**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**Sunday 30th April 2023**

**Esther 5:1-8**

**Gathering**

Let us gather and wonder

Let us be found in the waiting

let us pause,

hesitate

and reflect.

In the waiting

we worship.

In the not yet

we meet an expectant God.

In the pausing

we find a pregnant place

of possibility,

of potential,

of hope.

Between the beginning and the end

In the middle of life

We meet

Love

Truth

Promise

God

**Welcome**

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton… the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish… and thank you, as always, for inviting us into your home or wherever you are… that we might shape a time together in worship…

It strikes me that there are a lot of possible outcomes when we meet together… we bring much… and possibly expect much… but the true worship is the encounter that leaves us on an entirely different track from the one we started out on… or expected… This is worship…

**Prayer**

Holy One

Sacred space

Loving presence

May we find ourselves

Entangled in your being

That essence of life

That renews us

And forgives us

And invites us

Into the next moment

Resurrected

Breathing with new life

And hope

May we find each moment

Is such a gift

A new breath

Filled with possibility

Yet to be formed hopes

Yet sacred

And God-given

Even the silences and your

Waiting

For a new music

A word

That can shape what is still waiting to be

Inviting the dreams of the kingdom

To come alive

Flow into time

And place

Now

And still to be

Holy One

May we know the future is held

In each moment

The between places

The not yets

And we are love’s disciples

Quickening

Readying

Hoping

Into tomorrow

Hear us as we say the Lord’s Prayer

**Scripture Introduction**

Before we pick up the story today… let’s go back a bit… and remind ourselves of the story so far…

King Ahasuerus the Persian… has a wife… Queen Vashti… Vashti… refuses to parade herself in front of the king’s guests wearing only her crown… She is de-crowned… and the king searches for another queen…

Esther… a Jew… but she keeps that secret… after what is a beauty contest in all but name… is crowned queen… Mordecai – Esther’s adopted father – is also seen in the king’s gate

But then… Haman… a Persian in the king’s court… an enemy of the Jews rises to power… and he wants everyone to bow to the king… Mordecai refuses revealing he is a Jew… Haman plans then to destroy all the Jews on the 13th day of the 12th month…

The king is persuaded this is a good idea… not knowing the real reason… Mordecai urges Esther to plead with the king… to save the Jews… Esther faces a crisis – will she put her life at risk… or will she keep her identity a secret…

Esther chooses to reveal her secret… So, she fasts for 3 days… then decides the time has come…

**Reading: Esther 5:1-8**

On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king’s palace, opposite the king’s hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne inside the palace opposite the entrance to the palace. As soon as the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won his favour and he held out to her the golden sceptre that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the top of the sceptre. The king said to her, ‘What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom.’ Then Esther said, ‘If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to a banquet that I have prepared for the king.’ Then the king said, ‘Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther desires.’ So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

**Reflection**

Magpie Murders… Happy Valley… are two series where I’ve had to binge them… because I always want to know what happens next… There is a tension and an excitement… almost sitting on the edge of your seat wondering how these will conclude…

There have been a few series where I’ve actually had to skip to the end because the tension is actually too much… I need to know… Line of Duty was one… I watched the last bit in order to cope with the rest of it… I didn’t have enough blood pressure tablets otherwise…

I have a friend who always reads the last page of a book before the first… she then knows what happens and she doesn’t need to worry about it…

The bible doesn’t have many stories like that… long stories you don’t read all at once… We’ve got the Moses and Abraham stories which are long… even the Jesus story… but all of these are made up of wee stories… each with a beginning, middle and end… Bullrushes… or ten plagues… and we do all three in one Sunday service…

I can think of two bible stories that are much longer… Joseph and Esther… and this week we are in the middle of Esther… Everything has started… nothing is concluded… and we have to sit in the middle of the story…

Maybe we want to skip to the end… or like me… you can’t stand the tension in the middle… and want a quick conclusion…

But perhaps here is a chance to pause and reflect… not only on Esther’s story… but the reality that this is the experience of the bulk of our lives… we experience it as moments between the expectation of beginnings and the drama of endings…

Most Sundays we tell a story… and conclude it… moving on to the next one next week…

But that isn’t the reality of our lives… or our faith… We live between times… we live almost in the mundane… wondering where God is… what is the meaning of this… how is love guiding us here… in the unfinished…

There is a whole branch of faith called process theology… which is the idea that God is in the moment… God isn’t one for looking on from a distance directing the traffic… but is involved in the moments… moments that have still to be worked out…

Nothing is planned… nothing is taken for granted… God… love… justice… are all working towards a conclusion… that hasn’t yet arrived… Everything is in flux… the conclusion hasn’t been reached…

Even God doesn’t know how each moment will turn out… It is all to play for… Living in the unfinished… in the middle… It can have us sitting on the edge of our seats… We made a difference… we are co-creators with God of the next moment…

God is working in and through the world… not sitting apart from it checking the predestined plan is working out…

That won’t be everyone’s view however… May will prefer believing God is in charge… that there is some plan… God has already arranged… and what is good will win…

But others might see the middle of the story… as the reality in which we meet a living God… engaged with our actions… our responses… our creativity… because they all count… as we work together… and live towards… the next moment… and the next… and the next… shaping the world towards the shape of the kingdom… faithfully living and loving and recreating… the next moment with God…

Living in the middle of things… It certainly has me sitting on the edge of my seat… because I can’t turn to the last page to find out what happens… for… as yet… it hasn’t…

Dare we believe every moment counts… even these middle ones… in the everyday… the not yet… where God is alive… and is encountered… shaping… evolving… trusting… expanding… every… mundane… moment…

**News**

**Prayer**

Between the beginning and end

We find ourselves in the world

Between moments and possibilities

And so we pray for a different outcome

In Ukraine, Sudan, Yemen

For the moments that capture peace

And set it free

Where there has been too much destruction and pain

In Myanmar, Syria,

For the moments that free the oppressed

And change the ways of frightened leaders

And life is renewed and filled again with good things

In in the places of hunger

For the moments that someone speaks justice

And love to the hungry

And the places of refuge

For the moments that an invitation is given

That invites safety, compassion and a journeying together

Into the future

For all the between moments

The not yets of the world

The things that aren’t inevitable

For these we pray

And the between moments for our families and friends

The possibilities that surround them

The hopes and the tomorrows

That speak of renewal

And those who are hurting

Confused

Cannot understand what life has thrown at them

Cannot speak of it

We pray

For a peace

And a strength

And a presence

That loves them all

Through what they are going through.

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**