

Sunday May 24, 2020

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer (Ross L)

Welcome to our service today. It's great that, despite the restrictions, we have found ways to continue to meet together and encourage each other. Over the last couple of months, we've lost the opportunity to meet physically, and with that the opportunity, often, to really understand how others are travelling and coping with the changes that have occurred. For many there is a loss of control, and with that a feeling of powerlessness as we struggle to meet the demands of life within a limited range of options. Today, as we look at 1 Peter 3, Stephen is going to explore the idea of power for the powerless – at home, around others and after Jesus.

But firstly, we're called to come this morning to acknowledge the part that God plays in our lives, to acknowledge the great, wonderful, perfect plan that He has for us. We're called to come together to praise him, to come together and pray to Him, to come together to read and learn from His word and apply it to our lives. As it was written in Deuteronomy let us come and: *"Proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribing greatness to our God! "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he"*. Let's pray

Dear God and Father, we are here today. Before you, in awe of you. Humble us so that we can fully appreciate who you are. We want to proclaim your name, to honour you, to recognise that you are just, that your ways, so far above our own, are perfect. All the things that you have made adore you and recognise your right to reign over creation. We want to come and worship you, praise you and thank you for redeeming us. As we meet together this morning, heal us, lift us up, give us the courage and confidence to serve you.

So many times, we feel powerless and alone, when it's not you that's moved, but us. Forgive us. When we don't get answers quickly, or the answers we want. When that leads to confusion and doubt. Forgive us. When we forget the blessings that you have given us and concentrate instead on what we think we're missing out on. Forgive us.

Give us a spirit of patience and a willingness to listen to you. You have promised that even in the dark and lonely times you will be there, shining your light for us. Thankyou.

Strengthen us so that we can support others when they feel powerless. As we come to you this morning, open our hearts and minds so that we can recognise you, be reminded of your promises and understand your will for each of us. In Jesus' name. Amen

Songs Let your Kingdom come

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kjMaYqhQnw>

Glory be to be to God the Father

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikH8DfDADxc>

Bible Reading – 1 Peter 3:1-25 (NIV)

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, ² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³ Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewellery or fine clothes. ⁴ Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to

their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

⁷ Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

⁸ Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. ¹¹ They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

¹³ Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threat; do not be frightened. ¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. ¹⁹ After being made alive he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— ²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Announcements

- **Invitation Services.** Many people throughout the world are turning to the church or to prayer in this crisis. So now is a great time to invite someone to join us for Church. TONIGHT our evening service will conduct a Facebook Live service over our public Facebook page. NEXT SUNDAY we can organise for a paper service to be delivered to anyone or an interactive service be sent to their email address. So, let us work out whom we can include in these services and then let Stephen or Jon know the details so we can get a service to them. Who knows God might even use it to bring someone into the kingdom?
- **Focus for May – Mission.** Has our focus on mission for the month of May changed our thoughts or prayers at all? Has it made you think more about god's saving purposes during our time of trouble? Today we continue to link up with our missionaries, this time with the Appleby's in Cambodia. Please keep them in your prayers in the days to come.
- **Small Groups.** With the NSW relaxing its social distancing requirements, our home groups will now have a choice to meet or remain on ZOOM. We have set up the Church and the Hall to enable groups to have fellowship together safely. Please contact your small group leader and find out what their plans are going forward.
- **Vanuatu.** Many thanks to those who have been so generous in supporting our brothers and sisters in Vanuatu. This week we have been talking with the Amata village (who left Ambae because of the Volcano and settled just out of Luganville) about building a cyclone proof multi-purpose Church/Hall/evacuation area. This will be an expensive project and they will be raising the bulk of the funds but we will be able to help them make a start.

- **Prayer.** Don't forget that every Monday and Thursday evenings at 7pm we are meeting to pray via ZOOM. If you can't join us, why not stop at that time and bring your praise and prayers before our mighty God?
- **Pastoral Care.** One of the things that has happened in the last couple of months is that we as a church have been praying more for one another and helping more people in their time of need. So, if you need prayer or any form of practical help just let Stephen, Jon or Jo know and we help out where we can.
- **Christianity Explored:** Have a think and pray about who you can invite to join us for our online Christianity Explored sessions being held on Wednesday nights from 7.30-8.30pm for 7 weeks starting 3rd June. We will be running the sessions via Zoom so it would be great to have you and a non-Christian friend join us. The advantage of Zoom is that you can even invite friends or family who don't live in Newcastle to join in and hear the good news about Jesus. Think of how amazing that is!!! If you or a friend is interested in joining in, please email Suzie on aaronandsuzie@hotmail.com and she will contact you with the Zoom meeting details. Please be praying as to who you can invite and that people will want to join in the course.

Family Matters – ZOOM interview with the Appleby's in Indochina

Check out our Private Facebook Page for the video. Don't share or tag with others for security reasons!

Kids Song I'm following the King <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8O86Q4JImUA>

Pastoral Prayer (Simon M)

Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can come to you and find rest and hope. In this world we can feel restless, we can feel burdened, we can feel overwhelmed. We thank for the words of Jesus, "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Lord, we thank you for the rest we find when we put our trust in you. Help us to know your peace when things seem overwhelming, that we may rest in your grace and love.

Thank you, Father, for giving us hope. While we hope for a cure for the corona virus, while we hope for our church and for our lives to return to normal, while we hope for healing, we thank you for granting us the certain hope of our salvation. We thank you for the certain hope of the gospel, the certain hope of your promises, an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

We pray that our Christian brother and sisters in the country of Iran may also know your rest and hope. Grant to them safety and protection, as they face persecution, threats of violence, and the real possibility of detention, kidnapping and torture. May they know great encouragement from the teaching of your word and the fellowship of believers.

We thank you for the sense of unity and peace you have given to the Appleby's, while they minister in Cambodia. Help them to keep trusting in you, while they are unable to fly back to Australia. We pray for them and other mission staff who have stayed on the field, for physical protection and for your blessing and grace. We pray that this current season would bring new opportunities for the gospel and that many would come to a saving knowledge of your Son.

We pray for our Prime Minister, the Premier and those who govern our country. Grant to them energy and wisdom as they consider the best options for our nation. We pray for safety for those in front-line health care and we thank you for the drop in cases of COVID 19.

We pray for the leaders within our church here at Charlestown. Help them to be wise and discerning as they make decisions about how to relaunch the church services and ministries. We pray that many will be

able to connect with tonight's invitation service, and that your Spirit would soften the hearts of those who do not know you.

We pray also for those who have limited access to technology and have been unable to engage with church online. Help us to care for the whole body of our church and reach out to those in need. Grant to us all rest and hope, in these times of uncertainty. "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour. Amen

Song. **A Christian's Daily Prayer** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAaFfoQy6s0>

Sermon. <https://youtu.be/SsZfftRWMY>

Or <https://www.facebook.com/Charlestown-Presbyterian-Church-113127747005906>

Soon after we moved into Newcastle, an East Coast low struck the region and among other things the power went out. So for about 5 days, 5 long days we lived without electricity. It was tough, we had no stove, no fridge, no vacuum cleaner (that's was OK come to think about it), no computer, no home telephone, no lights. It was terrible. But life didn't stop because we had no power. We just had to find another way of getting our jobs done.

And in life there are plenty of times we will find when we don't have any power. Peter has already in chapter 2 talked about how kings and other government officials have power over us. And that masters or bosses also have power over us. And in chapter 3 he will talk about how to act in the home when you have no power. And if I was to summarise this passage in one sentence, I would say something like this. When you lack power, at home, in the Church & in life in general, remember that Jesus is the source of all power & continue to serve him. So, Peter begins by saying "*Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands*"

1. At home.

In those days, wives had no power at all in the home. Neither did kids. For the male was the boss of the family, the master of his household. So how do wives, Christian wives especially cope with the fact that they have no power? Well in the same way that Peter has just told all people to submit to the king & those in authority. In the same way that he directed slaves to submit to their masters. In the same way that Jesus submitted to the corrupt government that had been placed over him. In that same way wives should submit to their husbands.

Because in those days the man was the head of the household. And actually, the New Testament doesn't seek to change that view. But it wants to show men that the power in a marriage is given to them to serve, not to get their own way. Like a waltz the husband is to take the lead and the wife is to anticipate the husbands move and to follow suit. But together as a team they will complete the moves that God wants them both to make.

So, in order to do that the wife is called to submit not to all men as if men are always in authority over women but to submit to their own husband. So "*that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, ² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives*".

You see wives are not powerless, they can bring about change to their husbands, even to non-Christian husbands. Now we all know how hard it is to change people, especially to change our family. Our wives just don't get it do they? Our husbands are stuck in their ways. Our kids don't seem to learn the lessons that we

are teaching them. And it is even worse when we are trying to convert someone in our family. I think they are the hardest people in the world to reach! For they see us at our best and at our worst.

And so often we will try and preach to them the good news. Share the gospel with them at every opportunity. And they get pretty sick of that incredibly quickly. So, what do you do next? Continue to nag at them? Or go quiet and say nothing at all? Peter gives us another option; he says submit to them. Win them over without words by the purity of your actions.

Now this is not a cast iron guarantee. But what Peter is saying is that some men will enter heaven on the last day because their wives have shown them through costly, faithful submission the truth of the good news of Jesus. That's radical isn't it? So how does it work?

³*"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewellery or fine clothes. ⁴ Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight".*

The obvious way for a woman to change a man is by beauty. To win them over by their looks, that will change the power differential. But Peter encourages wives to go down another way. Not outward attraction but inner beauty. Be like Jesus. He demonstrated a quiet spirit. He was gentle by nature. But there was something that drew others to him. His godliness. So, wives be like him. Wives be like Jesus and be like Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Yes, she was physically beautiful, kings looked at her & wanted her to be a part of their harem. But she submitted to Abraham. She did what was right and didn't give in to fear. Even though like all other human beings Sarah at times made poor choices as well. Or be like Monica, the mother of Augustine. Monica's prayers and witness eventually won over both her husband and her son to Christ by the way she served her family

And wives if you that, God will see how you are behaving and that will be of great worth in his sight. Despite your lack of power, you might change your husband. But you will definitely please God. But husbands don't demand that your wives submit to you, nowhere does the Bible encourage you to force your wives into submission. *"In the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect."*

In the same way. You husbands need to learn the same lessons as your wives, as the slaves, as those who live under the authority of governments. You don't have complete power either! You can't always change your wife's behaviour and you will especially find it hard to change their attitude and their character. So, in the same way be considerate of them. Treat them with respect *"as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life"*

They may be weaker in body but they are just as strong in mind, in personality, in character and you won't be able to change that in them. So, you are not to treat them harshly. You are not to throw your weight around; they are heirs with you of the gracious gift of life. They are God's daughters. They are special in his sight. They are worthy of your honour. Honour them like you honour a Queen. And you do that so that *"nothing will hinder your prayers"*.

Your prayers. You are to pray to God with them. And what do we do when we pray? We submit ourselves to God. We ask him to run our lives. We are fully dependent upon him! In your daily lives you should be

praying as a couple and as couple submitting your hopes and dreams to him, and committing your marriage and your family also to Him.

The usual method of getting what we want is through the exercising of power. By force, by our dress, our money, our weapons. But Christians need to be aware we are not powerful but powerless and so we use prayer to connect with the one in power. We ask that God change the people around us by bringing his life changing word of God into their lives.

But can I make something really clear. This is not a passage that clears the way for a man to be abusive to his wife. That is not being like Jesus. Nor is it a passage that says that a wife should submit to the husband if she is being abused physically or verbally or emotionally. In a world where family violence is reaching epidemic proportions there is no room in our marriages or in our Churches for this sort of behaviour. Go to the police. Talk to us as a Church. Go to Jo. Yes, we submit to our husbands but we firstly submit to God.

But if your husbands are encouraging you to sin or are sinning themselves, your first priority is the Lord. I can't imagine how incredibly difficult it would be to take that first step and come forward, but let us walk beside and help you to do just that, for you will need all kinds of support to do that in a harsh environment. So, power in the home, yes but also

2. Around Others

⁸“Finally, all of you, (not just some of you) be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another be compassionate and humble”. All of us need to exhibit these five characteristics - two that will affect how we think – like minded and humble. Two that will our emotions – sympathy and compassion. And affecting everything is the middle quality of love, love for one another.

We may feel powerless in the Church and in our world but we do possess the power of love. A power that can change the world. A power that God used to change the world. Remember God so loved the world that he gave it his one and only son. And his son Jesus also taught us ⁹“Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing”.

On this idea Warren Wiersbe commented “As Christians we can live on one of three levels. We can return evil for good which is the satanic level. We can return good for good and evil for evil which is the human level. Or we can return good for evil, which is the divine level”

And the Scriptures say if we do that God will bless us. His eyes are on the righteous. His ears are attentive to our prayers. But his face will be against those who do evil. So, don't forget that God is the one who has the ultimate source of power. So Peter goes on to say. ¹³“Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?” And in our minds, we would normally answer that by saying “No-one! But just as a magnet attracts some and repels others, so this sort of godly behaviour will be extremely attractive to some and be repulsive to others.

¹⁴“But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threat; do not be frightened”. The people around you seem like they have power and many will have power over you. Remember Jesus is your Lord. He is the one who is in control of you completely. And he might be using your powerlessness, your suffering, your persecution to change another's heart and their eternal destiny. ¹⁵“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶keeping a clear

conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil".

So be ready for your opportunity. Have thought through what you are going to say & why you are willing to submit to others, why you are willing to continue to do good, why you are willing to love everyone, why you are willing to suffer for Jesus. But does this work?

As a young Christian I read the book, "Forgive me Natasha." It was written by a Russian, who was part of an elite squad trying to destroy the Christians in the area when one day he found a secret house Church. He sprung through the door, belted the girl closest to him and arrested the leader of the church. A week or so later, he found that this church had moved, he located their new place of worship and again sprung through the door, belted the same girl on the way in and arrested the new leader of the church. When the same thing again this man started thinking about this girl. Her name was Natasha, why was she willing to be bashed in order to come each week to worship? This soldier became a Christian because he saw that Natasha was willing to put God first, no matter what it cost her.

You and I may feel powerless but there is power at home when we submit to each other and are considerate and respectful. There is power in our world when we love rather than hate. When we are willing to suffer for doing what is right and good. For we are following

3. After Jesus

¹⁸ "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God". Jesus didn't bring us to God through a power encounter but through weakness> He died on the cross taking my sin, and your sin and dying in our place. Jesus blazes the trail for us to follow. He doesn't ask us to do something that he wasn't willing to do himself. His suffering & death led him to preach the truth. For ¹⁹ "After being made alive he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits - ²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built".

Wow, what does that all mean? Well this is one of the most difficult parts of the New Testament so let me see if I can work through the questions one by one. Where did Jesus go? To a prison of some sort. Who did he preach to? The spirits who were disobedient long ago in the time of Noah. Now a spirit is not a soul. So, Peter doesn't seem to be talking about people but demons or fallen angels, most likely those referred to in Genesis 6 who led the people of the earth into such evil that God decided to destroy the world through the flood. Noah's flood. So, Jesus preaches to these spirits while they are awaiting God's judgement.

When did this preaching happen? After Jesus was put to death in the body and made alive by the Spirit. So sometime after the cross. And what did he preach? That God was victorious over death, over the devil, over sin. And that, just as God had saved Noah from the waters of judgement in the time of the flood, so now, he was saving people through baptism.

For in the same way that Noah believed in the coming judgement of the world & was willing to flee that judgement & was saved by God's intervention, so Christians who wish to avoid the coming judgement can today flee to Christ and through his death they can receive life. Baptism then is a physical reminder that our death & resurrection is dependent upon Jesus.

"It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him." You see Jesus didn't just suffer and die. And he didn't just rise to life. He is now ruling the world. All angels and all authorities and all powers are now

subject to him. Do you get it? Our passage started with wives being subject to their husbands and ends with all things being subject to Jesus.

That is why we can be submit to others. That is why we can love others. That is why we can be willing to suffer at the hands of others because ultimately, they are not in control. For on the final day they will be the ones who are powerless. They might bully us in the meantime but at the end time everyone will see the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord. For everything & everyone is under the power of Jesus. Others are not in power. We are the ones who have access to power, real power. And we don't get that through throwing our weight around. We get that by walking the path of Jesus. By submitting everything to God. By suffering for him & by being willing to pray and commit ourselves to Him and Him alone.

And if we do that, we realise that these sorts of actions will be of great worth in God's sight. In fact, he might use them to win over our non-Christian husband or wife or kids for that matter. He might direct people around us to ask us the reason for the hope we have. And they might be ashamed of their slander. The powerful will become the powerless and the powerless will tap into the power of the one who has all the power in the world.

When the East Coast Low hit our region and caused our house to be without power for 5 days. We did what we could without electricity for a while until our next-door neighbour offered us his portable generator. So, from then on for a number of hours each day we plugged into its power and we could then cook, clean, wash and work. We then realised that there was still power available we just need to find its source.

Today when you and I find ourselves powerless we don't despair we turn to prayer. We don't seek to grab power; we humble ourselves before God. We don't act like everyone else; we follow the example of Jesus. And that sort of behaviour can change the people around us. That power can bring about conversations and even conversions. It was there all the time. So why didn't we flick the switch & use it? And why don't we use it today as well?

God's power is available to us today. And it will give us the power to submit and to be considerate and to love and to face suffering. And God will use those weak actions, those supposedly weak actions to bring about his strong salvation. Just put him to the test and see!

Song: I have a shelter in the storm <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCxhyiXQO9M>

Or **Will your anchor hold?** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQQO8v-0VBo>

Benediction.

¹⁰ "For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. ¹¹ They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (NIV)

Virtual Morning Tea

Our morning tea is a vital way that we give and receive fellowship during a time like this. We don't want to be just consumers of Church; we want to be a part of the family of God. So why not join us on ZOOM for a virtual morning tea. You can connect by

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89081952206?pwd=aGVtcml0OHp3VXMxYVg0bk5HSS9rZz09>

Meeting ID: 890 8195 2206 Password: 797654

Or it might work better for you to give one or two people a call. Who might your ring now?