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Service for the 7th Sunday after Trinity, 18th July 2021

A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jesus said to his disciples: "Come away...and rest a while."

Come into the Lord's presence now, away from the burdens and stresses of life.

Come with open arms, and receive the rest that Jesus offers – to restore our souls, and equip us for whatever comes next.

HYMN: Dear Lord and Father of mankind

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

1 Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
in purer lives your service find,
in deeper reverence praise,
in deeper reverence praise.

2 In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea,
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word,
rise up and follow thee,
rise up and follow thee.

3 O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
when Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity
interpreted by love!
interpreted by love!

4 With that deep hush subduing all
our words, and works that drown
the tender whisper of thy call,
as noiseless let your blessing fall
as fell your manna down,
as fell your manna down.

5 Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace,
the beauty of thy peace.

6 Breathe through the heats of our desire
your coolness and your balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire,
speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!
O still, small voice of calm!

J G Whittier

PRAYERS

Let us pray

Gracious God, you always make time for us; we are sorry that we don't always make time for you. When we are rushing around being busy, sometimes even when we are doing your work, we forget about you. We are sorry when we make our lives so full that there is no room left for you – no room to get away, to be in a quiet place with you.

Forgive us, Lord, and help us not to hurry but to slow down, to make space for you to dwell within us. In that dwelling place, may we seek what you want us to do and who you want us to spend time with.

Help us to get the right balance, a right rhythm that is in tune with you.

Even though we have gone astray, you are our Shepherd – the one who brings us back to the fold. We are assured of your forgiveness, and we are set free in the knowledge that you always make room for us.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

HYMN: Be still, for the presence of the Lord

*If you would like to **listen to this hymn**, click the icon on the webpage*

or click this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKfyudrhGK4>

SCRIPTURE READINGS

St Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56

³⁰ The apostles returned and met with Jesus, and told him all they had done and taught. ³¹ There were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his disciples didn't even have time to eat. So he said to them, "Let us go off by ourselves to some place where we will be alone and you can rest a while." ³² So they started out in a boat by themselves to a lonely place.

³³ Many people, however, saw them leave and knew at once who they were; so they went from all the towns and ran ahead by land and arrived at the place ahead of Jesus and his disciples. ³⁴ When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw this large crowd, and his heart was filled with pity for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began to teach them many things.

⁵³ They crossed the lake and came to land at Gennesaret, where they tied up the boat. ⁵⁴ As they left the boat, people recognized Jesus at once. ⁵⁵ So they ran throughout the whole region; and wherever they heard he was, they brought to him the sick lying on their mats. ⁵⁶ And everywhere Jesus went, to villages, towns, or farms, people would take their sick to the marketplaces and beg him to let the sick at least touch the edge of his cloak. And all who touched it were made well.

Psalm 23

23 The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need.

² He lets me rest in fields of green grass and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.

³ He gives me new strength. He guides me in the right paths, as he has promised.

⁴ Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, LORD, for you are with me.
Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

⁵ You prepare a banquet for me, where all my enemies can see me; you welcome me as an honoured guest and fill my cup to the brim.

⁶ I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life; and your house will be my home as long as I live.

REFLECTION: *Ms Megan Evans*

We have had two readings this week in which I took great comfort – I hope you have too. When I read the two readings for this service and the theme became apparent, I soon felt that they seemed like a direct message from God for me to explore these readings in greater detail.

I find my life is very busy. I am sure that's something to which many people can relate. We all have pressures on our time that often tire us out – from family, friends, work, hobbies... and church. In the Mark reading, the disciples were tired – they'd been sent out on a mission by Jesus and been busy teaching. When they met with Jesus and told him about all they had done and all they had taught, Jesus sees their tiredness and responds by offering time for quiet and rest in the boat. There are two lines in particular that I found especially interesting: verse 31 and 32:

There were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his disciples didn't even have time to eat. So he said to them, "Let us go off by ourselves to some place where we will be alone and you can rest a while." So they started out in a boat by themselves to a lonely place.

I felt as if I was taken on something of an emotional roller-coaster when reading just these two verses, due to the contrast between the busyness of the 'pre-boat situation' and the calmness of the boat itself. I genuinely felt quite stressed reading the first half of verse 31. I wonder if any of you can remember a time when you've been so busy that you haven't had time to eat. I have experience of this from eight years of primary school teaching, where it was considered a successful lunchtime if I managed to eat my sandwich! But after those feelings of stress, I experienced so much joy, calmness and relief when reading the latter part of verse 31 and verse 32. I was so thankful that Jesus was looking out for those disciples. It's Jesus who says, "You're exhausted, you need to rest!" and he makes that happen.

I know a number of charities and groups – and indeed NHS staff – who during the Covid pandemic, in particular, have been working crazy hours. I'm sure they needed to hear those words from Jesus. Achieving a healthy balance between having compassion and concern for others and maintaining appropriate self-care is a lifelong struggle for many people. Learning the importance of this balance, and receiving encouragement in working at it, is vitally important. I wonder if we can learn from Jesus' example and 'call it out' when someone

else is over-worked and needs to rest, supporting them in getting the rest they need. Can we even 'call it out' when we ourselves are exhausted and simply need to rest for a while?

When we think about resting in the reading from St Mark's gospel, it was in a boat; in Psalm 23, it is in fields of green grass and by quiet pools of fresh water. When continuing to read the psalm, you sense the feelings of peace the psalm-writer gets from being protected in times of danger. That peace is gifted to us all through a belief in God. I enjoy coming to church because of the peace, calm and stillness that it brings me amidst the busyness of life. 'Be Still, for the Presence of the Lord' is actually my favourite hymn because of the peace and stillness that it instils within me. The other hymns I have selected today have been chosen because I feel a certain peace when hearing their lyrics too.

As I reflect on today's gospel reading in particular, I think it's also important to remember that life can't be still and peaceful at all times. In today's reading from St Mark, we have the busyness of teaching and helping others before the still and the calm. The bible also teaches us not to be idle. The beauty of today's reading from Mark in my opinion is that the 'busyness – rest' loop is completed when Jesus and his disciples get to the shore and the crowd continues to seek Jesus for teaching and healing: Jesus simply gets back to work, making sick people well.

Jesus made deliberate choices about the time he would spend alone and the occasions that he was willing to forgo this for the sake of others. This is what he has modelled to his disciples – and to us. You can only rest for so long before you have to get back to work or back to the commitments of friends, family, hobbies – and church. Just like Jesus' disciples, we have to learn what it means to work with Jesus, and to rest with him too.

PRAYERS of intercession

Let us pray

We thank you, Lord, for the joy the Euro 2020 football tournament brought to many. We thank you for the England team who have been an example and a reflection of what's best about this country.

We pray for our fellow citizens of earth and heaven.

We pray for those engaging in racist abuse towards Rashford, Sancho and Saka. Enable us all to see the reality of racism and free us to challenge and uproot it from our society, our world and ourselves.

We pray for our fellow citizens of earth and heaven.

May our hearts and minds be open to celebrate similarities and differences among our sisters and brothers, remembering that the spark of life within each person on earth is the spark of your divine life.

We pray for our fellow citizens of earth and heaven.

We pray for people who feel excluded for reasons of race, culture, colour, or anything that makes them feel 'bad different' and not 'good different'.

We pray for our fellow citizens of earth and heaven.

We pray for countries at war, for the people who suffer, perhaps not even understanding what the fighting is all about. Bring them hope, Lord.

We pray for our fellow citizens of earth and heaven.

We pray for those who deliberately go into danger to negotiate for peace, and for ourselves that we might bring God's peace to our neighbours.

We pray for our fellow citizens of earth and heaven.

We pray for leaders in different settings across the UK, as they navigate the changes in Covid restrictions that start tomorrow, seeking to care for their communities.

We pray for our fellow citizens of earth and heaven.

In a moment of silence, we remember those in our own personal prayers at this time...

We pray for our fellow citizens of earth and heaven.

Amen.

HYMN: In the darkness of the still night

*If you would like to **listen to this hymn**, click the icon on the webpage*

Or click this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDpxFMBw55E>

BLESSING

Let us pray

O God, in Scripture we read that you rested on the seventh day – after all the busyness and work of creation; and we read of Jesus' desire for his disciples to rest.

As your followers – your disciples – now returning to our busy lives, may we know the rest you offer every day of this week.

Amen.