



The Ninth Sunday after Trinity: 9th August

Take some time to be still, perhaps light a candle and offer your own prayer to God. You may find the following words helpful.

Father God, help us to come to you this morning with open and thankful hearts. Fill us with the joy and peace that comes with knowing you. Be with us as we walk in your light, rejoice in your love and reflect your glory.

Amen

Hymn 54: At the name of Jesus

Welcome

The Lord be with you,
and also with you

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord.
Amen

Prayer of Confession

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself". There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour**

**in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen**

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in life eternal through Jesus Christ our lord. **Amen**

Gloria

**Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

Collect 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

Old Testament Reading: 1 Kings 19: 8 - 13

Elijah got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your

covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.'

He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Hymn 297: How sweet the name

Gospel Reading: Matthew 14: 13 - 21

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord

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.'

This is the gospel of the Lord

Praise to you. O Christ

Sermon: Revd. Petra Shakeshaft

When still, the Sea of Galilee is like glass, perhaps the most quiet and restful place imaginable, but it has its own strange microclimate and storms can whip up unexpectedly and terrify even the most seasoned of fishermen.

Over the last five weeks we've heard the sets of parables taught by Jesus from a boat on the sea. Then, last Sunday we heard the familiar story of the feeding of the five thousand – and immediately Jesus sends his disciples on a boat to cross the Sea and goes up a mountain to find some peace and quiet to pray. Meanwhile on the lake, it's not so peaceful.

A storm has whipped up and the disciples are being tossed about in their little boat. The waves batter them all night long and they are far from land. Towards morning, they see Jesus walking towards them, ghostlike, on the water and they are terrified.

But there's a piece of this story that's missing – for some reason the lectionary writers have not included it here; Immediately after teaching the parables from the boat, Jesus returns to Nazareth where he hears of the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod Antipas.

So we find Jesus, after the buzz of the crowds, seeking solitude and peace on the mountainside.

Except, it's not peace – there's a storm brewing. The death of John the Baptist picks up a thread sewn right at the beginning of the Gospel. Remember, it's *this* Herod's father who massacres The Innocents in and around Bethlehem shortly after Jesus' birth.

The shadow of this evil dynasty is cast again over the story. The storm-clouds are gathering and Jesus is alone on the mountainside, grieving for his cousin and realising that his death is a game-changer. If he carries on challenging the powers that be publicly, his own life is on the line. The disciples know this – and that this puts them in danger too. So the storm is as much about their states of mind as anything. They are tempest-tossed and afraid; in the middle of the lake, as far from land and safety, as it is possible to be – and far away from Jesus.

And then ... out of nowhere ... He is walking towards them ... in the middle of the lake. Ghost-like, unreal – terrifying, in his own way, as the storm. Steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures, the disciples would know that only God walks on the sea

Job 9. 8

*who alone stretched out the heavens
and trampled the waves of the Sea;*

The Scriptures also use that image of drowning, being overwhelmed by floods and storms, as a metaphor for difficult and traumatic life experience – as do we.

The Psalmist says,

*I have come into deep waters,
and the flood sweeps over me (Psalm 69)*

For the Psalmist, this is an image of the feeling of persecution.

And what Matthew is showing his readers, is a way of approaching the storms of life, whether they be persecution, or exile, or occupation, or pandemic...

Jesus sends his disciples out on the boat – into the middle of a storm.
He knows that he and they have some really choppy waters ahead of them;
that they face some real and painful battles, with authorities and within themselves
and this episode is as much about equipping them as equipping us;
showing us where to find help, wisdom, courage, peace.

Again, the Psalmist pleads with God,
*let me be delivered from my enemies
and from the deep waters.
Do not let the flood sweep over me, (Psalm 69)*

We can't avoid life's storms.

At least not all of them.

And it's easy when things are going badly to focus on what's going wrong: to focus on the storm,
we only have to watch the news – when did you hear any good news?

Well, the Gospel *is* the Good News.

And this story reminds us to focus, not on the bad news, not on the storm, but on Jesus.

Like the Psalmist calling to God for deliverance,
the disciples call out to Jesus and he replies, It is I – or, in Greek, ego eimi (ego eimi) – *I am*
I am, the divine name, revealed to Moses in the burning bush.

Jesus is *I am*, the one who reveals the God of Israel.

Peter takes those first tentative steps out onto the water at Jesus's bidding
and in his own strength begins to sink beneath the waves.

Again he cries out and Jesus stretches out his hand and saves him

and so, in rescuing Peter, he does what the Scriptures tell us time and again that God does.
God saves.

The Psalmist again

*Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven. Psalm 107*

We are living in stormy times and all across the globe there are even greater storms.

There are injustices that we, like Jesus and the disciples, are called to speak out against;
poverty, prejudice of any kind, the trashing of the planet and waste of resources, corruption ...
and when we put our heads above the parapet we are taking a risk – brewing up a storm.
Peter discovered he could not weather the storm alone and took Jesus' hand.

We can, like the disciples, spend all night focussing on the storm
(and aren't things always worse at night?)

or, like Jesus, find a quiet place to spend time with God and find his peace,

or, like Elijah, fleeing the prophets of Baal, discovering a quiet cave and to hear the still small voice of calm.

Just as John's death points back to the beginning of Matthew's Gospel so Jesus's ghostlike vision on the water points forward towards the end; to the resurrection appearances and to his final words to them and to us, again, on a mountainside,

And remember I am with you always, even to the end of time.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers

Creator God, who with a word created the world, and with a word commands the wind and the waves, we give you thanks and praise that we can worship you this morning. Fill our hearts with joy for the gifts of your creation, our beautiful world, our friends, family and each other. Help us to share in your sorrow, for the things of the world that are not as they should be. We remember before you those across the world who are weathering storms at this moment. We think particularly of those in Beirut, who are wounded, grieving and without a home, who are working to rescue and rebuild lives, may they know your presence and your healing.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Loving Father, source of all life, we look at our world and confess we sometimes feel helpless, that the storms of life can be overwhelming. In the depths of a pandemic, we lift before you the sick, the grieving and the fearful. The scientists and medics as they heal, treat and search for solutions.

The leaders, as they discern ways forward and navigate the complexities of this time. Those who have become unemployed, who are struggling with mental health issues, who are lonely and isolated. We know that you know and love each one of these people abundantly. May they and we know your peace and hope today.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Everlasting God, thank you that through the storms your presence is constant. That our hope for the future is secure in you. In a time of change in the world, in our community, and in our church, help us to trust in your unending faithfulness. We lift before you our churches at this time - St Mary's and St Peter's. For our churchwardens, Petra, our service leaders, and the PCCs, we pray for wisdom and discernment as plans are made in ever changing circumstances. Help us to seek your will for our future. May we continue to grow as a church, being a light for you in this community and pointing towards your coming kingdom.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Compassionate Lord, we remember before you our family and friends who are sick. May they know your healing and peace. For those we know who grieve, we pray they would know your comfort. For those who are lonely, provide the interactions they need to know they are loved. Whatever we face in the week ahead, fix our eyes on you, our anchor in every storm and help us to step forward in faith, trusting in your love for us.

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

The Peace

Take a moment and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for each other and our church family church community. Maybe call or text someone who would enjoy sharing the peace with you.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy, that you may be kept safe and blameless in spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Hymn 636: The Church's one foundation

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours.
Now and for ever. Amen.**

Hymn 718: We love the place

Remembering the Lord's Supper:

Take a moment to remember the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As we think about this meal - with the washing of feet and bread and wine shared with friends - we remember Jesus' offering of himself on the cross. We rejoice in his resurrection from the dead and look forward to the coming of God's Kingdom. While we cannot receive Christ in the sacraments in the usual way, we can be the presence of Christ in our homes and communities and we can be a praying presence wherever we are.

Hymn 144: Dear Lord and Father

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, we thank you for this time of worship; may your love and peace remain with us in the coming days. Be with us in all that we will think, say and do so that our lives may reflect your glory. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen

If you have any prayer or pastoral needs, please don't hesitate to contact
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