

Worship@Home 13th August 2023 with Revd David Speirs

Opening Prayer:

O God, we turn and face you in the midst of the storm. Help us this hour to hear you speak to us, not in the wind, or the thunder, nor even in the upheaval of the ground beneath us. Help us to hear You speak to us, in our heart of hearts, as that still, small voice amidst the maelstrom, which gives us direction, and peace, and hope. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer of Invocation, based on 1 Kings 19: 8-15, from RE: Worship. <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/06/opening-prayer-1-kings-19.html>

StF 353 – Jesus is Lord!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HHYt40whHQ&t>

Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,
for by his power each tree and flower was planned and made.
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it;
Sun, moon and stars in heaven cry:
Jesus is Lord
Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!
Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord!

Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal
in flesh he came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.
Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding
yet gave his life a ransom,
thus setting us free.

Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,
from death he rose; and all his foes shall own his name.
Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit
to show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.

David John Mansell (b. 1936).

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Please read:

Matthew 14: 22-33

<https://bible.oremus.org/?q1=269472839>

Or watch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQNY7ALnq0I>

Time to Reflect

In the Gospel passage that we have from today's lectionary we have the disciples in the midst of a storm whilst sailing on the lake of Galilee. The story shares some similarities with an earlier incident when the disciples are caught in a storm on the lake and Jesus calms the wind and the waves (Matthew 8:23-27). However, on this occasion whilst the waves are battering the boat and wind is against them, Jesus is not asleep in the boat. Instead, he is walking out across the water to meet the disciples on the lake.

Once again Jesus demonstrates to his disciples his divine status, not only the one who can command the wind and waves but walk upon them as well. To understand what Jesus is doing here we need to think back to another text in the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Job. In this story it is said that God in his act of creation "treads on the waves of the sea" (Job 9:8 NIV) and "walked on the recesses of the deep" (Job 38:16 NIV). Jesus walks on water to demonstrate that he is able to do what God did at creation; empowered with the same authority as his father.

When Jesus approaches the boat, he says to the disciples "take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." (Matthew 14:27 NRSVA). However, another way of translating this from the Greek, instead of 'it is I' is 'I am' (egō eimi). These are the same words that God speaks to Moses from the burning bush to identify himself (Exodus 3.14). Once again Jesus identifies himself with God in the way that he identifies himself to his disciples.

Then Peter asks to come out to meet Jesus on the water and Jesus responds by calling him over. Yet while walking to Jesus, Peter notices the strong winds, becomes afraid and starts to sink. He cries out to Jesus 'save me' and Jesus grabs his hand and catches him. Jesus then says to Peter "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31 NRSVA). This line has often been interpreted as a harsh admonishment from Jesus. However, I wonder how it would sound with a different tone? What if instead of admonishing Peter Jesus is responding with kind and loving words of comfort, reminding him that because he was with Jesus, he did not need to be afraid of the storm.

With this understanding the story now serves reinforces the earlier message that Jesus gave when he calmed the winds and the waves previously: That the presence of Jesus with the disciples means that they do not need to be afraid because he is the one who will save them.

Jesus gives this reassurance to remind the disciples who he is to them and the assurance they should have with his presence. It is a message that is echoed once again by St Paul when he writes that nothing in all creation “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:39 NRSVA). Jesus not only saves Peter in this moment, from the stormy sea, but he goes on to save him, and all of us, by what he does through the cross and the resurrection. By dying and rising for us Jesus saves us from the waters of death and brings us into the heavenly kingdom. It is for this reason that we do not need to be afraid because Jesus is the one who saves us from death.

Peter may have faltered when he walked upon the waters. However, it is Jesus who came out to meet the disciples on the water and he was the one who saved Peter from the waves. Even when our faith is wavering, in the storms of life, we can rely on Jesus to be our saviour; to help us and to lift us. So let us commit ourselves, as those early disciples did, to journey with Jesus. To face the challenges and uncertainties of life with the knowledge of God’s presence and in his love for us. Knowing that when we are with and journeying with Jesus, who meets us where we are, we need not fear. Thanks be to God.

Prayer of Intercession

You are invited to pray silently for:

The needs of the world...
The Church and its calling...
Loved ones going through difficult times...
For peace, justice, and reconciliation...
In Jesus name. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven...

StF 486 – Who would true valour see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFPIKnyiwK4>

Who would true valour see, let him come hither;
one here will constant be,
come wind, some weather; there's no discouragement
shall make him once relent
his first avowed intent to be a pilgrim.

Whoso beset him round with dismal stories
do but themselves confound;
his strength the more is.
No lion can him fright; he'll with a giant fight;
But he will have a right to be a pilgrim.

Hobgoblin nor foul fiend can daunt his spirit;
he knows he at the end shall life inherit.
Then fancies fly away,
he'll fear not what men say;
he'll labour night and day, to be a pilgrim.

John Bunyan (1628-1688)

Final Prayer

Gracious God, in all of life's storms give us the strength and hope that we need to journey closer to you. Give us the reassurance of your presence, in the constancy of your love, offered through your Holy Spirit. We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our lord, saviour, and friend. Amen.

