

Facebook Live Worship Outline

Pentecost 10 - 9 August 2020

GATHERING

GATHERING HYMN EVLW #842 *Oh, Worship the King*

- 1 Oh, worship the King, all-glorious above.
Oh, gratefully sing God's power and love;
our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,
pavilioned in splendour, and girded with praise.
- 2 The earth with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, your pow'r has founded of old;
established it fast by a changeless decree,
and round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.
- 3 Your bountiful care what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light,
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
and sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.
- 4 Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
in you do we trust, nor find you to fail;
your mercies, how tender, how firm to the end,
our maker, defender, redeemer, and friend.
- 5 O measureless might, ineffable love,
while angels delight to hymn you above,
the humbler creation, though feeble their lays,
with true adoration shall sing to your praise.

GREETING

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: **And also with you.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

P: God lifts us from death to life and preserves us for God's purposes

C: **through the compassion of Jesus Christ our Lord and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.**

P: With thanksgiving, praise the Lord!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- P: Let us pray. Son of God, you walk on the waters of turmoil to meet us in the midst of your purposed journey for our lives. Help us to recognize your presence, remember your promise, rely on your power, and receive your peace through every storm.
- C: Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING

Though Joseph was Jacob's favourite son, his jealous brothers sold him into slavery. Judah, who protected Joseph's life, later gives a moving speech before Joseph in Egypt, indicating that the brothers had changed their ways. Reading from the Book of Genesis in the 37th chapter:

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

Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. 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." 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, and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" "I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." 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. They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. 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." But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." 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. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

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. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 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. 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.

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28

GOSPEL

Matthew's gospel typically portrays Jesus' disciples as people of "little faith," who fail despite their best intentions. In this story, Matthew shows how Jesus comes to the disciples when they are in trouble and sustains them in their time of fear and doubt. This is the Holy Gospel according to Matthew:

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

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

Matthew 14:22-33

P: The Gospel of the Lord

SERMON



SUNDAY, AUGUST 9, 2020

BISHOP GREG MOHR, BRITISH COLUMBIA SYNOD

MATTHEW 14:22-33

Stay in the Boat, Peter!

Does it take more faith to stay in the boat or to walk on water?

Maybe that's an unfair question,
but I think it is something we need to ponder today.

At first glance, it would appear to be an incredible accomplishment of faith to step out of a boat with the expectation that you could walk atop the water.

But as some commentators have pointed out, from the very beginning

the writer of the gospel of Matthew offers subtle clues that perhaps Peter was motivated by something other than tremendous faith.

Maybe getting out of the boat was the action of "little faith."

It's been a long day for Jesus.

Feeding 20,000 people will do that to you!

Jesus sends the disciples out; it's a common phrase in the gospels; Jesus sending, directing.

Rather than get into the boat with the disciples, Jesus goes up the mountain to pray, by himself.

I see in that brief mention in the gospel a reminder of how important our self-care is, how important our prayer life with God is:

to spend time in prayer,
away from the rigours of the day;
to sit in the presence of God,
to be refreshed and
renewed.

This is a timely reminder at this time of year;

rest and renewal is built into the very framework of creation.

Some would argue that the crown of creation is humans.

But others say "no." The crown of creation is sabbath rest — not human beings.

God, with humanity and the whole of creation, enters into God's rest on the seventh day.

... "And Jesus goes off by himself to pray."

"When evening came ..."

The disciples are in the boat

and a storm bears down upon them.

They are far from land.

They have been rowing all night.

night. They are not getting anywhere.

The wind is against them.

They are exhausted.

Many of these disciples are trained fisherfolk.

They know how to handle a boat.

But not this boat.

Not this time.

Early in the morning,

in that ethereal, mystical time,

a time before sunrise,

when they are tired, not really awake but not asleep either,

when they are in between the shadows of night and the rays of hope of the morning.

And it is there, at this liminal moment in time, that Jesus comes,
walking to them on the water.

The disciples see Jesus, although they do not know
it is Jesus. And they are terrified.
They cry out in fear.

And then the words — the holy, gracious words: “Take heart, it is I. Do not be
afraid.” What those words do to us!

In the midst of fear, a voice that says “I am with you.”

In the midst of the struggles of life and challenges we face, we hear a
voice that says, “I am. I am with you always to the end of the age.”

Peter calls out, “If it is
you.” And Jesus says
“Come.”

That’s it.
One
word.
That is all that Peter needs.
One word.

Not like the three words of denial that he speaks a short time later in
the gospel. No. Just one word.

And Peter steps out of the boat and he walks toward Jesus

Now . . . we don’t know how Jesus said the word “Come.”
Does Jesus say it in a calm, reassuring voice, “You can do it. It’s okay.”

Or is it said with a rolling of eyes and note of exasperation in his
voice? “Just once, Peter, couldn’t you be less impetuous and just
stay in the boat?”

We’re not sure how Jesus said it.

Peter looks down.
And Peter feels the storm bu
eting him. And he starts to
sink.

But Jesus reaches out,
reaches out just like he is always
reaching out: a hand,
a gesture, a word, grace, care, love.

This is an amazing story; it is otherworldly.

And we, scientifically sophisticated that we are, ponder and wonder and have no
answer for what this means from a physics point of view.
And that is okay.

Because this is not a physics lesson.

The intent of the story is draw us in and to ask "Who is this?"

We come to this story with the question "What does this mean for us?"

And further, what did this story mean for the community in which the writer of Matthew lived — a community buffeted by the waves of persecution and hardship?

Matthew's community wonders where Jesus is.

Why does it seem like he has forgotten about them when their situation is so desperate?

Matthew's listeners could easily have identified with the disciples in the boat.

Weary and afraid of death, like sailors who have fought a storm all night, Matthew's community may have begun to lose faith, may have started to

become weary,
and they want a

sign,

some reassurance that Jesus not only knows what is happening to them but that Jesus cares and will do something about it.

This is usually how we explore this story. We derive great comfort from it.

Jesus comes to us in the storms of our lives, in our crises, in the death of a loved one, our struggles, times of feeling lost, at sea, lonely, afraid.

He brings peace and calm.

And it is good and true and we cling to that promise, that God is with us, in all things.

We believe that; we proclaim that.

At the beginning of the gospel of Matthew we are told that another name for the baby Jesus is to be "Emmanuel." And we are even told very clearly what the word means: "God with us."

At the very end of the gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus' promise, "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

These passages act like bookends to the gospel of Matthew.

At the beginning and at the end, we have before us this theme of "God with us."

But I wonder if there is another way to hear this story; perhaps there is another way God speaks to us in the chaos of our times in this COVID Era.

What if we hear it this way:

When Jesus says to Peter, "You of little faith," maybe Jesus was asking:

“Why, Peter, of all the people in the boat, were you the only one who doubted that it was me coming to aid you in the storm?”

“Why didn’t you have enough faith to stay seated in the boat with the others and let me come to you. Just wait in the boat and have some faith that I will be with you.”

Maybe this is not a miracle story.

Maybe this is Peter abandoning those in need.

Maybe “O you of little faith” is not that Peter sank.

Maybe those words were spoken because Peter wanted to get out of the boat.

Maybe Jesus said, “O you of little faith,” because Peter abandoned his friends; abandoned those in need.

He was a professional
fisherfolk, after all. He was
skilled on navigating the lake.
He would have experienced
storms before

He was needed by the community, by those in the boat.
And he left them behind.

Note that Jesus only rebukes Peter for his
lack of faith. To the others, seated in the
boat, Jesus just comes, and gets in the
boat with them.

And there is a great calm as the storm ceases.

While Peter is often referred to in biblical commentaries as being a prototypical disciple, this is not what we want to have in a prototypical disciple.

He left them for his own
personal reasons. Was it his own
ego? His impulsiveness?

Whatever it was, he abandoned
his friends. He is forgetting those
who are left behind.

And maybe this is what we need to ponder in these storms going on around us,
with COVID-19,

climate emergency, anti-racism rallies,

Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and

Girls, a ordable housing crisis,

opioid crisis,

stretched thin mental health services and support,

and millions needing to access Food Banks, 1/3 of whom are children.

Are we forgetting who is
left behind? Is that what

we've done as a society?

Do we value individual freedom and choice so much that we fail to discern who is in the boat with us?

Have we stepped out of the boat?

Perhaps I am taking liberty with the text.

But I think this text is speaking to us in this way, in this context, today.

It is a poignant reminder of what it means to be disciples of Christ: Who have we left behind?
Who have we left in the boat when we have gone on ahead?

Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

EVLW # 400

God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind

1. God of tempest, God of whirlwind,
as on Pentecost descend!
Drive us out from sheltered comfort;
past these walls your people send!
Sweep us into costly service,
there with Christ to bear the cross,
there with Christ to bear the cross!
2. God of blazing, God of burning,
all that blocks your purpose, purge!
Through your church, Christ's living body,
let your flaming Spirit surge!
Where deceit conceals injustice,
kindle us to speak your truth,
kindle us to speak your truth!
3. God of earthquake, God of thunder,
shake us loose from lethargy!
Break the chains of sin asunder,
for earth's healing set us free!
Crumble walls that still divide us;
make us one in Christ our Lord,
Make us one with Christ our Lord!
4. God of passion, God unsleeping,
stir in us love's restlessness!
Where the people cry in anguish,
may we share your heart's distress.
Rouse us from content with evil;
claim us for your kingdom work,
claim us for your kingdom work!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P: Separated by distance in our homes and yet called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world. Each petition will end with the phrase “Lord in your mercy” and I invite you to respond with the words, “hear our prayer.”
(Pause)

For your whole church throughout the world. Give courage in the midst of storms, so that we see and hear Jesus calling: “Take heart, it is I: do not be afraid.” May we follow Christ wherever he leads. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the well-being of your creation. Protect waterways, forests, lands, and wildlife from exploitation and abuse. Help the human family endeavor to sustain and be sustained by the resources of your hand. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the nations and their leaders. In you, steadfast love and faithfulness meet, and righteousness and peace kiss. May nations in conflict know the peace that is the fruit of justice, and the justice that is the path to peace. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those in need. Everyone who calls upon your name will be saved. Accompany all who are lonely, hear the voices of those who cry out in anguish, and support those who are frustrated in their search for an affordable place to live. We pray for those suffering this day. In this season of Pentecost we pray for: Ferolyn, Angela, Jordan, Pat, Grace, Joel, Dorothy, Carol, Ruth, Beryl, Karen, Barb, Elethia, Pat and for all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts. *(Pause)* Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For our congregation. Although we are separated by distance, you have gathered us together today as your people and we thank you for this gift. We pray for those who are new to this community, for students and teachers preparing for a new school year, and for those struggling with unexpected hardship. Supply us generously with your grace for our life together. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We give your thanks, O God, for the saints of the whole church from all times and places, and for the saints in our lives and in our community whom you have gathered to yourself. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

P: And now as our Saviour Jesus has taught us we are bold to pray:.

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, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

P: Touched, changed, called and empowered,
go now in the power and provision of Christ to heal the sick,
feed the hungry, and serve the world.

God the creator, Jesus ✝ the Christ,
and the Holy Spirit, the comforter,
bless you and keep you in eternal life.

C: Amen

SENDING SONG

EvLW #763

My Life Flows On in Endless Song

1 My life flows on in endless song;
above earth's lamentation,
I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn
that hails a new creation.

Refrain:

*No storm can shake my inmost calm
while to that Rock I'm clinging.
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth,
how can I keep from singing?*

2 Through all the tumult and the strife,
I hear that music ringing.
It finds an echo in my soul.
How can I keep from singing? [*Refrain*]

3 What though my joys and comforts die?
The Lord my Saviour liveth.
What though the darkness gather round?
Songs in the night he giveth. [*Refrain*]

4 The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,
a fountain ever springing!
All things are mine since I am his!
How can I keep from singing? [*Refrain*]

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Christ is with you!

C: Thanks be to God.