

Sunday 9th August 2020

Order of Service

Gathering hymn: StF 36 There's a quiet understanding

There's a quiet understanding
when we're gathered in the Spirit,
it's a promise that He gives us
when we gather in His name.
There's a love we feel in Jesus,
there's a manna that He feeds us,
it's a promise that He gives us
when we gather in His name.

And we know when we're together,
sharing love and understanding,
that our brothers and our sisters
feel the oneness that He brings.
Thank You, thank You, thank You, Jesus
for the way You love and feed us,
for the many ways You lead us
thank You, thank You, Lord.
Thank You, thank You, Lord

Tedd Smith

Call to worship

We come with humble hearts to worship God.
We bow before the God who holds the world in a grace that will never be defeated.
We bow before Jesus Christ who lives a radical love and calls us to do the same.
We bow before the Spirit, who brings renewal and refreshment into our lives and the
life of the world.

We come to worship a God of wondrous love and care.

Hymn: StF 44 Come on and celebrate

Come on and celebrate, His gift of love, we will celebrate
the Son of God who loved us and gave us life.
We'll shout Your praise, O King, You give us joy nothing else can bring,
we'll give to You our offering in celebration praise.

Come on and celebrate, celebrate,
celebrate and sing, celebrate and sing to the King.
Come on and celebrate, celebrate,
Celebrate and sing, celebrate and sing to the King

(Repeat)

Patricia Morgan & Dave Bankhead

Opening Prayers

Loving God we come confidently before you trusting in your love and mercy.

You are a God full of mystery and wonder, a God who calls us to go deeper and beyond what we can see and imagine.

Enter our hearts in this time of worship and speak to us clearly amidst the complexities of our lives.

May the life of Christ challenge and reassure us.

May we be open to reshaping our lives into your purposes and priorities; demonstrating your wisdom.

Break open your truth amongst us.

Be known to us now, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Merciful God, if we ever feel that we have nothing to confess, forgive us.

If we ever feel that we are so clear about your will when in reality we have only seen part of your truth, forgive us.

If we ever judge the actions of others because we think that our way is the only way, forgive us.

Pause to offer your own confession

The forgiveness of God is assured and free. We are forgiven.

We are restored and renewed by God's Spirit and free to be the people that God has called us to be. Amen.

Bible reading: Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28 Joseph is sold by his brothers

37 Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan.

² This is the story of the family of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves.⁴ But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

¹² Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." ¹⁴ So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

He came to Shechem, ¹⁵ and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" ¹⁶ "I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." ¹⁷ The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. ¹⁸ They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. ¹⁹ They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. ²⁰ Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." ²¹ But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." ²² Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. ²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; ²⁴ and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵ Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. ²⁶ Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷ Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. ²⁸ When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

Talk One

I wonder if you have a sibling, maybe half siblings? Or are you an only child? If you have siblings then have you ever experienced sibling rivalry - maybe especially when you were growing up together? Maybe you have parented more than one child and have experienced sibling rivalry in that way?

Today's Old Testament story is of sibling rivalry and difficult family relationships. Actually there's a lot of this kind of thing generally in Genesis. Over the last few weeks the stories have been about Abraham and Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob, Rachel, Leah and all the children of Jacob.

These are tricky stories containing jealousy, greed, lust and lies **and yet**, this is the family that God has chosen to work his good purpose in. Abraham and his descendants are far from perfect people but God, rather than disown them and start again with someone else, honours them and repeats again and again his covenant promise of blessing on Abraham and the generations of his family that follow.

So today we hear about the beginnings of Joseph's story in Genesis. It's a good story - you can see why it makes for a good musical. I suspect that many of you will be familiar with 'Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat' written by Andrew Lloyd Webber. You may even have seen it live either locally or in the West End.

Joseph was one of the two sons of Jacob born to Rachel. He was a favourite child. Being one of twelve children can't have been easy and we see in the story today how sibling rivalry threatened Joseph as he fell out with his brothers and they tried to get

rid of him. They drove him away from his home and made sure he knew he was not welcome.

Joseph's life, just like his predecessors, was neither easy nor perfect and just like his father before him he gets himself into difficult situations which are sometimes of his own making! And yet, time and again in the story, Joseph is reminded that God is with him - despite the difficulties he faces, the fear and the rejection he feels, God's hand is upon him and his presence is made known to him.

It is important to see in the Joseph story that God was still working through this hard time. Even amongst the pain and sadness of being cut-off from his family, Joseph is also gaining the skills and the position he needs to eventually save his family (and thousands of other people) from starvation.

In this time of global pandemic and the easing of lockdown in our own communities, how are we aware of God being right there with us working in our lives and in the lives of others despite the difficulties we each face?

Hymn: StF 633 My soul finds rest in God alone

My soul finds rest in God alone, my Rock and my salvation;
a fortress strong against my foes, and I will not be shaken.
Though lips may bless and hearts may curse, and lies like arrows pierce me,
I'll fix my heart on righteousness, I'll look to Him who hears me.

*O praise Him, hallelujah, my Delight and my reward;
Everlasting, never failing, my Redeemer, my God.*

Find rest, my soul, in God alone amid the world's temptations;
when evil seeks to take a hold I'll cling to my salvation.
Though riches come and riches go, don't set your heart upon them;
The fields of hope in which I sow are harvested in heaven.

O praise Him, hallelujah.....

I'll set my gaze on God alone and trust in Him completely;
with every day pour out my soul and He will prove His mercy.
Though life is but a fleeting breath, a sigh too brief to measure,
my King has crushed the curse of death and I am His forever.

O praise Him, hallelujah....

Aaron Keyes & Stuart Townsend

Bible reading: Matthew 14:22-33 Jesus Walks on the Water

²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was

against them. ²⁵ And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea.

²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

²⁸ Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

²⁹ He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Talk Two

Our Old Testament reading left Joseph in great difficulty. Our Gospel reading finds the disciples also in a state of peril. In this Gospel story, what should be a period of rest and recuperation, turns out to be anything but that. Prior to this passage the feeding of the five thousand has taken place and after that is over Jesus sends his disciples away for a boat ride across the water and he chooses some time alone on the mountainside. After the incident on the water that is our focus today, Jesus and the disciples are on the road again fulfilling their ministry of healing and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom.

But here, in this in between time they are caught in a boat on the water as a storm brews. What should have been plain sailing is now dangerous. They feel alone and are frightened and before they can even cry out, Jesus goes towards them. They don't recognise him at first, they mistake him for a ghost. But Jesus speaks words of calm and reassurance and Peter is willing to step out in faith on the water and to move towards Jesus and eventually, despite a sinking feeling, both he and Jesus end up back in the boat with the others. All is well.

The last few months might still seem surreal for many of us. Whilst we knew that covid-19 was a concern, none of us could have predicted quite the impact it would have on all our daily lives. I suspect many of us are still coming to terms with what has happened and trying to make sense of where God has been working amidst the pandemic. For those worst affected - those who have been ill; those who have lost their lives and their bereaved families; and those who have been working on the frontline throughout it all - for the NHS, in social care and for other essential services I wonder if it has felt like being in the battered boat, far from land, frightened and fearful of what might happen next. Peter's courage to walk towards Jesus despite the dangers might also remind us of the courage so many have shown - the courage of patients and their families; the courage of the medical and caring professions; and the courage others have shown to help with little thought for themselves and their own wellbeing. Much courage will continue to be needed in the days and weeks that lie ahead as we continue to adjust to the new normal we find ourselves in.

The good thing about this Gospel story is that Jesus comes to be with the disciples in the boat. He doesn't just try to guide it to safety from a distance, **he gets into the boat with them all**. Jesus comes close and experiences their fear with them and says 'Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid'. May those words reach into our hearts, calm any fears and concerns that we may have, and enable us to look to the future with a sense of hope knowing that God is in the boat of life with us.

Intercessions

Lord, in the storms of life, bid us come to you, that we, who are aware of our weakness, may be made strong; through the power of Christ our Lord.

When we are in danger of being overwhelmed, increase our faith.
When troubles beset us, let us hear you say, "Take heart, it is I: do not be afraid."

Give to your church a new vision of yourself and of your saving power and go with us as we seek to proclaim your love.

We pray for areas where the church is struggling, overwhelmed or in danger.
We pray for all who reach out in faith towards you.

We pray for areas of the world where there have been floods or other natural disasters,
for all who are swamped by poverty or hunger,
for all who are battered by wave after wave of oppression or violence,
for those who have no freedom,
for all who are sinking beneath a load of care and anxiety.
We give thanks for all who have supported us in times of trouble or distress.
We pray for family and friends who are in need at this time.

Pause to remember people from your own community and fellowship.....

We pray for all who are down, the fearful, the weary, the despairing.
We pray for all who are unable to help themselves and we remember all who give a helping hand; for carers, home helps, social workers; all those who work in the NHS.
We remember those who are suffering in their care of another.

Though our faith is weak, we reach out to you, for you are almighty.
Grant that we may come to be with you in life eternal.
Show us your mercy, O Lord, and grant us your salvation.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: StF 645 Will your anchor hold

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life? When the clouds unfold their wings of strife,
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain, will your anchor drift or firm remain?

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the Rock which cannot move; grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.*

Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear? When the breakers roar and the reef is near,
while the surges rave and the wild winds blow, shall the angry waves then your bark o'erflow?

We have an anchor that keeps the soul...

Will your anchor hold in the floods of death? When the waters cold chill your latest breath,
on the rising tide you can never fail, while your anchor holds within the veil.

We have an anchor that keeps the soul...

Will your eyes behold through the morning light the city of gold and the harbour bright?
Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore? When life's storms are past for evermore?

We have an anchor that keeps the soul...

Priscilla Jane Owens

Closing words

We go from this place knowing God and known by God.
We go in freedom and hope.
We go in faith to lift up the life of God in the world.

Blessing

And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us, and all those who we know and love, now and forever more. Amen.