

ST STEPHEN'S HOME SERVICE
20th JUNE 2021

INTRODUCTION

"Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?!"

Jesus' calming of the storm is a well-known story. The geography of the Sea of Galilee means that it is prone to sudden, violent windstorms, and the disciples have been caught in one while making a boat crossing. Even the professional fishermen are sure they are about to die. And Jesus – who took them there in the first place – is fast asleep.

Don't you care that we're drowning? How often have you felt like crying out something similar to God? Where is God when you need him? Doesn't he care? How many people have felt like that during the past year? Perhaps you feel like that right now?

Jesus' response to the disciples' crying out to him does not answer all their questions: in fact, it leaves them with an even bigger one: *"Who is this whom even the wind and waves obey?"* But the experience of learning to trust Jesus in the storm moves them deeper into an understanding that the God who created and sustains this awe-inspiring universe is not absent from the storms of life, but right there with us, inviting us to trust him more.

Spend a moment now to allow God's peace to still whatever storms (or even light turbulence!) are troubling you today, and to reaffirm your trust in him.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The light and peace of Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

The glory of the Lord has risen upon us.

Let us rejoice and sing God's praise for ever.

Be with us, Spirit of God;

Nothing can separate us from your love.

Breathe on us, breath of God;

Fill us with your saving power.

Speak in us, wisdom of God;

Bring strength, healing and peace.

The Lord is here.

His spirit is with us.

TURNING TO GOD

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all.

Let us come to him, in sorrow for our sins, seeking healing and salvation.

God be gracious to us and bless us, and make your face shine upon us;

Lord, have mercy, Lord, have mercy.

May your ways be known on the earth, your saving power among the nations;

Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

You, Lord, have made known your salvation, and reveal your justice in the sight of the nations;

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw us to himself and cleanse us from all our sins,

That we may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COME, LET US TELL OF THE LORD'S GREATNESS

I will praise the LORD at all times.

I will constantly speak his praises.

I will boast only in the LORD;

let all who are helpless take heart.

Come, let us tell of the LORD's greatness;

let us exalt his name together.

I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me.

He freed me from all my fears.

**Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy;
no shadow of shame will darken their faces.**

In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD listened;
he saved me from all my troubles.

**For the angel of the LORD is a guard;
he surrounds and defends all who fear him.**

Taste and see that the LORD is good.

Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!

**Fear the LORD, you his godly people,
for those who fear him will have all they need.**

The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help.
He rescues them from all their troubles.

**The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;
he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.**

The righteous person faces many troubles,
but the LORD comes to the rescue each time.

**For the LORD protects the bones of the righteous;
not one of them is broken!**

Calamity will surely destroy the wicked,

and those who hate the righteous will be punished.

But the LORD will redeem those who serve him.

No one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.

From Psalm 34

A SPECIAL PRAYER FOR FATHERS

We give our thanks, Creator God, for the fathers in our lives. Fatherhood does not come with a manual, and reality teaches us that some fathers excel while others fail.

We ask for Your blessings for them all – and forgiveness where it is needed. This Father's Day we remember the many sacrifices fathers make for their children and families, and the ways – both big and small – they lift children to achieve dreams thought beyond reach.

So too, we remember all those who have helped fill the void when fathers pass early or are absent – grandfathers and uncles, brothers and cousins, teachers and coaches – and the women of our families.

For those who are fathers, we ask for wisdom and humility in the face of the task of parenting. Give them the strength to do well by their children and by You.

In Your Holy name, O God, we pray. **Amen**

NEW TESTAMENT READING

2 Corinthians 6:1-13 (New Living Translation)

[St Paul lists some of the "storms" he has endured for the sake of the Good News about Christ. But somehow he has discovered not simply how to survive, but to experience a sense of God-given joy through it all.]

As God's partners, we beg you not to accept this marvellous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it. For God says,

"At just the right time, I heard you.

On the day of salvation, I helped you."

Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation.

We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry. In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God. We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind. We have been beaten, been put in prison, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food. We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love. We faithfully preach the truth. God's power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left hand for defence. We serve God whether people honour us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. We are ignored, even though we are well known. We live close to death, but we are still alive. We have been beaten, but we have not been killed. Our hearts

ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything.

Oh, dear Corinthian friends! We have spoken honestly with you, and our hearts are open to you. There is no lack of love on our part, but you have withheld your love from us. I am asking you to respond as if you were my own children. Open your hearts to us!

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING

Mark 4:35-41 (New Living Translation)

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water.

Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"

When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "Even the wind and waves obey him!"

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you O Christ.

REFLECTION (by Margaret Mandrell)

When I was a teenager, we went for a holiday to Loch Awe, and my friend and I decided to go rowing on the loch. It was a stormy day, with waves and a strong wind, and we had a scary and difficult time trying to make progress, as we fought against the current to return to safety. For a long period of time we made no headway, becoming more tired and anxious as we battled the elements. Some-how we got back to shore, and a lesson was learnt. We recognised our frailty and

limitations, but that feeling of vulnerability and fear has never been forgotten.

In life, as frail human beings, we often have this type of experience, as we strive to cope with difficult and challenging circumstances. We plough on, perhaps feeling too busy to take time for God, and struggle in our own strength, feeling tired and discouraged. On an inter-faith charity ride, an author was in the Swiss mountains, cycling over 100 kilometres a day, exhausted, and battling against a headwind. A companion suggested she ride in his slipstream. The effect was dramatic, as the wind resistance was reduced by 30%. The healing respite allowed her to recover physically and psychologically. She noted that at first everyone was feeling alone and afraid of failure, but that when they relied on each other, the effect was transformational.

The disciples were probably exhausted, after a day spent with crowds of people, curious, questioning, seeking healing and answers. They set sail from the shore to the other side of the lake. A violent storm with gale force winds threatened to sink the boat. Jesus slept, despite the tumult of wind and waves. Jesus was woken up, and he calmly addressed the turbulent elements, bringing about a state of calm, and showing his followers that he had great power.

The gospels show us that constant connection with those who are in need, in body or spirit, those who are longing for relief, those who are outsiders. Jesus always provided a healing space where the weary and worn out, the sad and the excluded, could find restoration and wholeness. Jesus reached out and touched the untouchable, those disfigured by leprosy, those considered unclean, the despised and rejected. His unconditional love and acceptance transformed people, allowing them to become whole. The disciples misunderstood him and let him down, but he gave them opportunities to grow and mature in faith. He treated everyone as someone having infinite worth and healed their brokenness.

We too can lift and support those who are struggling against storms and trials, those who feel overwhelmed and ignored. We can do this by listening with attention, by remembering a name, where someone is on their journey, by valuing them as an individual. We can offer to pray for or with them, share in their pain and loss and listen to their story. We can share the story of God's love and forgiveness and demonstrate this love to those who are in need. We, as Christians, can experience the peace which knowing we are loved and part of God's family can give, so that even if we are going through a difficult experience we can still be upheld and comforted by this knowledge.

Sometimes the words of a hymn can give comfort and lift our spirits, and when prayer is difficult, they can say what we are struggling to express. We can be encouraged in our walk of faith by the example of those who have gone before. As a child I learned "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." We can choose to accept the gracious love of God, and to rest in his presence, so that whatever happens, we too can know his peace which passes understanding. This peace will sustain us when things are difficult and threaten to overwhelm us.

[Take a few moments to reflect on what you have read.]

RESPONDING IN FAITH

Let us declare our faith in God.

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

**We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

PRAYERS

As residents of God's awe-inspiring universe,
Let us pray to our loving Creator.

To the bidding: Calm our fears
The response is: **and teach us your peace.**

Lord of all truth and goodness,
We pray for those in positions of authority
In the Church throughout the world,
And in each gathered community.
In all the storms facing our communities
May we be enabled to hear your calming voice
And deepen our trust in you.

Silence

Calm our fears:
And teach us your peace.

Lord of power and majesty,
We pray for all in positions of political and military power,
And for those whose decisions affect many lives.
Speak your truth into their motives, your integrity into their actions,
And your vision of peace into every conflict.

Silence

Calm our fears:

And teach us your peace.

Heavenly Father, we pray for all whom we know
Who are weathering storms in their relationships.
To all who have responsibility to care for others
Please give the ability to bring peace and calm fears.

Silence

Calm our fears:

And teach us your peace.

Lord of all healing, we pray for those
Whose minds and hearts are in turmoil,
Whose lives feel like they are lurching from crisis to crisis;
For those who find their lives shattered by illness or injury.
Among those known to us personally, we ask your blessing on
Paul Burston, David New, Anna Clements, and Adrina and Alan Price.
For these and others we pray for your peace
And a stilling of anxiety.

Silence

Calm our fears:

And teach us your peace.

Lord of eternity, we thank you
For your reassurance of life beyond the death of our present
bodies;
We pray for any who are facing death alone, unnoticed or
unprepared;
And at the anniversary of their passing, we commend to your
merciful kindness and eternal tranquillity Geoff Clarke, Mick
Tudge, David Drew, Geoff Stephens, and Stuart Foster.

Silence

Calm our fears:

And teach us your peace.

And so, Lord of Creation,
As we wonder at the story of your universe,
Spoken into existence by your Word
And sustained by your love,
We commend ourselves and all whom we love to your care.

Merciful Father,

Accept these prayers

For the sake of your Son,

Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

We pray the Lord's Prayer together as Jesus taught us, saying:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily
bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who
sin against us.
Lead us not into
temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the
power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

**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,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
Be with us all evermore.
Amen.**

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Prayer for Fathers, Revd Chuck Currie, amended*

SENDING

**Loving God, bring us all to life
by the power of your love.
Transform our brokenness into blessing.
And as we go on our way,
May our minds be full of your peace,
our hearts full of your love,
and our thoughts full of your praise.**