



Service for the 9th Sunday after Trinity, 9th August 2020

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

God's love has called us here,
God's presence is promised to us,
God's goodness is all around us,
O come, let us worship!

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Let us pray.

Gracious God, You are the Lord of wind & waves and all the forces of nature. You created the earth with its skies, sea and dry land, full of energy and movement, wind & rain, sunshine & beauty. We worship and adore You for the wonder of Your world.

Loving God, You are the Lord of humanity. You approach us in the drama of history, in the life we share with our families & friends, and most of all in the peace of communion with You. We worship and thank You for life and love, and most of all for Jesus, who came to show us how much You love and care for us.

Holy and forgiving God, we come to You now to confess our failures. We have turned from You, our Maker and Redeemer. We have not listened to Your word and Your call to obedience. We have imagined You are hidden from us and blind to our words and deeds. We have rejected the quietness and confidence of Your strength.

God of love and mercy, have compassion on us; free us from our fears and sins to live as those whom You call Your children, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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: I Kings 19: 9-18

The LORD Appears to Elijah

^{9b} Suddenly the LORD spoke to him, "Elijah, what are you doing here?"

¹⁰ He answered, “LORD God Almighty, I have always served you—you alone. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed all your prophets. I am the only one left—and they are trying to kill me!”

¹¹ “Go out and stand before me on top of the mountain,” the LORD said to him. Then the LORD passed by and sent a furious wind that split the hills and shattered the rocks—but the LORD was not in the wind. The wind stopped blowing, and then there was an earthquake—but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake there was a fire—but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the soft whisper of a voice.

¹³ When Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, “Elijah, what are you doing here?”

¹⁴ He answered, “LORD God Almighty, I have always served you—you alone. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed all your prophets. I am the only one left—and they are trying to kill me.”

¹⁵ The LORD said, “Return to the wilderness near Damascus, then enter the city and anoint Hazael as king of Syria; ¹⁶ anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Anyone who escapes being put to death by Hazael will be killed by Jehu, and anyone who escapes Jehu will be killed by Elisha. ¹⁸ Yet I will leave seven thousand people alive in Israel—all those who are loyal to me and have not bowed to Baal or kissed his idol.”

REFLECTION I

Both Bible stories set for today remind us that God is with us and cares for us in all the storms of life.

This passage from the Old Testament is a continuation of the story told from the beginning of the chapter, in which Elijah had a moment of victory in his contest with prophets of Baal; but Queen Jezebel was determined to take her revenge and Elijah had to flee for his life.

He was making the long journey from Mount Carmel to Sinai – the holy mountain – and perhaps this indicates that he recognised the need for spiritual refreshment. However, on the journey he became exhausted and depressed, wondering if any of his efforts had been worthwhile. He poured out his feelings to God: “I’ve had enough”, he said. God understood his needs and responded in a very practical way, providing food and encouraging Elijah to rest. This gave him the strength to complete the journey to Sinai. There, God gave him a spectacular display of His power to remind Elijah of God’s greatness and authority. Then, in the calm after the storm, God spoke to Elijah to give him the encouragement he needed to continue his work.

In the same way, God is with us on our faith journey, as a church and as individuals. If we are finding it difficult at this time, missing the fellowship and anxious about the future, we can place ourselves in God’s hands, wait for the storm to pass and then listen for His voice to guide us again in the coming days.

We are reminded of our need for this refreshment in our first hymn....

HYMN: Dear Lord and Father of mankind

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

1 Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
in purer lives your service find,
in deeper reverence praise,
in deeper reverence praise.

2 In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea,
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word,
rise up and follow thee,
rise up and follow thee.

3 O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity
interpreted by love!
interpreted by love!

4 With that deep hush subduing all
our words, and works that drown
the tender whisper of thy call,
as noiseless let your blessing fall
as fell your manna down,
as fell your manna down.

5 Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace,
the beauty of thy peace.

6 Breathe through the heats of our desire
your coolness and your balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire,
speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!
O still, small voice of calm!

J G Whittier

SCRIPTURE READING: St Matthew 14: 22-33

²² Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵ Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

²⁸ "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

²⁹ "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

REFLECTION II

In our New Testament reading, we are reminded that Jesus also needed a time of spiritual refreshment when the demands of His ministry exhausted Him. He often sought the quiet of the hills around the Sea of Galilee as our hymn reminds us...

*where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity
interpreted by love!*

It was at these times that Jesus gathered strength and built up resources for His challenging ministry.

However, it also seems that there were times in the Gospel stories when He wanted to see how the disciples could cope on their own. In this case, He sent them across the lake without Him, knowing that the Sea of Galilee was a place where storms developed quite suddenly. While the boat was some distance from land, this was exactly what happened and the disciples were very frightened; but Jesus was still watching over them even from a distance. He was still caring for them. When it looked as if the boat might sink, He went to them, walking on the water as it seemed to them.

Peter, in his usual impetuous way, wanted to do the same thing and walk to Jesus; but he soon found he needed a helping hand. Did he want to test his faith or was he just showing off? Peter would often get things wrong, but we cannot doubt his love for Jesus.

Both Elijah and Peter shared that experience of sinking when the storms of life overwhelmed them. Both acknowledged that there was a divine power at work in their lives. So also did the other disciples in the boat when they worshipped Jesus, saying 'Truly, you are the Son of God'.

Many people still battle with the storms of life today and experience the same doubts and fears as the disciples and followers of Jesus. We can be reassured that God is always watching over us, that He knows our needs and holds out His hand when the waves threaten to overwhelm us. So let me finish with a few verses from one of my favourite poems by Francis Thompson, 'The Kingdom of God'....

*The angels keep their ancient places; —
Turn but a stone and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces
That miss the many-splendoured thing.*

*But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry; —and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross,*

*Yea, in the night, my soul, my daughter,
Cry, clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames!*

Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN: Eternal Father

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

1 Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm does bind the restless wave,
Who bids the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

2 O Saviour, whose almighty word
The winds and waves submissive heard,
Who walked upon the foaming deep,
And calm amid the rage did sleep;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

3 O Holy Spirit, who did brood
Upon the chaos dark and rude,
And bid its angry tumult cease,
And give for wild confusion peace;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

4 O Trinity of love and pow'r,
Sustain us all in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect us wheresoe'er we go;
And ever let there rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

William Whiting (*altd*)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray.

*In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear;
and safe is such confiding, for nothing changes here:
the storm may roar without me, my heart may low be laid;
but God is round about me, and can I be dismayed?*

Lord, in the storms of life, bid us come to You, that we who are aware of our weakness may be made strong. We pray for all who are in danger of being overwhelmed, who feel unable to cope with the problems they face in these days.

We remember those areas of the world where there have been floods or natural disasters. We pray for all who are suffering from poverty or hunger, for those battered by the waves of violence or oppression, and for those who are sinking beneath a load of care and anxiety. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for Your Church in all parts of the world. Give us a new vision of Yourself and of Your saving power. We pray for areas where the Church is struggling and for all evangelists and ministers who are overworked or in danger. We pray for our own church fellowship and ask Your blessing on all our friends and families.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for all who have been supported in these difficult days and for all who are dear to us. We commend to Your care all who are ill, the dying and the bereaved. May they know your comfort and peace.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Finally, we give thanks for those who are beyond the storms of this life and have come to the haven of rest. May we be found worthy to share with them the joys of Your eternal kingdom.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen.**

HYMN: Guide me, O thou great Jehovah

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

1 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore,
feed me now and evermore.

2 Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow.
Let the firey, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield,
be thou still my strength and shield.

3 When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside.
Death of death, and hell's Destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

Peter & William Williams

BLESSING

Go forth into the world in peace.
Be of good courage.
Hold fast that which is good.
Render to no-one evil for evil.
Strengthen the fainthearted,
Support the weak,
Help the afflicted,
Honour all people.
Love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
and may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
rest upon us and abide with us and with all whom we love,
today and always.

Amen