

Date	Speaker	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Other info	
Apr	20	GL	Suz	-	Lev 1 – Burnt offering
	27	GL	AI H	AI H	Lev 2 – Peace offering
May	4	GL	Karen	-	Lev 4-5 Sin & guilt offering
	11	GL	AI B	AI H	Lev 6-7 Laws of the offerings
	18	AH	S&S	-	TBC
	25	PC	AI H	AI B	Vocal group in morning
June	1	GL	AI B	-	TBC
	8	GL	S&S	AI H/Karen	Senior youth in evening
	15	GL	AI H	-	TBC
	22	GL	Suz	Becky Pippert	TBC
	29	GL	AI H	AI B	TBC

## BREAK THE SILENCE Johnny Parks Band

There are plenty of perfectly sensible and mature reasons to be excited about reviewing Break the Silence; musical creativity, thematic boldness and the strong sense of place to name but three. So with this in mind, why do I want to start by shouting "MATT WEIR IS THE DRUMMER"? My own childishness is an explanation too convenient and familiar by far. The real reason is of course that Matt's a hugely talented yet thoroughly nice bloke who deserves to do well. So it's great to see him with this well established, Belfast-based band.

Parks, who is signed to Survivor/Kingsway, has previously toured with Chris Tomlin and this album contains co-writes with Tim Hughes and Matt Redman. Yet on the whole there is a healthy reluctance to slip fully into the musical mainstream of contemporary worship. Combining influences as diverse as Arcade Fire's sense of drama, Sigur Ros's atmospheric and trad Irish sounds dangerously ambitious in any musical context, yet here it is; delivered sincerely and without pretence. It's a refreshing take on worship music.

And refreshed you will be from the outset. Opening track "Brand New Day" boldly sets out the album's stall with an irresistible celebration of salvation. Driven and melodic, it is the blueprint for much of the ensuing uptempo content, such as "Walls" and "Freedom". The band's penchant for the quiet / loud dynamic really comes through on more reflective tracks like "Lord of All the Earth" and "Rescuer". The latter is a real highpoint, with Psalm-like truths woven through the ethereal verses before giving way to a soaring, triumphant chorus.

The Celtic musical elements and Parks refusal to adopt the default Christian mid-Atlantic singing accent are only parts of the consistent local feel to this album. Tracks like "The Troubles Are Over" and "Walls" address our social and political situation with a genuine passion to see more of God's hand at work in our land. Sincerity again wins the day. There's one final local element; did I tell you about the drummer?

David Currie

## News

### Website update

I'm excited to announce that the music website is nearing completion! We hope to go live by the start of June.

### Worship leaders training course

is starting next Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April for 4 weeks. It's designed for those who currently lead worship on Sunday mornings and all others who would like to explore and develop their call and gifting in this area. It'll be practical and interactive. It's in AI's office from 8 to 9.30.

### CJ Mahaney's talk

is available at [www.theresurgence.com](http://www.theresurgence.com) Look for the [Text & Context](#) conference

# transformission

worship that shapes and sends

April 2008

## Keep smiling anyway

A few years back my eldest daughter Beth was building a tower from her blocks. Up and up it went, higher and higher, becoming more precarious with every new level, teetering on the brink of collapse but somehow managing to stand tall. Eventually it got higher than her head and she had to stretch to place the blocks on the top. By this stage it was swaying unsteadily and we held our breath as Beth reached to place one more block on her towering master piece. As she set it on top and slowly removed her hand, the inevitable happened. The tower came crashing down in a spectacular show of brightly coloured blocks! We were expecting tears of disappointment to follow – but instead, Beth turned to us with a smile on her face. 'Hooray,' she cried, 'I built a tower so high it fell down!' I don't know how the Oxford dictionary defines optimism, but I reckon that should be it.

The perspective we bring to life can radically alter the way we see events. In this edition of transformission, I want to share something that has challenged me greatly about the way I perceive the work of God in the people we have the privilege of leading during corporate worship in Glenabbey. I have been challenged to examine the perspective that I'm bringing as I lead and to consider how that perspective is shaping my vision of God's work in our church.

The thing that has brought this challenge is a talk by CJ Mahaney at a church planters' conference in Mars Hill Church, Seattle. CJ spoke on the opening verses of 1 Corinthians 1, where Paul brings his opening greetings to the church. We may have the tendency to skip over these greetings a bit too quickly, seeing them as mere formalities before the real stuff begins. But these verses are part of God's inspired word too. And in the case of this letter especially, they give us a fascinating insight into the way Paul viewed God's work in this church. So grab your bible and read 1 Cor. 1:1-9.



Before we look at these verses, if you know the book of 1 Cor, you'll know that Paul doesn't pull his punches when it comes to tackling problems in the church. How about this: *'But for right now, friends, I'm completely frustrated by your unspiritual dealings with each other and with God. You're acting like infants in relation to Christ, capable of nothing much more than nursing at*

a community of worshipping artists seeking to make his praise glorious

*the breast. Well, then, I'll nurse you since you don't seem capable of anything more.'* (1 Cor 3:1-4). A rant Dr Cox would be proud of!

So this is far from a perfect church. And yet, look at how Paul opens his letter. *'I give thanks to my God always for you...'* (1:4) This is so much more than Paul buttering them up before launching his attack. This is not just the consequence of Paul's optimistic outlook overlooking how much this church sucked at so much. There is something stirring in his heart that prompts a genuine prayer of gratitude even for this most difficult of churches. And what has developed this deep heart-felt attitude in Paul is that he has glimpsed something of God's perspective on this problematic church. Notice three things:

**1. Paul understood God's call on this church.** Three times the call of God is mentioned in these verses. Once, Paul talks of his own call. Think of where Paul was called from. Remember his past. How much do you think he came to value the fact that Jesus Christ called out to him to waken him from his spiritual blindness? That he, the worst of sinners, was somehow called by God into his purposes for his glory? And when he remembered that, and then turned to consider the Corinthian church, how could he look on them in the same way?

How much do we value our sense of call? Do we remember the darkness we've been called out of? Do we spend time reflecting on the light we've been called into as sons and

daughters of our loving Father? And do we cultivate an awareness that the people we lead have also been called? That we all, as the family of God, have been the beggars invited into the feast of God, the prodigals graciously welcomed despite our horrific rebellion against our loving Father. Let's remember our call.

**2. Paul recognised God's grace at work.** In v4, Paul says the reason he gives thanks is because of God's grace that was given to the church, resulting in them not lacking any spiritual gift. Now, if you read chapters 11 to 14, you'll know that the Corinthian church was managing to make some spectacular blunders when it came to exercising these gifts. They were hardly a shining example of God's grace. And yet, Paul still saw God's unmerited favour at work.

Do we actively cultivate an awareness of God's grace at work? Do we look for it, or is our default setting to focus on the problems and lack of progress? We have much to be thankful for in Glenabbey. Think of some of the events even over the past few months: the U2 event – so many non-Christians there, such a positive reaction from everyone I've spoken to. Easter Sunday morning – we had such a tangible sense of celebration and engagement; 26 people on stage leading in worship; over 1000 adults, youth and children on site between the two services, including many non-Christians. Behind the scenes, much is going on too. It's our desire, as the people of God declare and celebrate truths about God in our songs, that non-Christians would

see something of the reality of God in us. A few weeks ago when Suz was leading, one non-Christian said after being in our service, 'I still don't believe in God, but I believe in the people who believe in God.' He had seen something significant in us as we worshipped God together. There are evidences of grace, big and small. Lives are being shaped, some quickly and dramatically, some slowly and less perceptibly. But God's grace is at work. Let's pray that God will help us all to be attuned to his activity among us.

**3. Paul was confident because of God's faithfulness.** In v8-9, Paul confesses his confidence that it's God's faithfulness that underwrites his assurance that the Corinthian church will be sustained to the end. Despite the problems, God was still in control, working out his purposes through the mess of this very human church.

And we have this same hope in Glenabbey. Despite the frustrations we face, despite the challenges that meet us, despite the fact that progress can feel so slow sometimes, still God is at work in his church. It's his power and reliability that gives us hope – he will not abandon his people.

This is a call to something much deeper than mere optimism. This is to have our view of the people we lead shaped by God's view. It's to ask him to help us grasp that we are all **called** by him; that we would be attuned to the evidences of his **grace** at work in us; and that we would rest in a quiet, joy-filled **confidence in God**, that his purposes will be achieved through us and despite our failures and weaknesses.

*Alistair Hamill*

