

Worship Sheet for Sunday 1 November – A true perspective

Jesus is highly critical of the scribes and Pharisees, essentially for putting themselves first in place of God. We get things seriously wrong if we begin with thinking that we are No1. Almost like looking through a telescope the wrong way we get the wrong perspective – we don't consider others, we ignore God.

Call: Lord, we often think of ourselves as No 1; Jesus' love led him to lay down his life for us. It is easy for us to imagine that we are always right; Yet, we all fall short of your standards; Lord, even when we are right, we can be so inconsiderate; teach us that love and service is the more excellent way.

Pray Lord, while we get worked up about being seen to be important, you have little concern for image. When it comes to pecking order you are apt to turn things on their head. Service rates more than being served. Pride comes before a fall. Help us to accept that we are not No1 or 2, 3 or 4 for that matter. We've messed up time and again and if folk really knew everything about us they'd be sorely disappointed. But that doesn't stop you loving us – and you are ready to forgive and use us in your service to further your plan and purposes of love. Forgive us in Jesus, grant us your Spirit that our attitudes and outlook may be transformed from self to you, from self interest to self giving for the glory of your name. We pray in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray together saying: Our Father...

Read Matthew 23: 1-12 Jesus warns against religious leaders. The greatest is the one who serves.
Thought This might be taken as a swipe against ministers' robes but that is the least of it. (Actually, I am ambivalent on that issue). More significant, is that Jesus was issuing a thinly veiled criticism of the scribes and Pharisees' tendency to see themselves as supremely important, the repository of light and truth, failing to care for the people, and ultimately substituting themselves for God. Am I the only one who sees that there are too many leaders these days who have little inkling about caring for people – they may put on a brave face but it seems as though their own self interest is paramount. If I am No 1 and everything I say is right and no one is allowed to call me into question, I'd say that I was looking through my telescope from the wrong end! Image is NOT everything and we need to get back reality and see those in public service as being there to serve the people, to do what is best for the country and the world, not for power or self adulation. Do pray for leaders they need it. Pray for the American elections we all need it. But remember we are all susceptible to pride and self importance and we need the transforming power of Jesus' love to enable us to put him at No 1 and others before ourselves. That is the way to a better world, a more excellent way.

Praise CH4 694 Brother, sister let me serve you v1,3,5 & 6.

Pray Heavenly Father, your thoughts are higher than our thoughts, your ways greater than ours. Teach us how we need to change our thinking and our deeds so that we align our thoughts and purposes, our lives, our deeds, with yours. Work in us that miracle of grace that reverses our priority from self to service, from us to you. As we look out on the world it doesn't take us long to recognise that things are not as they should be, we are far removed from your purposes of love. The coronavirus has reeked havoc across the globe but so too has our inhumanity, greed and selfishness. While we pray for meaningful cooperation among the nations to cope with covid 19 and wisdom to leaders and clinicians as to how best to protect and care for our populations we also pray for a change of heart and outlook – among leaders and among ordinary folk like us – that the pretence of self importance and looking good is dispelled and seen to be shallow and worthless. Bring to front and centre qualities of love, grace, service and self giving – honesty and integrity – and help us to consider those most in need, those who have little going for them. Help us to think globally rather than parochially. May your will be done on earth – and that won't happen if we are all blowing our own trumpet! We do pray locally too – for the sick and sorrowing in Montrose and district, for the people we are concerned about, for those who are worried about their futures. And we pray a blessing on the church that we would rise to the challenges ahead with faith in you rather than in our ingenuity. In our prayer walk this week we remember those who live in Baltic Street.

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Lord hear our prayers spoken and unspoken and answer them for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen Blessing May the Lord bless you. Amen.