provides us with the "living water" which permanently quenches our thirst.

We might ask why the pandemic struck us, or if the vaccine will protect us sufficiently, or when things will become normal again? The virus struck with a ferocity highlighting our own unpreparedness; the vaccine will offer us greater protection; but we must remain vigilant, socially distant, wearing a face covering, and sanitising our hands regularly for the moment. Some of us may forget the role which God and Jesus play in this. They are, or should be, central to our thinking. God and Jesus calm our fears, remaining by our side through the worst of moments, lightening our load. Just like the Samaritan woman at the well" and Cleopas and his companion on the "Road to Emmaus", God and Jesus are always there beside us when we are searching for answers, even if we fail to realise this at the time.

Kind regards, Glenn.

From our Session Team Member:

"The World War One Memorial at the North Parish Church has now been added to the archives of the Imperial War Museum in London. Lorna and Ritchie Conaghan of the Girvan and District Great War Project are working in collaboration with the Imperial War Museum to update them on information and images that are currently missing from the museum's records.

7 images of the Memorial along with the names of all those listed are now available on their website. Lorna and Ritchie will also be sending the memorials of the Chalmers and Trinity Churches which are within the North Parish along with those of the South Parish Church and the former St John's Church in Piedmont Road."

The pictures have now been added to the Imperial War Museum records and you can see them here:-

[Girvan Parish Church - WW1 | War Imperial War Museums \(iwm.org.uk\)](http://www.iwm.org.uk/ww1/girvan-parish-church)

See pictures of the Memorial below

Ian Fitzsimons



To the glory of God
AND IN MEMORY OF
THE MEN OF
GIRVAN PARISH CHURCH
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES
pro Deo et patria
IN THE GREAT WAR
1914-1919

ERECTOR 1920

ROB MORRISON, R.S.F.
ALEX McCALLUM, R.C.A.
DAVID McKEAN, R.H.
ANDY McKIE, R.N.A.S.
GEORGE McLEOD, H.L.I.
JOHN McLEOD, A.I.F.
THOS McQUAKER, H.L.I.
JAMES STROYAN, C.H.
Wm TURNER, R.N.D.

MARSHALL McMURTRIE, R.S.F.
PETER C. ORR, A.I.F.





The Woman at the Well

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." John 4:10 (NIV)



Choose the word that best matches the definition.

- ___ 1. An adult female
A. man B. girl C. boy D. woman
- ___ 2. A deep hole in the ground from which we get water
A. well B. drink C. water D. thirst
- ___ 3. A clear, colorless liquid which is necessary for life
A. thirst B. well C. water D. drink
- ___ 4. To take in liquid through the mouth
A. drink B. eat C. thirst D. well
- ___ 5. The need or desire to drink something, especially water
A. thirst B. drink C. well D. hunger
- ___ 6. The man to whom a woman is married
A. son B. husband C. uncle D. father
- ___ 7. A person who tells what will happen in the future
A. Samaritan B. woman C. prophet D. husband
- ___ 8. The one expected to come and save the world
A. Jacob B. Joseph C. Samaritan D. Messiah

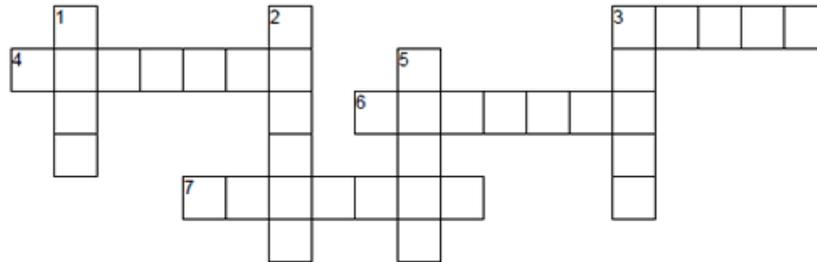
The Woman at the Well

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." John 4:10 (NIV)



The puzzle is based on John 4:5-26 (NIV)

1. Using the Across and Down clues, write the correct words in the numbered grid below.



ACROSS

3. An adult female
4. The one expected to come and save the world
6. A person who tells what will happen in the future
7. The man to whom a woman is married

DOWN

1. A deep hole in the ground from which we get water
2. The need or desire to drink something, especially water
3. A clear, colorless liquid which is necessary for life
5. To take in liquid through the mouth

WELL	WOMAN	WATER	PROPHET
DRINK	THIRST	MESSIAH	HUSBAND