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## Service for the 5th Sunday after Trinity, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2021

*A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

The greatness and power of God are such a contrast to our weakness – yet, our God loves us.

The holiness and goodness of God are such a contrast to our sinful nature – yet, our God loves us.

Come, offer your praise and thanksgiving, and give glory and honour to our God.

HYMN: New every morning

*If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1. New every morning is the love  
our wakening and uprising prove,  
through sleep and darkness safely brought,  
restored to life and power and thought.
2. New mercies each returning day,  
hover around us while we pray;  
new perils past, new sins forgiven,  
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.
3. If on our daily course our mind  
be set to hallow all we find,  
new treasures still, of countless price,  
God will provide for sacrifice.
4. Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be,  
as more of heaven in each we see,  
some softening gleam of love and prayer  
shall dawn on every cross and care.
5. The trivial round, the common task  
will furnish all we ought to ask.  
Lord, help us, this and every day,  
to live more nearly as we pray.

*John Keble*

PRAYERS of thanksgiving & confession

*Let us pray*

Heavenly Father, heavenly King, we come before you today just as we are.

We come to listen and to learn. We come and lay everything down to stand in your awesome presence.

Loving God, all-sufficient one, we acknowledge your presence and we worship you.

We adore you, Lord of all. We worship you, Lord Jesus Christ, holy and anointed one.

You laid your life down that we might live. We adore you, Lord of all.

We welcome your authority and influence in our lives, Holy Spirit.

You intercede for us when we have no strength. You are with us and guide us in our weakness. We adore you, Lord of all.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit are worthy of all our praise: we adore you, Lord of all.

We bow before you, O God, and we confess that we have let you down.

We have turned away from you and gone our own way.

We have allowed material things to dominate our lives, and to occupy our minds.

We are sorry, and we lay everything at your feet.

We are sorry that we overcomplicate everything.

Help us to learn how to be still and know that you are God.

Help us to seek simplicity, to slow down and not to hurry, to require nothing more than what you give, and to fear being vulnerable so that we can be complete in your presence.

Jesus Christ, you died and rose again that we might be released from all the worldly things that weigh us down. Thank you that we are forgiven, that our chains are gone, and we have been set free to serve you once again.

O God, all-sufficient one, we give you thanks and praise that you are all we need. You are enough. Thank you that you love us so much and provide everything we need for the journey of life.

You didn't promise that following you would be easy, but we thank you that you care about us as you do the birds of the sky and the lilies in the field. You know our every need.

Thank you that your thoughts are higher than our thoughts, your ways higher than our ways. Thank you that when we come to you empty, your arms reach out to embrace us.

**Amen.**

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;**

**Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.**

**For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.**

**Amen.**

#### SCRIPTURE READING

St Mark 6: 1-13

<sup>1</sup>Jesus left that place and went back to his home town, followed by his disciples. <sup>2</sup>On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue. Many people were there; and when they heard him, they were all amazed. "Where did he get all this?" they asked. "What wisdom is this that has been given him? How does he perform miracles? <sup>3</sup>Isn't he the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? Aren't his sisters living here?" And so they rejected him.

<sup>4</sup>Jesus said to them, "Prophets are respected everywhere except in their own home town and by their relatives and their family." <sup>5</sup>He was not able to perform any miracles there, except that he placed his hands on a few sick people and healed them. <sup>6</sup>He was greatly surprised, because the people did not have faith.

Then Jesus went to the villages round there, teaching the people. <sup>7</sup>He called the twelve disciples together and sent them out two by two. He gave them authority over the evil spirits <sup>8</sup>and ordered them, "Don't take anything with you on your journey except a stick — no bread, no beggar's bag, no money in your pockets. <sup>9</sup>Wear sandals, but don't carry an extra shirt." <sup>10</sup>He also said, "Wherever you are welcomed, stay in the same house until you leave that place. <sup>11</sup>If you come to a town where people do not welcome you or will not listen to you, leave it and shake the dust off your feet. That will be a warning to them!"

<sup>12</sup>So they went out and preached that people should turn away from their sins. <sup>13</sup>They drove out many demons, and rubbed olive oil on many sick people and healed them.

HYMN: It is a thing most wonderful

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment*

1 It is a thing most wonderful,  
almost too wonderful to be,  
that God's own Son should come from heav'n,  
and die to save a child like me.

2 And yet I know that it is true:  
He came to this poor world below,  
and wept and toiled and mourned and died  
for love of those who loved Him not.

3 I sometimes think about the cross,  
and shut my eyes, and try to see  
the cruel nails and crown of thorns,  
and Jesus crucified for me.

4 But even could I see Him die,  
I could but see a little part  
of that great love which, like a fire,  
is always burning in His heart.

5 It is most wonderful to know  
His love for me so free and sure;  
but 'tis more wonderful to see  
my love for Him so faint and poor.

6 And yet I want to love Thee, Lord;  
O light the flame within my heart,  
and I will love Thee more and more,  
until I see Thee as Thou art.

*W W How*

ADDRESS: *Mr Geof Owen*

### The Sacrament of Failure

Several years ago I was watching a programme on television that filmed several young people placed in a house together for six weeks. One of the girls made the candid remark, "I have never failed at anything I have ever tried to do". It was one of those sentences that makes you stop while you are crossing the room and ask, "What did she say?" She was full of honest confidence as she said it; but I remember thinking, "Yes, I was young once too."

If you live long and attempt much, you will run up against failure. People fail every day. They suffer from failed relationships, failed marriages, failure at work and failure in

health. Most of us can identify with failure, and we know from experience that failure is hard to cope with in a world like ours. When we fail at something, most of us think of it as the ultimate and irreversible tragedy of all time. We see it as the one aspect of life from which there is no reprieve and no reversal.

I find it very interesting that, in our passage for today, Jesus both experienced failure himself and expected his disciples to fail. In my Bible, this paragraph is subtitled, "Jesus is rejected at Nazareth." In the last part of this passage, Jesus gives his disciples instructions about what to do when they are rejected.

Jesus has been moving from one success to another in his ministry. As Mark leads up to this point, we have witnessed some of Jesus' most amazing miracles: the stilling of the storm, the healing of the demon-possessed man, and the restoration of Jairus' little daughter to life. Now, searching for some rest, Jesus journeys back to his own hometown of Nazareth.

At his home synagogue, Jesus begins to teach. He earns a response, but hardly like that in other places. As in other places, the people are astonished at his teaching, but this time they are astonishingly appalled at his message and manner. "How dare this local boy, Jesus, assume such authority?" they ask. Verse three says, "Isn't he the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? Aren't his sisters living here?" They were offended by him.

This is actually the third time that Jesus had tasted a glimpse of failure in his ministry. In Mark 3:21, his own family labelled him mad and tried to restrain him. In Mark 3:31, his mother and brothers and sisters try again to remove him from his teaching ministry. Here in his home town, he meets with out-and-out rejection, prompting him to utter his famous line, "Prophets are respected everywhere except in their own home town and by their relatives and their family".

Then Jesus turns to commission his disciples for the beginning of their missionary activity. He tells the disciples that it is time for them to begin their ministry, going two by two into the countryside preaching and casting out unclean spirits. He advises them to travel lightly taking nothing but a staff. They are to carry no bread, no bag, and no money in their belts. They are to wear sandals and not even take an extra tunic.

But in verse 11, Jesus prepares them for failure when he says, "If you come to a town where people do not welcome you or will not listen to you, leave it and shake the dust off your feet. That will be a warning to them". Jesus makes it clear that they will not be insulated from failure just because they are going in his name. In fact, Jesus knows that failure will be a real possibility, so he provides his disciples with a 'sacrament of failure' - shaking the dust off their feet.

Jesus' inauguration of a 'sacrament of failure' doesn't mean that he is sending the disciples out to fail. Rather, he is showing them how to carry on in the face of failure. Nobody likes to hear that they are going to have to face failure in life, but understanding how Jesus provided all Christians with a 'sacrament of failure' can empower all of us to carry on when we fail.

In his book *A Theology of Failure*, John Narrone says, "A theology which takes failure seriously does not encourage fatalism, passivity or indifference to the world; rather, it

affirms that the man who cannot freely lay down his life is one whose ideals and values are already compromised”.

Jesus tells his disciples that they should not fear failure either. He says “Shake off the dust and go on”.

#### Failure can lead to better things

Sometimes our highest hopes are destroyed so that we can be prepared for better things. The failure of the caterpillar is the birth of the butterfly. The passing of the bud is the blooming of the rose. The death of the seed is the prelude to its resurrection as wheat. Someone has said that plants grow best in the darkness of night just before dawn. Our failures can be the door to a new success.

The name of John James Audubon is forever associated with the magnificent paintings he made of the birds of North America. No one else has so accurately painted the birds and the natural environment in which they were found. It might not have happened had he not gone bankrupt in business! In 1808, he opened a store in Louisville, Kentucky. It was after he went bankrupt in 1819 that he began travelling and painting birds. We are all richer because of his business failure.

Shake off the dust and go on.

#### Failure can be creative

Sometimes we get stuck in a rut and it takes failure to jolt us out of the routine so that we can be truly creative. An adventurous life requires risk-taking. Great courage is needed to face real change. A great failure can be the influence that enables us to risk and change.

When we listen to the exalting music of Handel's oratorio *Messiah*, we usually assume it was surely written by a man at the pinnacle of his success, but that is not the case. In fact, it was written after he had suffered a stroke. It was written while Handel lived in poverty amid bleak surroundings. He had suffered through a particularly deep night of gloom and despair over his failure as a musician, and the next morning he unleashed his creative genius in a musical score that continues to thrill and inspire us generations later.

Shake off the dust and go on.

#### Failure can be failure for Christ

Sometimes failure comes our way when we are doing everything in our power to serve Christ. Some modern theologies promise health, wealth and success if we will only follow Christ; but he promised that his disciples would experience the same kind of rejection that he experienced. Let us never forget that almost every one of the first twelve suffered martyrdom for Christ. Failure is good when the failure is for Christ's sake.

David Brainerd, eighteenth-century missionary to the American Indians, failed magnificently for Christ. While Christianity for his contemporaries was a dull habit, it was for him an acute fever. He went among Indians and preached and lived. He was not put off by the task of converting them to the ways of Jesus. He was sick and often without food. He endured hardship and little success. He converted only thirty or forty Indians. His ministry knew nothing of the kind of success in numbers that other missionaries knew, but his writings and

influence have lingered and continue to inspire people to a deeper commitment and a deeper spirituality.

He left the American forest only when he knew he was dying. David Brainerd died in the home of Jonathan Edwards, having burned himself up for Christ. His was a beautiful life, lived with a magnificent purpose. Here was a case of failure that was good.

Shake off the dust and go on.

As Theodore Roosevelt said, "Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though chequered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the grey twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat".

Failure is not the end of the world. Failure is not a debilitating disease that ruins us for eternity. In fact, we should not be afraid to fail. We should expect failure at times. Then we should exercise Jesus' ritual of failure: shake off the dust and go on.

## HOLY COMMUNION

This is the table, not of the church, but of the Lord. It is made ready for those who love him and who want to love him more.

So come, you who have much faith, and you who have little, you who have been here often and you who have not been for a long time, you who have tried to follow and you who have failed. Come not because it is I who invite you: it is the Lord. It is his will that those who want him, should meet him here.

Let us hear the story of how this sacrament began....

On the night in which Jesus was betrayed, he sat at supper with his disciples. While he was eating, he took a piece of bread, gave the blessing, broke it and gave it to them with the words, "This is my body. It is broken for you. Do this in memory of me".

Later he took the cup of wine, saying, "This is God's new covenant, sealed by my blood. Drink from it, all of you, to remember me".

And so, now, following Jesus' example and command, we take this bread and this wine, the ordinary things of the world which Christ will make special.

*Let us pray*

For us you were born, for us you healed, preached, taught and showed the way to heaven; for us you were crucified, and for us, after death, you rose again.

Lord Jesus Christ, present with us now, for all that you have done and all that you promised, what have we to offer? But with you are mercy and the power to change us.

So send down your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine, that they may become for us your body, healing, forgiving and making us whole, and that we may become for you, your body, loving and caring in the world until your kingdom comes.

**Amen.**

Among friends gathered around a table, Jesus took bread, broke it and said, "This is my body. It is broken for you". (*Eat the bread*)

Later he took the cup of wine and said, "This is the new relationship with God, made possible because of my death. Take this – all of you – to remember me". (*Drink the wine*)

Christ has died. Christ is risen. In Christ shall all be made alive.

Blessing and honour and glory and power be to our God for ever and ever. Amen.

*Let us pray*

Most gracious God, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life, and renewed us for your service. Now we give ourselves to you and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and that our love may be your love reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

PRAYERS of intercession

*Let us pray*

Lord God, there are so many situations in our troubled world that need your hand upon them. Some we are aware of, many we are not; but you know.

God says "My grace is sufficient for you".

We pray today for countries at war, that their leaders may realise the futility of human power and the all-sufficient power of God, who says "My grace is sufficient for you".

We pray for areas affected by natural disasters, that your order may be restored, and your compassion rule. God says "My grace is sufficient for you".

We pray for people who are disabled, who struggle with the tasks of everyday living, that they will receive the help and encouragement they need.

God says "My grace is sufficient for you".

We pray for people with illnesses, seen and unseen. For those who suffer in ways we cannot begin to understand, for people who do not know your love and power in their lives, God says "My grace is sufficient for you".

**Amen.**

HYMN: O Jesus, I have promised

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 O Jesus, I have promised  
to serve thee to the end;  
be thou for ever near me,  
my Master and my friend.  
I shall not fear the battle  
if thou art by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway  
if thou wilt be my guide.

2 O let me feel thee near me;  
the world is ever near,  
I see the sights that dazzle,  
the tempting sounds I hear;  
my foes are ever near me,  
around me and within;  
but Jesus, draw thou nearer,  
and shield my soul from sin.

3 O let me hear thee speaking  
in accents clear and still,  
above the storms of passion,  
the murmurs of self-will.  
O speak to reassure me,  
to hasten or control;  
O speak, and make me listen,  
thou guardian of my soul.

4 O Jesus, thou hast promised,  
to all who follow thee,  
that where thou art in glory  
there shall thy servant be.  
O guide me, call me, draw me,  
uphold me to the end;  
O give me grace to follow,  
my Saviour and my Friend.

J E Bode

## BLESSING

*Let us pray*

Lord, you sent your disciples into the world to share your word with those in need. May we approach this coming week with a similar desire.

You sent them carrying little but trusting much. May we live this week with a similar attitude.

May our lives be less about us and our needs, and more about you, and your love and care for all people in all places and circumstances.

May we love as you love. We ask in your name.

**Amen.**