

Sunday 9th August 2020

Welcome

The passage that we are going to be considering today and is set in our Lectionary for this Sunday happens to be the story of Peter stepping out of the boat to meet Jesus across the water. For those of us that joined in the last series of Bible studies (pre lockdown and which now seem so long ago!) this will be a very familiar passage. We followed a book entitled 'If you want to walk on water, you have to step out of the boat.' Perhaps even more so than previously we as a church, God's family, are going to have to be willing to take some risks and do things differently. Perhaps today's Zoom service will be one of our steps out of the boat. Are we going to sink or have faith and walk on the water to Jesus?!

Gathering Prayer

Jesus said to Peter and the disciples in the boat 'Take courage, it is I. Don't be afraid.' And he continues to that to us today.

We pray:

Our God is a powerful God, who does things way beyond our understanding.

But we have no need to fear, for we know we are safe in God's presence.

Let us come to our God now. Let us bow down and worship. **Amen.**

As we are gathered Jesus is here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCdD5Ouq-2Q>

As we are gathered Jesus is here

One with each other, Jesus is here

Joined by the Spirit, washed in the blood

Part of the body, the Church of God

As we are gathered Jesus is here

One with each other, Jesus is here

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Opening Prayers

Lord, sometimes life following you can be difficult.

We find so many challenges, difficult decisions to be made and times when we struggle so much.

We often wish life could be easier.

Help us to see beyond the obstacles, give us faith to trust in you and help us to see your plan for us.

Help us this morning to relax into your presence, to hear clearly your word and be prepared to act on it.

As we approach you today, Lord, perhaps we feel pretty much like Peter –

full of bravado to begin with, but then just not quite so certain of ourselves.

We come to you, Jesus, trusting that even if we feel ourselves beginning to sink under the pressures that we face, we know you are still there holding us up.

Please reassure us that you won't let go, no matter how we feel. Thank you, Lord.

Prayer of Confession

Lord God, I'm sorry for the times I take my eyes off you, and seek to do things in my own strength.

I'm sorry for the times when I doubt that you can keep me on the straight and narrow.

I'm sorry for the times when I've asked you for signs and have then deliberately ignored them.

Lord, I pray that you will forgive my doubts and hesitations,

show me your loving presence, especially when I most need it, and teach me to trust you at all times. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Reading Matthew 14:22 - 33 Jesus walks on the water

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

LAIRG CHURCH OF SCOTLAND & ROGART (ST CALLANS) CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
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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."

Reflections on the reading

In the last few Sunday's several of my reflections have been based on passages from Matthew's gospel. This week as I was looking back on some of these I noticed that there is a common thread in what Matthew records. He brings messages of hope. These recent weeks and months are, as we've been told countless times, unprecedented, for our own lives, the life of the nation, the world and the Church. But in the recent weeks Matthew's gospel brings us messages hopeful themes. A couple of weeks ago we read the parables of the mustard seed, the yeast, the hidden pearl. All these things are small and yet in the right place and when used in the right way can produce something great; the tiny mustard seed growing into a large tree, the tiny amount of yeast being sufficient to leaven a large quantity of dough to produce bread, and the tiny pearl, seemingly so insignificant being of great worth. This gives us hope that God takes and can use the smallest things to great effect. Although we may be small in number and we often feel there is little we can do the message of hope for us is that what we can do is not important, it is what God can do in and through us if we allow him to.

Last Sunday we were thinking about the familiar account of the feeding of the five thousand with two small fish and five barley loaves. We could follow the same theme of small things being used by God to bring about something great, the miracle that fed well over 5000, when you include all the women and children. But I think there is another message a hope from that story. Jesus had been teaching the large crowd and at the end of his teaching , late in the afternoon, he wanted to prevent the crowd from dispersing. The way in which Jesus achieved this offers hope to the church, that despite the separation we've all experienced this year, we can stay together spiritually, even when physical meetings are not possible. What kept that crowd together on the hillside above Galilee was an act of generosity on the part of a young boy. Our enforced separation has taught us the value of staying together; this passage shows us how we might do this in the times ahead, following the lead of the young perhaps we can look to sharing our time and resources.

Then we come to today's passage with peter stepping out of the boat to meet Jesus. I feel that these verses have a particular message at this time for the leaders in our churches. The life of the Church has changed dramatically this year with rules around social distancing and public gatherings (or rather the lack of them). Change may be necessary, but it is also frightening, because it can make us vulnerable. None of us wants to perform an action that ends with a cry of 'Lord, save me' issuing from our lips. However, this bible passage shows us that when Jesus invites us to come, this is often an invitation to vulnerability. Peter demonstrates this when he begins to sink but he also demonstrates that our hope in these situation lies in our keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus. We may be called to risky and scary actions, so we as leaders in the Church must keep looking to Christ so that our faith in him may conquer doubts about our own capabilities.

Let's either listen or sing along if you wish to this song which includes the chorus Turn your eyes upon Jesus

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nO4ulyz_d90

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Saviour,
And life more abundant and free

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.*

Through death into life everlasting
He passed and we follow Him there;
Over us sin no more hath dominion,
For more that conquerors we are!

Turn your eyes....

His word shall not fail you he promised;
Believe Him, and all will be well:
Then go to a world that is dying,
His perfect salvation to tell.

Turn your eyes....

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God Knows

When you are tired and discouraged from fruitless efforts....
God knows how hard you tried.
When you've cried so long and your heart is in anguish
God has counted your tears.
If you feel that your life is on hold and time has passed you by
God is waiting for you.
When your friends are too busy even for a phone call ...
God is by your side.
When you think you've tried everything and don't know where to turn ...
God has a solution.
When nothing makes sense and you are confused or frustrated ...
God has the answer
If suddenly your outlook is brighter and you find traces of hope ...
God has whispered to you.
When things are going well and you have much to be thankful for ...
God has blessed you.
When something joyful happens and you are filled with awe ...
God has smiled upon you.
When you have a purpose to fulfil and a dream to follow ...
God has opened your eyes and called you by name.
Remember that wherever you are or whatever you're facing ...
God knows.

As the deer panteth for the water

As the deer panteth for the water
So my soul longeth after thee
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSZWogD0AH4>

*You alone are my strength, my shield
To you alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship you.*

**LAIRG CHURCH OF SCOTLAND & ROGART (ST CALLANS) CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
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You're my friend and you are my brother
Even though you are a King
I love you more than any other,
So much more than anything
You alone are

I want you more than gold or silver,
Only you can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy-giver
And the apple of my eye.
You alone are

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Blessing

As we leave this time of worship, go
Knowing God is with you,
Knowing you will be richly blessed,
Knowing that you are called to make a difference,
Knowing that God will bless others through you,
Knowing the overwhelming love of the living God.
AMEN