

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION 9th August 2020

9th Sunday after Trinity

To prepare ourselves for our worship, we reflect on the day and on our relationships.

- *What good things have come from God today?*
- *Where have I fallen short?*
- *What will I try to do differently in future?*

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

In times of difficulty we find it natural to turn to God. But in good times, we tend to forget him. We need to learn to turn to God at all times.

Let us turn to God now, and ask pardon for our sins and strength in our weakness.

Lord Jesus, you are our strength in times of weakness.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

You are our refuge in times of distress.

Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy

You are our hope in times of despair.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

May the God of love and power

Forgive us and free us from our sins,

Heal and strengthen us by God's Spirit,

And raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Collect (special prayer for today)

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

READINGS

Psalm 85:1-10

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people,
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.
Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.
Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
and righteousness will look down from the sky.
The LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness will go before him,
and will make a path for his steps.

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'

Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

REFLECTION

At last, after receiving the news of his cousin John's death, having put aside his own emotions, and instead emptying himself in compassion for the crowd who had followed him, Jesus now had the opportunity to go by himself to pray. He sent the disciples off in a boat and took responsibility for dismissing the crowd. He needed to have the space to pray without interruption.

As evening came, the wind on the Sea of Galilee started to rise, as it often does, and the boat in which the disciples were sailing was starting to be tossed around. They were far from the security of the land, it was dark, and the wind was against them. Yet at this point they were not afraid, in fact, they were probably feeling fairly confident- after all, they had Peter and the other fishermen in the boat with them, and they knew what they were doing. OK, it wasn't the most comfortable of journeys, and some of the non-fishermen may have turned a bit green at the gills, but it is amazing what we will put up with if we think it is our best, or only, option. It is easier to carry on then to change tack.

And then, when the light of morning comes, so does Jesus – the light of the world. But he is not in the boat with them, he is outside; unreal, and threatening their assumed safety. They start to feel exposed and uncomfortable. Is this perhaps an hallucination brought on through a lack of sleep, and emotional exhaustion? But their fear is real. Their boat doesn't seem to be such a safe place after all.

Then Jesus speaks to them to calm them. They recognise his voice, and his words ring true, but there is still clear water between them and him; he is not in their boat. So Peter, dear Peter who so often gets things wrong, sets Jesus a test. 'If it's you, command me to come to you on the water'. He isn't convinced, and you can imagine his tone of voice as he says the words. And yet he answered the call. He stepped out of the boat. And this was not the first time that he had left his boat, the world in which he felt secure, to answer the call of Jesus. This time, however, it was more dangerous, and testing.

And at first it all went well. He must have felt a great rush of adrenalin as he made his way towards Jesus. You can imagine the elation; he was probably almost dancing after the first few tentative steps. He was convinced now; more than that, he must have had the enthusiasm so commonly felt when we discover something new, something that is the best thing ever; we become zealots; nothing can go wrong. He was totally focused on Jesus; nothing could go wrong. And then, something made him lose his concentration, and he noticed the wind. You can almost feel that sudden sense of panic as he notices the wind and realises what he has done; he has left the relative safety

of being in the boat. He is no longer focused on Jesus, but is relying solely on his own abilities, and he starts to sink.

In his distress he calls out, 'Lord, save me!' Down through the ages, this is a cry which has been uttered at times of crisis by believers and non-believers alike, and as with Peter, Jesus is there to reach out and catch them, possibly with the same gentle admonition, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' And he is there for us every time that we step out of our perceived place of safety into the storm-tossed waves of his way of life. And when he is in the boat with Peter and the others, when they are sure of his presence, the wind and the waves are of little consequence to them.

There are those who would dismiss this story as fantasy; as something with little relevance for us today. However, there are many things to be taken from it; questions that it poses for each one of us.

How often do we take the time and make the space in the busyness of our crowded lives to truly wait on God?

What is the 'boat' in which we feel fairly safe, which we don't want or dare to step out of?

What are the 'wind and waves' that will make us lose our focus on Jesus if and when we do leave our 'boat'?

Are we ready to join with the disciples in proclaiming to the world in our words, and our lives that 'Truly Jesus is the Son of God'.

And so, we pray:

**Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'.
Be with us today, as we offer ourselves to you.
Hear our prayers for others and for ourselves,
and keep us in your care. Amen**

Faithful God, pray for the gift of deeper faith in you, so that we trust you in a way that alters our dependence on everything else, and allows us clearer vision as to the direction and role of the Church. Remind us that it is your Church, and not ours; your work, your power and your kingdom.

Lord our God:

let only your will be done.

Faithful God, as we call to mind the stormy areas of our world, the raging and the insecurity, the confusion and the bewilderment, the restlessness and fear, let your calming and reassuring presence be sensed and recognised, bringing peace and goodness, righteousness and hope. In particular we pray for Beirut and all those affected by this week's explosion.

Lord our God:

let only your will be done.

Faithful God, come to us in the storms of life, when we let one another down, mishandle opportunities and come to the end of our strength or patience; and bless us with the love that never lets us down.

Lord our God:

let only your will be done.

Faithful God, we place into your healing hands all who are suffering in body, mind or spirit. In these times of uncertainty, we ask that you will give courage to all who fear the threat of covid-19, and that you will make us considerate towards one another.

Lord our God:

let only your will be done.

Father, we call to mind all those we have known and loved who lived among us and now have died. We pray for all who made that journey unnoticed and alone. We ask that they may know your mercy and the everlasting peace and joy of heaven.

Lord our God:

let only your will be done.

Faithful God, whose promises stand sure for ever, we thank you for your patience with us and your refusal to give up on us.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Gathering together all our prayers, we say the prayer that Jesus gave us

**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**

We give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with us now

**Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen**

We pray God's blessing on each other

**May God be within us to strengthen us, and outside to protect us.
May God be above us to watch over us, and beneath us to uphold us.
May God be before us to guide us, and behind us to keep us from straying**

**And may the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us, and those whom we love and pray for
this day and for evermore.**

Amen

Prayers by Susan Sayers

