

Thanksgiving, Cost, Purpose

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Date: 25 October 2017

Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 0 0] I'm now going to read the finding of the Commission of Assembly of this year that brought us to this point this evening.

So, the finding of the Commission of Assembly of 4th of October 2017. It was moved, seconded, and agreed that the Commission of Assembly receive the petition of the Presbytery of the Western Isles for the union of the congregations of Knock and Point and Grant its Crave.

They declare the congregations of Knock and Point to be united as one charge with one kirksession and one deacon's court. They further declare that the united charge be called Garibald Free Church of Scotland.

They grant the united congregation the authority to call a minister without restriction according to the provisions of Act 1, Class 2, 2017, Interim Act, and its Sustentation Fund.

They instruct the Presbytery of the Western Isles to meet with the congregations at the earliest available opportunity to formally constitute them as the new congregation of Garibald Free Church of Scotland.

[1 : 1 2] I now invite the Reverend Andrew Coggle to address you as the congregation of Garibald Free Church. Thank you, moderator.

Well, friends, we begin something of a new stage in the journey this evening, and we do so together. Myself, as inexperienced in this as you are, given that we begin a new stage under God.

I'd like us to read together a few verses of Scripture, perhaps unusually. I'm going to read from a psalm in the metrical version. I want to read in Psalm 45 from the 13th verse on.

Behold the daughter of the king, all glorious as within. With embroideries of gold her garments wrought have been. She shall be brought unto the king in robes with needle wrought.

Her fellow virgins following shall unto thee be brought. They shall be brought with gladness great and mirth on every side into the palace of the king, and there they shall abide.

[2 : 2 3] Instead of those thy fathers dear, thy children thou mayest take. And in all places of the earth them noble princes make. Thy name remembered I will make through ages all to be.

The people therefore evermore shall praises give to thee. Amen. The daughter of the king is not being asked to trash the memory of her parentage.

She's not being asked to forget, in a dismissive sense, those who have brought her to that stage of being presented now to the king as his bride-to-be.

But she is being asked, like any prospective bride, to recognize that the love and the blessing and the labor which has brought her to that stage is to be surpassed now by a greater love and a new hope and a fresh start.

To that end, there are three points I would like us to consider in this particular subject. When I was growing up and still to this extent, there's a great believer in the medicinal properties of the medicinal compound TCP and its benefits in subduing infection and being as an antiseptic and so on.

[3 : 45] Now, of course, in the medicinal sense, that stands for tetrachloropentine. But I would like us perhaps to consider three other possible means by which these letters might be understood.

First of all, thanksgiving. The moderator has already alluded to the fact that it's not to us or to any individual that thanks is to be rendered, but ultimately to the Lord.

It is in thanksgiving to the Lord that we come to this stage tonight together. It is he who has brought us through some, yes, difficult stages. But thanksgiving also for the labors of those who have gone before.

We do not, like the daughter of the king, we do not seek to dismiss or forget the labors of those who toiled in the Lord's cause in each of the respective congregations which unite now tonight and are brought together as Garibust Free Church.

Nor do we seek to forget the labors of those whose vision and impetus wrought so much to bring these two congregations together.

[5 : 00] Whatever may be the tragedies of recent months, the work done beforehand should never be forgotten, nor its impact, nor its effect.

The labors likewise of your former moderator, Mr. Matheson, and all the work that went before in likewise bringing us to this stage and the sustentation fund schedules and all this stuff behind the scenes that people don't see.

The labors of many, yourselves, office bearers, elders, deacons, and members attending meetings and giving their voice and their vote to this union.

This is a cause for thanksgiving. It is an achievement, not of ourselves, but an achievement for which we give thanks to the Lord.

It is a witness. It is a witness to the world that delights to say, why can't you Christians get on with each other? Why are you always parting from each other? Why are you always going your separate ways?

[6 : 02] Well, here we are coming together and uniting in a witness and an achievement, giving thanks for the labors of those who have gone before, but thanksgiving most of all to the Lord.

Secondly, when we think of the letter C, I would like us to recognize that there is in all these things a cost. There has been a cost to yourselves.

Just as the daughter of the king is thankful for what has gone before and the parents who have brought her up and brought her to that stage, there is none of us here tonight that is saying, oh, thank goodness I am short of that old knock or that old point congregation.

I couldn't stand belonging to them. They were awful. Thank goodness we have now got this new congregation together. Nobody thinks that. Nobody wants to say what a bad congregation we were in before because you weren't.

We were in good and loyal and faithful congregations serving the Lord, but now together this is something better. This is something greater.

[7 : 10] But there is a cost to the old identity, to the old loves, to the old loyalties. There is a sense in which you have been called upon to do some dying to self, dying to the old loyalties, dying to the old loves, and that is part of what it is to follow Christ.

There is a dying to self. There is a dying to some of those things which we have loved, which are not bad things in themselves, but there is that which we must put ahead of them if we are to grow together and increase in the Lord.

So it is right to have a cost awareness, not only of what it has cost to come this far, but also a cost to following Christ. Jesus said that we are required to take up our cross and follow him.

There is always going to be a cross. There is always going to be a price to pay in following Jesus and being faithful to him. And we should be aware of that. Jesus himself said, Who does not, when he plans to build a tower, sit down and count the cost and see whether or not he has the resources to carry on?

We trust and believe that in the Lord's providence, we will have the resources that he will supply, that he has been supplying for this ongoing struggle.

[8 : 37] There has been a dying to self. There will be an ongoing cost. But anything that is worth having in this world, anything that is a true prize, is not won without a price being paid.

It is not won without a cost. It is not won without a struggle. And if there is to be a greater vision and a new beginning and a fresh horizon before us, then there will be a cost to it.

And the cost will not end tonight. In a very real sense, new costs, new prices to be paid, new struggles ahead, will all have to be faced. But in God's providence, we will face them together as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

So there is a cost. There has been. And there will continue to be. That is not to be gloomy. It is to be realistic and to recognize that there is always a price to following Jesus.

But it is a price eminently worth paying for the prize and the joy that he sets before us. Finally, there is a purpose of the P of the TCP, Thanksgiving cost and purpose.

[9 : 53] Our purpose, we might think, well, we've achieved our purpose tonight. Now we've come together as one. But Garabas Free Church is not an end in itself. It is a means under God of reaching out to the people of this peninsula to bring souls to Christ.

Some within its orbit are already, perhaps, God-fearing adherents, as the moderator has alluded to, who may already be in their place in church, hearing the gospel, longing for Christ, but not yet having closed with them.

There will be others out in the villages and townships of our community who have yet to know anything of Christ. It is for their sakes, as much as our own, the purpose of reaching out to them with the good news of Jesus Christ that we come together now as a congregation.

There is that purpose. It is a greater purpose than merely the fact of bringing two congregations into one. It is the salvation of souls.

It is the good news of Jesus Christ. But along with that purpose, there is also another peer, and that is promise, as the moderator has already said. The promise of the Lord's help.

[11 : 08] The promise that in this purpose, he will never leave us nor forsake us. He was not idle in all the years that we may have existed as two separate congregations.

He was not failing to work out his gracious purposes, bringing souls to salvation through point and knock congregations. Souls were saved. Lives were changed.

God was not doing nothing. But how much more might he do now through this new vehicle and vessel that we place in his hand under him to use for his glory, to bring in souls as yet unbirthed into the kingdom, but who are waiting in his providence, his time, to be brought forth through means of this new vessel in his hand.

There is this promise. And as we look to the final consummation, when the Lord shall return in glory, as he has promised, there will be a day when he comes back and we long for it and we look for it.

And in that day, Garibas 3 Church, beginning fresh and new tonight as it does, will be no more. It will have finished its purpose. It will have been consummated in the Lord's holy purposes, as will every congregation under the sun.

[12 : 30] They will have fulfilled their task. There will come a day when this new congregation is over, when it has fulfilled its task, when the Lord returns and gathers his children to himself and our work here will be done.

And there will be those who are alive at that day. There will be those who see the Lord return. There will be those who see the ending, the completion, and the conclusion of this congregation.

We may or may not be there ourselves. We don't know when the Lord is coming back, but probably it won't be in our time. And those who are there at the last will have a great privilege in all that they see.

But it is unlikely that they will be able to share with us the privilege that is ours. They may be there at the end. But you and I, friends, we are here at the start.

We are here when this congregation began. We are here for the first steps of this new story and take our places in his story, which is what history is, for a purpose, with a cost, and thanksgiving, the glory of the Lord.

[13 : 47] Not to us, as the moderators pointed out through the scripture. Not to us, but to his name be all the glory. We wouldn't say that we were a Paul, and yet we seek to plant the seed.

We may not claim to be an Apollos, and yet we may seek to water, sometimes with our tears, dull us with our prayers, the seed that is sown. But one thing on which we can all agree is that God gives the increase.

And we trust and believe that he shall. And whatever may be the end and the conclusion and the consummation when the time comes, we are here at the start.

Thanks be to God. The daughter of the King is all glorious within. And here the Lord comes in unto her to begin his work afresh tonight.