Worship@Home 09.08.26 with Revd Dr Samantha Gillard

Call to Worship: *Mattew 14:22-33*

We gather together to worship God,
who comes to us when we least expect it,
who calls us out of the safety of our ordered lives and invites us to join Him in the adventure of faith.
Let's worship God together!
Call to worship https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/08/call-to-worship-matthew-1422-33.html

STF 104 God moves in a mysterious way

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCca-8HDiVg&list=RDvCca-8HDiVg&start_radio=1

God moves in a mysterious way. His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm.

Come all you saints, fresh courage takes; The clouds you so much dread Are big with mercy and shall break. In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense but trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence. He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err. And scan His work in vain; God is His own interpreter, And He will make it plain.

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CCL:I Song Number: 4662491

Bible reading: Matthew 14: 22-32 https://bible.oremus.org/?ql=264135375

Time to Reflect

"God Moves in a Mysterious Way" is a well-known hymn whose words were written by William Cowper, one of England's greatest hymn writers. Yet Cowper did not write them from a place of easy confidence.
He lived much of his life under the shadow of deep depression and darkness. There were times when he struggled to believe that God could possibly love him. He could not always see God's hand at work. He could not explain what God was doing.

At his lowest point, God gave him a friend who walked alongside him: the Reverend John Newton, the former slave trader who became a pastor and hymn writer. Newton did not solve all Cowper's problems, nor could he explain all his suffering. Instead, he remained present. Through friendship, prayer, and encouragement, Cowper discovered a gift for poetry and hymn writing that has strengthened countless Christians ever since. Perhaps that is why Cowper could write about God riding upon the storm. He had learned that God's presence is often discovered not through understanding everything, but through trusting when we cannot understand.

Our Gospel reading today takes us into another storm. Jesus has just heard the devastating news of John the Baptist's death. We should not rush past that detail. Jesus is grieving. He seeks solitude and prayer. Yet even in His sorrow, He has compassion on the crowds and feeds the five thousand. Then He sends the disciples ahead across the lake while He goes away to pray. As night falls, the wind rises. Waves crash against the boat. The disciples are battered by the storm. Then they see a figure approaching across the water. Terrified, they think it is a ghost until Jesus speaks: *"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."*
Peter responds, *"Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you on the water."*
And remarkably, Jesus says, *"Come."* Peter steps out.

For a moment, the impossible happens. He walks towards Jesus. But then he notices the wind. He sees the waves. Fear overwhelms him, and he begins to sink. We could stop there and conclude that we simply need more faith and must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. There is truth in that, of course. But perhaps there is something deeper happening here.

After all, how do we measure faith? Faith is not a spiritual achievement or a personal accomplishment. Faith is trust.

What if faith is needed not only outside the boat, but also inside it?
The other disciples remain in the boat. The storm is still raging. Jesus is not yet physically with them. Their faith is expressed not through walking on water but through staying together in the midst of chaos, trusting that somehow Christ has not abandoned them. And is that not often where we find ourselves? Most of us will never walk on water. Most of us will never do the spectacular or the miraculous. But we will all face storms: grief, illness, loss, uncertainty, disappointment, and fear.

The good news of this passage is not that we can do the impossible if only we have enough faith. The good news is that Christ comes to us in the storm. And even more wonderfully, He continues to make His presence known through the boat itself, through the community of faith. Life is often not a cruise ship sailing through calm waters. It is a storm-battered boat carrying imperfect disciples. Yet it is here that Christ meets us, strengthens us, and reminds us that we are not alone.

William Cowper discovered that through John Newton. God's presence became real to him through friendship and community. Sometimes the hand of Christ reaches us through another believer who stays alongside us when the darkness comes.

From this passage, I believe we may gather two quiet hopes. First, when the winds rise, the waves break over us, and every sign seems to whisper that God is far away, dare to trust that Christ remains in the boat. Though hidden from sight, He has not departed. Though silent, He is still near.

Second, remember that no one crosses life's waters alone. Time and time again, God makes His presence known through the steady companionship of others, through hands that help, hearts that listen, and friends who refuse to let us drift. Take a moment to consider who has journeyed beside you and give thanks for them.

For though the sea may be rough and the storm fierce, you are not abandoned.

The waves may batter you, but they cannot separate you from the One who shares your voyage.
Christ is with you still, and His love will carry you safely through the night.
Amen.

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 610 Best of all is God is with us

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpVfjZ7PxhM

Best of all is God is with us; God will hold and never fail. Keep that truth when storms are raging, God remains though faith is frail.

Best of all is God is with us, life goes on and needs are met, God is strongest in our weakness. Love renews, will not forget.

Best of all is God is with us,
hearts are challenged, strangely warmed,
faith is deepened, courage strengthened,
grace received and hope reformed.

Best of all is God is with us, in our joy and through our pain, till that final acclamation:
'life is Christ, but death is gain'.

Best of all is God is with us, as we scale eternal heights, love grows stronger, undiminished; earth grows dim by heaven's lights.

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Blessing (Psalm 138: 1-8*)*

As you go into the coming days, remember: You do not go alone. God's faithful love goes with you. No matter what you are facing, God will not abandon you. For You belong to God, and God will fulfil His plans for your life. So go from here, strong in the knowledge that God's loving presence goes with you. **Amen**

https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/08/benediction-psalm-138-1-8.html