

Sheffield United Reformed Churches Team Ministry worship for individual or family
Sunday 9th August 2020 at 10:30 am.
10th Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

Jesus reveals a little more of his identity by walking on the water to where the twelve are battling a storm. Peter thinks he can do it too; but he needs to be rescued and learns a lesson in trust, faith and doubt; taking the risk...

Call to worship

Lord, sometimes life following you can be difficult. We find so many dilemmas and struggle so much, wishing life could be easier.

We so want to trust you and see your plan for us. Help us this morning to relax into your presence, to clearly hear your word and be prepared to act on it. In Jesus' name.

Hymn

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us, for we have no help but thee;
yet possessing every blessing, if our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us: all our weakness thou dost know;
thou didst tread this earth before us, thou didst feel its keenest woe;
lone and dreary, faint and weary, through the desert thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending, fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
love with every passion blending, pleasure that can never cloy:

thus provided, pardoned, guided, nothing can our peace destroy.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession

God, we thank you for this new day, for the beauty of all creation, Lord may this beauty around us lead us into a greater understanding of your compassion, gentleness, holiness and a peace which we long to share...

We thank you that, in Jesus, we have seen your promise of fullness of life for all peoples made flesh and come among us. That in Him we see what we must do to bring your peace and justice to this world through the proclamation of the gospel in word and action.

To you we lift up our hearts, O God, and give you thanks and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord God, we are sorry for the times we take our eyes off you, and seek to do things in our own strength - then we find ourselves sinking! We are sorry for the times we doubt that you can keep hold of us and hold us up.

We are sorry for the times we ask you for signs. Lord, we pray that you will forgive our doubts and hesitations, show us your loving presence, especially when we need it most and teach us to trust you at all times. These prayers to bring together in the prayer Jesus taught his disciples... **Our Father...**



Readings

Genesis 37: 1-4 (12-28) - Joseph has a dream but makes a mess of sharing it...

Romans 10: 5-15 - In spite of this, Paul encourages us to keep sharing the good news about Jesus.

Matthew 14: 22-33 - Jesus walks on water and invites us to take a risk and walk with him. He will hold us when we start to sink...

Reflection - by Micheal Gillott of Central URC

Reading the Genesis reading for today strikes a very strong chord for me. It is a shame that it stops where Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers. I feel very strongly about forgiveness and spreading God's love through his Good News. Unfortunately, to any who don't know the full story, this reading appears to show his brothers still being at odds with Joseph - and this isn't how it ends!

Joseph's story also shows a very important lesson in these difficult times. Having favourites causes animosity which is very dangerous for us as we are all equal in the sight of God. It is very easy to think we will be fine because we have God on our side but then we forget that God is on everyone's side if they are willing to accept Him. No one is too good or bad in God's sight. We know that He abhors wickedness but we also know that if a wicked person or nation repents, He will be there with them and bless them.

Paul tries to help us understand this in his letter to the Romans where he gives us a clear instruction to help others find the Lord's forgiveness. If they have never heard the Good News of the Lord then how can they have the option to turn from their wicked ways to accept God's grace and love? Paul makes it clear that this is where we come in with our prayer and knowledge. Sitting and doing nothing (or the same old thing) doesn't get the job done. We have to act and follow the guidance of God. He alone knows what we need to do. Both Paul and Joseph's story show that we need to act and share what God is saying, whatever the reaction - without action the status quo remains. This is never the way of the Lord.

Paul was writing this message to a church in Rome made up of Jews who were complaining that the Gentiles (i.e. the Romans), were wanting to join them in worship. Sometimes we have a similar problem in our churches where people we don't know (or people we think don't deserve to worship with us) try to join. However, Paul is very clear that salvation and thus worship is for everyone. Who are we to judge them? If God has drawn them to join us who are we to say no? Yes, we need to test they are genuine before admitting them into membership but that is not a difficult task.

I feel very strongly that God wants us to accept all His people no matter what they believe. You never know they may be coming to us for the first time to see what it's like after someone has planted a seed - but if we won't accept them and help them then we destroy that germinating seed. In this way we lose the possible gifts that would help us go forward. Unfortunately, I have seen it happen more often than I would like to imagine in our churches.

It may seem very strange in these times to consider this word from Paul. We imagine that, with the internet and many other media, people around the globe would already know about Christ. However, as Paul points out, people need to hear it from another person. Seeing it written down is not enough. But if we need to tell them then that is scary and impossible!

And so, I also feel really privileged to reflect on the Matthew reading today because it is one of my favourite stories about Jesus. It starts just after the feeding of the five thousand, which drained Jesus and, needing to recoup His energy, He knew He needed to be alone with God in prayer. So He sends the disciples off in the boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In these troubled times I can identify with feeling drained and the need to be close with God in nature. It never ceases to amaze me how quickly being at one with God in nature revives the spirit. The same story shows the opposite of the serenity that Jesus found. As the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee a storm blew up, as often happens there. They were struggling to keep afloat in the fierce storm. During this struggle Jesus appears walking on the water. I can imagine how terrified they were seeing Him walking towards them when they knew they were far from land. Peter shows us the answer by saying that if it was truly Jesus he should call him to walk to Him on the water. Jesus says "Come" which to me is even more amazing. Peter gets out of the boat and while he focuses on Jesus, he walks on the water -

but the instant he starts worrying about the storm and the worries of the world he sank like a stone. He did have the presence of mind to call for Jesus to save him as he sank. This shows me the faith Peter had in his Lord. It is also a very valuable lesson for us in these difficult times: if we keep our eyes on Jesus and trust Him completely, we will not sink but rise up and “walk on water” - we can do what seems impossible.

So there are three main points we need to remember today from our readings:

- Trust God through even the most turbulent times
- Send out those of us with gifts of speech into the communities around us; ensure no stone is left unturned - that everyone has heard the Good News and therefore has the choice to accept Christ or not
- If they accept Christ, ensure we help them repent and turn to Him then encourage those with the right gifts to go out with us to reach more and more.

So, I pray that we may bring the news of the Lord Jesus Christ and his forgiveness and grace to those He shows us. May we feel challenged to prepare people with the gifts to go out to gather those who want to come to God to feel forgiven and loved like never before.

In these most turbulent of times, I pray we will be renewed in our strength and knowing God accepts us in love; that we will stay afloat and when we see Jesus walking towards us on the water we will ask Him to say “come” to Him. May we not let the worries of the world drag our attention down and away from Him.

Prayers of Intercession

God of mercy and healing, you who hear the cries of those in need, receive these petitions of your people that all who are troubled may know peace, comfort, and courage. As we reflect on the great cloud of witness, our prayer is that we are given the strength to encourage each other and provide a helping hand for those in need.

Lord God, we come before you to pray for all the people for whom taking risks is a way of life. We pray for our emergency services – paramedics, the police, and the fire service – all who daily face difficult situations as they seek to help to protect us and make our world a safer and more peaceful place.

We pray for our world, we remember the people in Beirut, as they work through shattered lives, we pray for healing during this time.

We pray for people who work in troubled areas – the armed forces in war zones, those who bring humanitarian aid into areas of natural disaster, and many more. We remember the people of the Lebanon today, especially.

We pray for people who take risks in your name, Lord Jesus, for those who are persecuted, those who take your word where it is most needed and for those of us like Peter who grapple with faith and doubt. We remember those who are, unwell, isolated, in hospital and lonely. We pray that you will reach out and take their hands and offer them the assurance of your love.

God, the ways of the world we have created tempt us greatly. We desire to have more. Transform our desires and dreams to be your desires and dreams, to love one another and to seek the well-being of others. Transform our heart to be like yours, to love all, but especially the overlooked, the unseen, the lost and forgotten, so that all may know your love and grace. Amen.

Hymn - *This is a new song that may be unfamiliar to you but use the words as a prayer - you can listen to a music version using the You-tube link below:*

You call me out upon the waters - The great unknown where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery, In oceans deep, My faith will stand

I will call upon Your name - And keep my eyes above the waves, when oceans rise.
My soul will rest in your embrace - For I am Yours and You are mine

Your grace abounds in deepest waters, Your sovereign hand will be my guide
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me - You've never failed and you won't start now!

So I will call upon Your name - And keep my eyes above the waves, when oceans rise
My soul will rest in your embrace - For I am Yours and You are mine

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders - Let me walk upon the waters,
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander - And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Saviour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HZvOXe0jBq>



Blessings

May the blessing of God the Father be upon us as we venture out into His world, to live to the glory of His name

May the blessing of God the Son be upon us as we step out in faith, to serve Him as faithful disciples

May the blessing of God the Holy Spirit be upon us as we listen to His promptings and take obedient risks as He leads us



The Lord says: "I will never let go of your hand..."