

Thought for the week - It's hard to remember when and where we learned to say 'Bless you' when somebody sneezes. It's an automatic reflex reaction for many of us, and I don't suppose most people think either of God or what 'bless' means when they say it. In fact, some people even feel it's rude not to say 'bless you' – whether they believe in God or not. Dr Gail Saltz (a psychiatry professor at a New York medical college) describes it as: 'An utterance without specific meaning other than a response to a sneeze that is considered to be polite.' It's just what you do when someone sneezes. But is that all a blessing is? Is it just an utterance without specific meaning?

In the same way, most acts of worship end with a blessing of some kind. Is that just a liturgical full stop, words spoken but without any significant impact or meaning?

Jesus told the 70 that whenever they entered a house the first thing they should say was, 'Peace to this house.' Are these empty words? Is this just a fancy way of saying 'Hi folks'? Clearly it is not, because Jesus goes on to say (Luke 10.6): 'And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.' Jesus describes peace as a unifying facet of our lives. It is as if we each have a portion of peace that we can offer. But this peace can never just hang about in the air. It is either received – and thus enriches the heart of the recipient – or it bounces back to the one who is offering it. God's Spirit works to enhance the relationship between the one who offers and the one who accepts.

Back to sneezing... It is thought that the practice dates back to a time when people believed that a sneeze somehow loosened your soul from the rest of you. It might even have escaped along with the 'atchoo'. But, by saying 'bless you', the soul was restored to its rightful place and the devil was prevented from snatching it away. It's doubtful that many people would believe that explanation today, whether they believe in God or not, but the idea of blessing someone in response to something physical is interesting. It demonstrates that a blessing is an act of love; it reveals a desire for the other person to be protected, and it is motivated by a hope that they will remain whole. May God bless you.

**Thought for the week - © ROOTS for Churches Ltd 2002-2022.
Reproduced with permission**

Blessed be you, Lord God, for your forgiveness.
Blessed be you, Lord God, for your guidance.
Blessed be you, Lord God, for your acceptance of us.
Blessed be you, Lord God,
that we can know our sins, our failings, are forgiven. **Amen.**

Order of service



Kelso
Country
Churches

Charity no. SC000958

**Sunday July 3rd, 2022
Conducted by Stephen Manners**



To contact the minister **Stephen Manners**
smanners@churchofscotland.org.uk
Tel 01573 470 663 07747821458
www.kelsocountrychurches.org.uk
www.facebook.com/kelsocountrychurches.org.uk/

Welcome

470 Jesus shall reign

Prayer

Philippians 1.3-11 I thank my God for you every time I think of you; **4** and every time I pray for you all, I pray with joy **5** because of the way in which you have helped me in the work of the gospel from the very first day until now. **6** And so I am sure that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus. **7** You are always in my heart! And so it is only right for me to feel as I do about you. For you have all shared with me in this privilege that God has given me, both now that I am in prison and also while I was free to defend the gospel and establish it firmly. **8** God is my witness that I tell the truth when I say that my deep feeling for you all comes from the heart of Christ Jesus himself. **9** I pray that your love will keep on growing more and more, together with true knowledge and perfect judgment, **10** so that you will be able to choose what is best. Then you will be free from all impurity and blame on the Day of Christ. **11** Your lives will be filled with the truly good qualities which only Jesus Christ can produce, for the glory and praise of God.

511 Your hand, O God, has guided

Sermon

680 You are called to tell the story

Offering prayer (please remain standing)

Intimations

Tea and coffee after the service

Next Sundays service is in Stichill Church at 10.30am

Prayers of response

702 Lord in love and perfect wisdom

Benediction

Philippians 1.3-11 - What would your parting words be to a faith community whom you have planted, loved, and nurtured? How do you possibly find the appropriate final words to thank the folks who have risked their own welfare just to be associated with you, who have supported you and stood by you—even though they could have been harmed by the scandalous, treasonous claims that you made, and whom you know may face some hardships in the near future?

That is the dilemma in which Paul finds himself as he pens the letter to the Philippians. Imprisoned and awaiting another trial, Paul knows that he could face death. Prisons in the first century were not intended as punishments in and of themselves. They were places to wait—wait for trial, wait for pardons, wait for hearings, and sometimes wait for death. And Paul deserves death. He has been going around the empire preaching that there is a king other than the emperor. It is of little surprise that the charges levelled against him, as recorded in Acts, claim that he and his associates are turning the world upside down and preaching another king, Jesus (Acts 17:7). After all, in this very letter, the only letter that we have to this church, he will make the bold claim that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord—that is, every knee on earth, under the earth, and in the heavens, even Caesar's knee (2:10-11).

In his final words to these believers, Paul is neither defiant nor despondent. He is joyful, full of warmth and love for this community of faith that has not only stood by him and supported him during his imprisonment, but has remained true and faithful to the gospel. What does he tell the Philippians? He urges them to continue to lead lives worthy of the gospel (1:27) even though this path could lead to suffering (1:28-30). The Lord that they serve is worth the risk; they serve the real Lord after all, the one whom the whole world will someday recognize as the rightful king (2:6-11).

In the passage this week, the apostle expresses gratitude to God for the believers. In this thanksgiving section, he mentions matters that he will develop in the body of the letter. The first matter of note is joy, of all things. There is nothing about the situation that seems joyous. Paul will assure the Philippians that his imprisonment has served to advance the gospel even “among the whole praetorium” (1:13-14). We do not know which imprisonment this is. In either case, the point is that his scandalous message is even infiltrating the ranks of those who maintain the hegemony of empire. This success can only be met by joy.

Carla Works - Working Preacher