

New Kilpatrick

Sermon

30th October 2016

Spirit... may we find our inspiration... in that desire for justice... that urgency for love... that possibility of renewal... May we hear them in word... at table... in community... together... So be it... Amen

So bake-off is finished... There was real trauma in our household on Wednesday... The very last one... It is as if a whole part of our culture has just... slipped away...

I don't know if the Widow of Zarephath could have been a contestant in Bake Off... but her last loaf... was certainly worth a Paul Hollywood handshake for she did something even he is unable to do... though Mary Berry... being on an entirely different plain from the rest of us mortals... probably does every day... but the rest of us find it somewhat more difficult... making the last loaf... last...

The widow's replenishing jars... made certain that last loaf... never ran out...

It is a remarkable thing... Generosity and grace came together... and through the work of the two... a last loaf was baked... but once finished... the basic ingredients were still there...

Generosity and grace... never ran out...

Perhaps the way to hear this story... is to listen to the metaphor... of the widow... who with generosity lived towards the other... despite her own needs... and in grace... offered what was needed... without prioritising herself...

It is a constant metaphor in the bible... living generously... sacrificially... by grace...

The church in the west... is now so utterly unfamiliar to people... it finds itself at the gates of the Widow's town... and learns a lesson... We feel we may be the last generations to know what it has meant to be church like this... that we are now down to our last loaf... but my friends... look at the oil jug... look at the flour jar...

Generosity and grace... there is still enough... still enough... to create... something that nourishes and feeds hope... Those ingredients that make us church... haven't run out...

At the session last Thursday... we had a hugely inspiring conversation with two folk from the wider church... Alistair Duncan who is the transition minister at St George's Tron... and Liz Crumlish who works with 40 congregations in Scotland on a path to renewal... and both offered us oil and flour... that inspired us to believe... that the church had not run out of the ingredients that make us God's People...

Perhaps the loaf we will bake from now on isn't the one we are familiar with... but the same ingredients are still there...

Maybe the church always ought to be in this state... one meal away from starvation... never excessive... never too much... never too comfortable... always wondering where the next meal will come from... Always living with just enough... giving of itself... generously... and with grace...

Maybe that needs to be our living space now... because to live like that... we have to rely on generosity... and grace...

And they are always enough... When you are in the wilderness... and hungry... and on the margins... as you could perhaps describe the church... you can't rely on the structures and culture and heritage you once did... you have to go back to more fundamental things... generosity and grace...

And from these kingdom ingredients... shape another loaf...

Which is what we do... and where we find ourselves today... and where the church... has fundamentally... always found its purpose...

For this table... and this bread and the wine... are these very building blocks... Jesus' generosity... and grace... is where we begin...

We've often imagined communion as a place we end up at... We have advertised this table as a place you strive to get to... the end result... the reward after a communicants class... offered only to members... as if we had to understand what this was...

How many of us... as children... have sat in the balcony of the churches we were brought up in... and watched... as the adults... and new members... were invited to feast... as if this was something they had achieved...

I can find no where in the Bible that speaks of generosity and grace like that... This place... this meal table... even at the Last Supper... was not a place you ended up... but a place where you began...

With a loaf and a cup... and with those on the margins... and those who did not understand... is where Jesus... began... the renewal... and it is where we learn to make church...

What we have here... right here... unconditionally given... regardless of whether we believe or don't... regardless of questions... regardless of intent... this is where everything begins... in the generosity and grace of God... of the last loaf... Of Jesus giving generously of self... and with a grace that does it unconditionally...

And it never runs out... This generosity never runs out... this grace... is not limited...

Each of us is at a different stage in our faith... some of us with very little and some with more than we can imagine... here... together we begin... we start anew... we rebuild... what it is to be church... to be God's People... to be the body of Christ... on this last loaf... shaped by generosity and given in grace...

So here we are nourished enough... here we are included enough... here let us enjoy as if this is the last loaf... and know... what this table offers... is the very building blocks of our faith... and there is enough... for another loaf...

From generosity and grace... we begin... from generosity and grace... comes resurrection... this is our beginning place... not our ending place... our first place... to be church... through generosity and through grace... our basic ingredients... we grow as a

church... we nourish the world... we give of self for others... we love neighbour... and in so doing... shape another loaf...

So come to the table... come now... there is enough... to bring life again... and my friends... trust... know... believe... these will not... run out...

So come my friends
to the place where grace and generosity
are ever replenished
where love and peace
never run out
and where all have a welcome
and a place to belong

This is an open invitation
to an open table
not a place of membership
but a place of journey
not a place of belief
but a place of belonging

Let us set the table
with the host of heaven
and in bread and wine
break open the gift of grace

So come now
we share together
and offer common cup and bread
for any who wish
and invite you to move to the front pews
on the lectern side
otherwise where you are already seated
we share in individual glasses
passing trays to each other
serving our neighbour

As we ready the space we sing 'The earth belong to God alone'
immediately moving to 'Ye Gates' as the elements are then processed

The time is now
the table is ready
let us gather
in the name of Jesus Christ