

St. Patrick Family Service - 15 March 2020

Welcome: Thank you for logging on and taking the time to watch and listen to our service of worship which will be based on the life of our patron saint Patrick. The world faces uncertainty with the coronavirus infection and we will pray that God will keep us strong and united as a nation and that we will seek God wholeheartedly. This past week has been unusual, unprecedented and difficult and you may have experienced discouragement.

From the very beginning of time until now, God often reassures us of the fact of his being with us, Immanuel, and I call us to worship our God who promises to be with us as he was with St Patrick. As the story of God being with us began to unfold he said to one of the first leaders these words found in Genesis Ch 28:15 *"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go."* This involvement is not just a sentiment but resulted in the action of creation and salvation. Let us worship God as we sing our first hymn and remember the story of God's cry of love for us.

Opening Praise: Across the Lands (You're the Word of God the Father)

Prayer:

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-discipline. 2 Tim. 1:7

Heavenly Father, every portion of your Word is true and beautiful. Today this one small verse is both of those things, as well as being timely. The fear we feel, in response to the growing impact of the coronavirus, is palpable and understandable.

To belong to Jesus doesn't mean we are free from the "messier" emotions in the kaleidoscope of feelings. It means we handle them differently. In our anger, we choose not to sin. In our grief, we learn to weep with hope. In our fear(s), we learn to trust in you.

You haven't given us a "spirit of fear." Caution, alertness, appropriate response... indeed, you give us these things, but not fear. Thank you. Rather, the Spirit you have placed inside of us is the Spirit of *"power, love, and self-discipline."*

We need the power of the Spirit today, Father. We need power to keep our minds and hearts set on things above. If we knew what you know about this crisis, we would worship more than we worry. We need power to resist the lies and the spirit of panic with which the devil would love to paralyze us.

We need the love of the Spirit. Your perfect love drives out fear. As real as our fears are, make your love for us in Jesus even more palpable and transforming. And increase our love for our neighbors. May we not waste this crisis on self-preservation, but use it for loving to your glory.

We need the self-discipline of the Spirit. Empower us for making wise, Gospel-choices—saying “Yes!” to right and helpful things, and “No!” to futile and self-serving things. Father, thank you that this is your crisis, and we are your beloved children. So we pray, in Jesus’ merciful and mighty name. Amen.

Part I: Conversion in Captivity (Katie)

A long time ago on the outskirts of the Roman Empire, there lived a boy named Maewyn. Now, Maewyn grew up going to church - after all, his grandad was a priest and his father was also a church leader, one of the deacons - but Maewyn never really saw any need for the God that they worshipped in his own life. Many made an effort to share about Jesus and the gospel with him, but he just wasn’t interested. Instead, he turned away from God. One night, he was in his bed fast asleep, when suddenly he heard a loud commotion outside. Before he knew what was happening, he was yanked from his bed by foreign men, chained to others from his village, marched to the sea, and loaded onto ships headed to the land of Hibernia. He was sixteen years old. When the ship docked, Maewyn, though born a free man and citizen of Rome, was sold as a slave to tend herds in the fields. But the LORD protected Maewyn out there in the fields and woods and on the mountainside. Cold and all alone in a foreign land, with no one but animals to talk to, Maewyn began to pray. As days turned to weeks, weeks to months, and months to years, the LORD taught him the difference between good and evil, and Maewyn recognized he had committed many sins, rejected God and disobeyed His Word. He continued to pray. . and pray and pray, all through the day and in the watches of the night, and day by day his love and respect for the LORD grew. And though he was still a slave, Maewyn praised God for all the grace and gifts given in his captivity, including the gift of knowing and loving God Himself.

Conversion in captivity. Talk 1 (Sam)

Maewyn has heard of God, he has been raised in a Christian family, but he doesn’t want to follow Jesus. That is sad.

His life changes when he as a 16yr old is CAPTURED and CHAINED as a SLAVE and made to work as a SHEPHERD.

How far can you go to get away from God?

Read Psalm 139:8-12 (page 627)

NOWHERE

God is everywhere, God knows where you are and the really, good news is, he comes looking for us and wonderfully he speaks to us. He speaks through circumstances (often tough times as Maewyn experienced) through conscience and the Holy Spirit (a quiet voice in our thoughts) or through the word of God.

God came looking for us most directly when Jesus came. Jesus was always talking about looking for lost things and particularly lost people.

Let us read one of those stories in Luke Ch 15:3-7 (page 1048)

Maewyn was like a lost sheep but God came looking for him and spoke to him, teaching him the difference between good and evil and through the conviction of the Holy Spirit Maewyn came to understand how he had rejected God and how wrong that was, and he also learned how good God was, his love and character, his sending Jesus, his death on the cross for Maewyn. Maewyn believed God and accepted his offer of forgiveness and became a true follower of Jesus, a Christian disciple. He understood that Jesus was the good shepherd.

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Maewyn was saved in captivity, and his life changed dramatically, he was still a shepherd and a slave BUT he wasn't running from God or rejecting God, he had a new relationship with God and a new life of obedience to God and desire to please God.

Praise: IPH 98 The King of Love My Shepherd Is

Part II: Deliverance from Captivity (Katie)

One night, about six years after he had been kidnapped, Maewyn was fast asleep when he heard a voice tell him it was time to return home, and a ship waited to take him there. So, he ran away and started walking towards the sea. It was a very long journey, about three hundred kilometers, but the LORD directed Maewyn's path and protected him from being recaptured. When he arrived at the sea, a ship was getting ready to set sail, but the captain insisted Maewyn perform a pagan ritual in order to board. Out of reverence for God, Maewyn refused. He left the dock and started praying, and before he finished his prayer, a member of the crew shouted after him, brought him back to the ship, and they did *not* make him perform the ritual. They sailed for three days before coming to land. They wandered this deserted country for weeks until all of their food and supplies ran out. Distressed and hungry, the captain said to Maewyn: "Tell me this, Christian. You say your God is great and all-powerful; why then can you not pray for us? As you see we are suffering from hunger; it is

unlikely indeed that we will ever see a human being again.” Maewyn confidently replied: “Turn sincerely with your whole heart to the Lord my God, because nothing is impossible for Him, that this day He may send you food on your way until you are satisfied; for He has plenty everywhere.” Suddenly, a herd of squealing pigs appeared on the road right before their very eyes! There was plenty of food for everyone, even their dogs! They ate and gave thanks to God, and the food did not run out until the day they finally found other people.

Deliverance in captivity Talk 2 (Sam)

Now Maewyn and God are friends, they walk together, they listen to each other and Maewyn wants to please God by being obedient. Remember Maewyn is still a SLAVE and SHEPHERD but he is now God's child.

God and Maewyn are on a journey together. The journey becomes like an obstacle course, there are various tests on the way.

Let us try and remember some of the things that happened to Maewyn as he obeyed God.

- Told to leave Hibernia, being a shepherd of sheep, to take a long journey with the danger of being caught
- To get on the boat for home the captain ordered him to perform a pagan ritual
- He faced being mocked by his fellow travellers when they were lost on an island and very hungry. Where is your great and powerful God now?

Remember God is with Maewyn and he speaks to him, we will do a **sword drill** which is a way of saying we are going to look up verses in the bible as if our lives depended on it.

- Psalm 121:1-4 (page 621)
- John Ch 14:1 (page 1082)
- Hebrews 4:16 (page 1203)

Is there a better friend than Jesus? One who is powerful and who promises to help his children on our journey through every-day?

Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. (The Message)

Proverbs Ch 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord (Jesus) with all your heart and lean not in your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths.

Praise: IPH 345 (i) I heard the voice of Jesus say

Part III: Mission to the Captives (Katie)

When Maewyn finally succeeded in making his way back home, his family was overjoyed to see him, and begged him never to leave again, especially after all the hardships he had endured. But one night, Maewyn had a dream of a man called Victor, coming from Hibernia with more letters than anyone could count. As Maewyn read the first letter, he heard the voices of the Hibernians - the people who had enslaved him - calling as one: "Come and walk once more among us." Utterly gutted, he could not read another word. He left home and went to study the Scriptures at a monastery, that he might then teach them to the Hibernians. He struggled throughout his studies, because they were in Latin, a language foreign to him. When he completed his studies, he was ordained as a priest, and he chose to take a new name. He became Patricius, which means "nobleman", a fitting name, for he was no longer a slave, neither physically to men nor spiritually to sin, but had been bought at a great price by the King of the universe and adopted as a son. And so, the remainder of his life was given in service to his King, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people who had once enslaved him, that they might be freed from their slavery to sin.

Mission to captives. Talk 3 (Sam)

Maewyn has already learned much about God and experienced how God is able to keep him as they walk together through life.

What are you going to be (or do when you grow up) in life? It's a big question, but now that Maewyn is a friend of Jesus it's a question that he must ask God; God (Jesus) what do you want me to do in life?

I'm not talking about the job you will do, but what God wants you to do as a nurse, a pilot, a homemaker, a carpenter, a business person, an accountant, a council worker, a civil servant, a lecturer etc

The first disciples were FISHERMEN let's listen to what Jesus says they are to do.

Mark Ch 1:16-20 (page 1002)

FISHERS OF MEN This is the calling given to every disciple, tell others what you have discovered about Jesus and pass on the good news.

This is what Maewyn understood as God's call on his life and he was given the special task of coming back to Ireland to tell the Irish people about Jesus. He trained in the university of the day, learned more about Jesus from the scriptures and in obedience came back to Ireland and proclaimed the gospel of forgiveness of our sins, and of God's friendship and presence within the family of God the church.

(Katie)

You may know Patricius better as St. Patrick, and as we prepare to celebrate the day that bears his name, let's think of it as a timely reminder in this Lenten season to celebrate the new life that has been granted to us through the Great Emancipation, that is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"For when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent Him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that He could adopt us as His very own children. And because we are His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child." Galatians 4:4-7

"You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship." Romans 8:15

We haven't just been freed from our enslavement to sin, but adopted into the family of the Living God! How can we keep such good news to ourselves? Sharing this gospel with others was the mission that St. Patrick dedicated his life to, but that mission is not yet complete, neither here in Ireland nor in the world at large. In his Confession, St. Patrick wrote, "[Christ] promises in the Gospel: 'They will come from the east and the west to take their places with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob (Matthew 8:11). . . For that reason we ought to fish well and diligently in accordance with the advice and teaching of the Lord, who says: 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.'" May we continue to fish diligently wherever God places us or calls us to go, keeping our eyes and ears open to learn from Him how to fish well, that all might come to know our Saviour and experience the freedom of His saving grace.

Offering (Christ Be All Around Me)

Prayers for Others (Ethan)

Father God, we pray to You now, remembering that You are God Almighty, You are sovereign, You are rich in mercy and Your love is steadfast. You are also pleased when we bring our prayers before You and when we pray for others, so we take this opportunity to do that now.

Father, we ask for peace in our country and across the world for everyone affected by the coronavirus outbreak, the peace that only You can give. We ask for Your

protection from the virus, especially for those who are particularly at risk. We ask that You would grant wisdom to the leaders and governments of this world as they coordinate responses and we pray for fortitude and determination for medical professionals who are on the front lines of the fight against this outbreak. Help us, Lord, to be responsible in our actions and our attitudes, whether we are buying groceries or staying at home, remembering that we have been called by Your Son to serve and to be ambassadors for You in all circumstances. We pray against fear and panic, and that in our lives we will show a true and tangible faith in You as our God, a God who is greater than any virus.

Father, we also pray for the spiritual state of our country. We have heard today the story of St. Patrick and how You used him. Lord may this be an inspiration for us to live as Christians, filled with the joy of knowing You, and with a heart to tell of all that You have done for us to the people of Ireland. We pray that the people of Ireland will respond to the call of the gospel and that You, Lord, will bless the work of churches across this island to reach and bring people to salvation through Your son, Jesus. Lord, give us the strength and the courage to continue to proclaim Your name in Ireland.

Lord, we also ask for Your continued presence and love for the Meldrum family as they continue to grieve. We thank You for John's life and his faith in You, and we pray for his friends, family and everyone who misses him. Father, we pray for those in our congregation who are sick, who are physically, emotionally or spiritually needy, that they will turn to You, our rock in times of trouble, for help and that they will find rest and encouragement in knowing You.

Finally, Lord, we remember Christians across the world who are suffering persecution. We want to pray specifically for Kim Jong-Uk, a missionary from South Korea who was working with refugees from North Korea and was thrown in prison for this work. We pray that You will maintain his faith, that You will use him even in prison, and that one day he will be released and justice will be done. We pray for him, his family, and the Christians and missionaries in North Korea who are facing similar risks. Lord, You have told us that we should expect opposition from this world, but also that You have already overcome the world and that ultimately we can place our hope in You.

Lord, hear our prayers for our world, increase our faith and help us to trust in Your name. In the name of Jesus we pray, amen.

Closing Praise: For the Cause

Benediction

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.