

The Ninth Sunday After Trinity, 9th August 2020

Welcome

Welcome everyone to our website worship. Today we will hear about Jesus, raw from the news of John the Baptist's death and tired from the intensity of feeding the five thousand, modelling self-care and devotion to prayer. After much needed refreshment, He re-joins His disciples, walking on the water! As they saw Him coming, Jesus said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." May we hear these beautiful words today as we encounter Jesus in our time together.

As we prepare to worship, we pray St Benedict's prayer of faith:

Gracious and Holy Father,
give us the wisdom to discover You,
the intelligence to understand You,
the diligence to seek after You,
the patience to wait for You,
eyes to behold You,
a heart to meditate upon You,
and a life to proclaim You,
through the power of the Spirit of Jesus, our Lord. **Amen.**

Today's Collect

Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage never to lose hope,
but always to bring our prayers before you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gospel Reading: Matthew 14:22-33

22Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. 25And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. 26But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. 27But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." 28Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Reflection

Our Gospel today contains the wonderful moment when Jesus walks on the water. The disciples see Him coming and think He is a ghost. Jesus immediately reassures them saying, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid". Peter then seeks further proof and asks Jesus to command him to walk out onto the water. Jesus says, "Come" and Peter steps out. With eyes fixed on Jesus all is well. However, he

soon notices the strong wind, is terrified and starts to sink. Jesus reaches out and saves Him, reprimanding him saying, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?". Together they get into the boat and the wind stops. Preachers have taken many angles with this text. I have heard it used as a call to step out and put our faith in Jesus.

The angle I want to take is shaped by our collect for the day. A prayer reminding us that Jesus taught His disciples to be persistent in prayer and to never to lose hope. In the first part of chapter 14 we hear about Jesus being told about the troubling death of John the Baptist. We then rapidly move to the miraculous feeding of the five thousand. After this Jesus sends the disciples ahead and dismisses the crowd. Modelling the importance of prayer, He goes up the mountain to pray. Later in the evening Jesus was able to observe the disciple's boat being battered by the waves as the wind was against them. Jesus stayed put. He did not panic; he chose to be fully present in His space and time alone. He was prioritising self-care. He knew He needed rest and time to talk to God. Jesus took the time He needed despite the presenting challenge of the choppy waters. I wonder when Jesus said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" if He was reminding Peter that He had sent them ahead and that all was going to be well, despite the wind being against them.

In these current times the wind feels against us! We feel buffeted by so many emotions and difficult realities of this time. How I need to hear those words of Jesus, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid". Down through the centuries the church has been portrayed as a boat on the sea of the world with the mast in the form of a cross – and since 1948 this has been the logo of the World Council of Churches. The central feature of a traditional church is the 'nave', a term derived from the Latin word for 'ship' or 'boat' (navis). We are in the boat. Rev. Dr. Mitzi J. Smith, Professor of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary writes,

Sometimes faith is seeing the boat for what it is—a shared experience and the opportunity to lean on one another, to encourage each other in the storm while waiting on God.

In our worship together I encourage us to sense that we are in the boat together waiting on God. May I encourage us to trust in God and be persistent in prayer. Prioritise seeking time with God in your home or outside. The riverbank is my favoured place. Through the 'weather' we face we will encounter Jesus and hear those words of comfort, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid". Let us not doubt that despite these unsettling times we are held in the hull or body of the church as we navigate life's journey together.

Prayers of Intercession

Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage never to lose hope,
but always to bring our prayers before you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In response to our collect I invite us to pray. Using the following photos taken by Alison Tonner, some prayer prompts from our Anglican Sunday cycle of prayer and some music, rest in God's presence and pray.

Departed slide: May all the departed know the rest and refreshment of your presence.

We pray for the souls of John Broadhurst who died recently and Rudolph Smith who lost his life in WWI.

Through the storms of life, O God,
you are with your people
in the person of Jesus your Son.
Calm our fears and strengthen our faith
that we may never doubt his presence among us
but proclaim that he is your Son,
risen from the dead,
living for ever and ever. **Amen**

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

We join all our prayers together in 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.**

Conclusion

Friends,
Jesus calls us to step out on to the water with him,
to be persistent in prayer, courageous and hopeful,
joining Him in the work He is already doing in our world.
And when the wind and waves get high and threaten to overwhelm us,
we remember His words:
"Don't be afraid. Take courage. I am here."

So, let us go with faith,
to follow where Jesus leads,
confident that His love and presence go with us.
Amen