**New Kilpatrick**

**13th March 2022**

**Luke 13:31-35**

**Podcast**

**Centring**

Perhaps our religion has been wrong

Perhaps it is not about the strength of faith

But its vulnerability

Not about the security found in buildings

But about our courage found in the world

Perhaps the best of our humanity is seen

In what is happening in Ukraine

As folk who see the challenge of suffering

Do not look away

The courage that is found in vulnerability

Perhaps there is where we meet Jesus

Most authentically

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton… the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish… and thank you for letting us be part of your lenten journey… The stories are harder in this season… and our world illustrates that far too readily at the moment… but in the hard stories… comes authentic truth… and in our words today… hopefully we will be able to share a faith that is both vulnerable… and courageous…

**Prayer**

Loving God

Generous God

Vulnerable God

Presence with us

And presence between us

May we find you one of us

Having let go the glory

And laid aside the kingship

And chosen to be human

In all its fragility

And uncertainty

Right where we are

May we see you

In the face of our neighbour

Those queuing for visas from Ukraine

On borders fleeing conflict

In shelters and hospitals

May we find you

In the words we speak

In the compassion we find

And the love that provokes and challenges us

That dares us to do something

Even as it makes us more vulnerable

Loving God

In this chaotic world

Where we are tired of uncertainty and conflict

May we create the sanctuaries others need

Among us

Places of comfort

In our welcome

Places of hospitality

In our offer of belonging

Kingdom places

Beyond our usual patterns and familiar ways

And may we be energised by such faith

New life to reshape our communities

A daring that finds us

Out with our walls

And alive in our community

Witnessing to a kingdom

Ready for justice

And forgiveness

And possibility

So we gather

Vulnerable as we are

Hesitant and uncertain

And make ourselves, yours

Hear us

As we share the global prayer

Our Father, who is in heaven

Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, the power

And the glory, forever

Amen

**Scripture Introduction**

There is a lot of the bible with which we are familiar… and then there are other bits that are less familiar… sort phrases that we remember something about… but don’t seem to connect with us as much as a visual narrative or parable or ancient Old Testament epic… This is one of them…

It sounds like a conversation between Jesus and the pharisees… who are NOT out to get him… but seem to want to protect him… warning him of Herod… but turns to a lament… longing for people to be gathered… like a hen gathers her chicks… While provocative… it is also quite a vulnerable image… a hen protecting her chicks under her wing… herself facing the danger…

So the passage is not a narrative… or a parable… but and insight into the character of Jesus… how he saw himself and the kingdom… It’s not a passage you pick up easily in one reading so feel free to replay a few times…

**Scripture: Luke 13:31-35**

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” **32**He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. **33**Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ **34**Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! **35**See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

**Reflection**

I want to make a plea for vulnerability today… and being a congregation that names and lives its vulnerability… rather than seeing ourselves as a strong church… and that strength… is not something we should seek… It is courage…

That truth plays out before us constantly in Ukraine… those who thought Russian strength was enough… are finding it increasingly difficult to counteract the courage of vulnerable Ukrainians…

That kind of courage, however, is costly… utterly so… Vulnerability is defined as recognising the pain and not backing away… and each one of us sees that on our televisions daily… and deeply longs for that courage… to win over strength… But the thing about vulnerability is… there are no guarantees…

It is the real live version of our passage today… There we have Jesus courageously moving towards Jerusalem… not in a show of strength with great certainty… but completely vulnerable… which is essential to this kind of courage… Seeing the pain and challenge and not turning away…

There is a peculiar strength in vulnerability… responding to the needs of others around you…

And it speaks to us too… as a church… the courage to be vulnerable… There is a slice of thought that runs through the church… increasingly so… of a strong God… Jesus, a hero… making himself a sacrifice for sin… for the wrath of God… that the cross is all about victory…

Let us not preach that in a world that is watching Ukraine… that needs compassion and generosity… We don’t know love will win… that’s the vulnerability of it all… and the courage of our faith…

When Jesus moves towards Jerusalem… he does it precisely not to prove himself a fearless hero… or a sacrifice for a judgemental god… or even to combat death… Jesus heads to Jerusalem… not in victory… but in the courage of love… in vulnerability…

But we don’t like vulnerability… we don’t like exposing ourselves to plain or grief or disappointment or failure… and we numb ourselves to it… It happens in religion a lot… The researcher Brene Brown says we do that by making everything that is uncertain, certain… we turn a belief in mystery… into certainty… I’m right, you’re wrong…

We do it in politics too… she says… we just blame each other… there is no conversation, no discourse… we just blame: blame is defined as a way to discharge pain and discomfort…

But being vulnerable is part of an authentic life… an authentic Jesus… where there are no guarantees… no certainty love will win… or God will raise Jesus… Authentic faith is courageous… it comes from honesty and vulnerability…

And as a congregation… post pandemic… negotiating presbytery mission plans… and very uncertain futures… may we recognise we are vulnerable… New Kilpatrick is not asked to be a strong congregation in the way we understood that before… we are not asked to be strong… but courageous…

Because global leadership… populist politics… nations with a fear of vulnerability… are being taught something profound from those who are most vulnerable in Ukraine… and the courage they have found… about something authentic… real… and generous…

And perhaps that is the version to hold to… of this lenten passage we read today…

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

Loving God

In a world that has moved us

With scenes of courage and vulnerability

Among scenes of fear and conflict

We gather to pray

Not to pay lip service to what we long for

But words of commitment to the kingdom of love

So we pray for Ukraine

For that sense of being left to be vulnerable

Of the sacrifice that they make

That stops a greater war

We pray for refugees

And those countries willingly taking them in millions

And those left waiting on our own border

That leave us asking: Why are we like that?

We pray for Russians

And an autocratic government

Afraid of freedom

And a world that is shaped by these things

That could be so much better

With more authentic leadership

May we not leave our prayer there

But choose to live differently

Choose to live courageously into the future

Find in our vulnerability, rather than strength

A humanity that is generous and life-giving

We pray for a different way to run the world

Where the vulnerable teach the strong

About courage and joy and gratitude

And where justice is real and not just an idea

And truth is spoken and not feared

And kindness is a given and not conditional

Loving God

Hear our prayer

For all vulnerable in all conflict

In all poverty

In all oppression

In all our neighbourhoods

And for our own families and friends

Those ill physically and mentally

Those anxious and those grieving

Hear us

Hear us O God

Amen

**Benediction**