**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**3rd September 2023**

**Psalm 50**

**Gathering**

There is a beauty in things

In the poetry of faith

And the words of life

In the songs of worship

And in the community we create

A beauty that is deeper than sight

Or sound

But is an essential awareness

Of what is profound

And reaches in to support us

A beauty that unfolds in wonder

And is known in awe

This is the way of worship

Where the beauty of God

Meets the wonder of humanity

That coming together

Can only create an encounter

In such a place

Let us worship

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish… and over the next month we are going to explore worship… what is it we are doing… what do we expect… or give… or share… or encounter… and it is that last word… perhaps… encounter… that interprets all the other words we use when we talk about worship… An encounter with God… and every tradition of Christianity… and every tradition of every other faith… offers different means of encounter… so over the next four weeks… we explore… engage… encounter… the mystery in worship… and the God who is that mystery…

**Reading: Psalm 50**

The God of gods, the Lord, speaks.  
    He calls the earth from the rising to the setting sun.

**2**

God shines from Jerusalem,  
    whose beauty is perfect.

**3**

Our God comes, and he will not be silent.  
    A fire burns in front of him,  
    and a powerful storm surrounds him.

**4**

He calls to the sky above and to the earth  
    that he might judge his people.

**5**

He says, “Gather around, you who worship me,  
 who have made an agreement with me, using a sacrifice.”

**6**

God is the judge,  
    and even the skies say he is right.

**7**

God says, “My people, listen to me;  
    Israel, I will testify against you.  
    I am God, your God.

**8**

I do not scold you for your sacrifices.  
    You always bring me your burnt offerings.

**9**

But I do not need bulls from your stalls  
    or goats from your pens,

**10**

because every animal of the forest is already mine.  
    The cattle on a thousand hills are mine.

**11**

I know every bird on the mountains,  
    and every living thing in the fields is mine.

**12**

If I were hungry, I would not tell you,  
    because the earth and everything in it are mine.

**13**

I don’t eat the meat of bulls  
    or drink the blood of goats.

**14**

Give an offering to show thanks to God.  
  Give God Most High what you have promised.

**15**

Call to me in times of trouble.  
    I will save you, and you will honour me.”

**Reflection**

What does God want from us? What do we want to give God?

Look around us

Look around and see who we are

This incredible variety or wonder and magnificence

We are beautiful in our creation

We have been shaped by forces we have no understanding of

Of evolution and of living experience

Of deep history over aeons and of memories of only yesterday

We are a bundle, a tangle, a muddle of life

That God loves

Deeply

And in our worship

That is all we can bring

Not the perfect version of who we think we ought to be

But our messy, confused, hurting, bruised, joyous, laughing self

It has always been a mystery to me

That there is space in worship for a monologue

From a worship leader

Who in some sense feels the conduit of God

Who expounds the scriptures

Offers some learning

In the hope that the congregation before them

Picks something up from the oratory

But what are we meant to do with that?

Seriously

Why is worship a learning experience

Why is that not for Bible study, for adult Sunday school

And worship left to be an encounter

A moment in God

A place where we meet God beyond words

Intelligence

Understanding

But in wonder and awe

In affirmation and love?

None of which comes easily with words

Might our worship ever be

A place of encounter

Where we create a ritual, a pattern of poetry and silence

Of action and story

Of symbol and emotion

That takes us beyond the everyday

Do words keep us safe?  
If we find a way of understanding a passage is that a way of controlling faith?

Is faith rather not an unplanned

Unexpected

Unlimited encounter with that which is beyond us?

If you were to ask: in which parts of the service do we encounter God?

What would be our answer?

The psalmist is saying we do not need to provoke an encounter

We don’t need to rehearse

Or offer a gift for God to come close

We just need to be aware God is already close

Just call and God is there

You don’t need to be in a particular state of mind

Or achieved a particular level of behaviour

Of faith or understanding

Just call

Just call

And so, what do we do with the sermon

The monologue

The learning.

And what might we do instead to engage

Leave room for an encounter with God?

A space

A story

A sound of music

A time of silence

A way of being

An action to respond to

An image to dive into

An experience with beauty

What might we be in worship?

Which is what we will explore over the coming weeks

**Prayer**

Holy one

Beyond words and understanding

May we fill the silences with our longing

That we might, without words,

Find ourselves in your presence.

May we become aware of what that is like

The space, the freedom, the limitless time

Might we read an ancient word

And hear it anew, again today

Might we leave things unsaid, unconcluded,

And discover trust is enough

Might we encounter you beyond what we comprehend

And know we don’t have to understand

In the freedom of our encounter

May we know the breadth and depth of you in our living

And gather here all that hurts, all that needs peace

All that is broken, all that is unjust

And leave it here, you who can take so much more

And love it into life again

Holy One

May we seek only the space we need

For all we are

To be held

Heard

And renewed

So be it

Amen

**News**

**Benediction**