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## Service for the third Sunday after Trinity, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2021

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

### CALL TO WORSHIP

In the midst of life's storms, God is there. What have we to fear?  
In the darkness and terror, God is with us. Of whom shall we be afraid?  
Rise up, people of God, for you are loved and saved.  
Thanks be to God who cares deeply for us.

### HYMN: God is love

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

1 God is love: his the care,  
tending each, ev'rywhere,  
God is love, all is there!  
Jesus came to show him,  
that we all might know him!

*Sing aloud, loud, loud!  
sing aloud, loud, loud!  
God is good! God is truth!  
God is beauty! Praise him!*

2 Jesus came, lived and died,  
for our sake, crucified,  
rose again, glorified:  
he was born to save us  
by the truth he gave us:  
[Refrain]

3 None can see God above;  
Jesus shows how to love;  
thus may we Godward move,  
joined as sisters, brothers,  
finding him in others.

[Refrain]

4 To our Lord praise we sing,  
light and life, friend and King,  
coming down, love to bring,  
pattern for our duty,  
showing God in beauty.

*Sing aloud, loud, loud!  
sing aloud, loud, loud!  
God is good! God is truth!  
God is beauty! Praise him!*

Percy Dearmer (*altd*)

### PRAYERS of thanksgiving & confession

*Let us pray*

For the health workers tending the seriously ill,  
for the scientists working on a vaccination,  
for the researchers analysing data and identifying trends,  
for the media outlets working to communicate reality,  
for the supermarket workers, hygiene and sanitation providers,

for the good news stories of recoveries and effective planning,  
for the singing from balconies by locked-down communities,  
for the recognition that isolation doesn't need to mean loneliness,  
for the notes through letterboxes offering help and support,  
for the internet and telephones and technology that connects,  
for the awakened appreciation of what is truly important,  
Thanks be to God.

God of love and power, we listen to the stories of miracles and doubt that these things can happen today.

Forgive us for the littleness of our faith.

Forgive us for our doubts.

Help us to place our trust in you, Lord Jesus.

Help us to fix our eyes on you and on the ministries to which you have called us,  
for we ask these things in Jesus' name.

**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.**

SCRIPTURE READING

St Mark 4: 35-41

<sup>35</sup> That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."

<sup>36</sup> Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. <sup>37</sup> A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. <sup>38</sup> Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

<sup>39</sup> He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

<sup>40</sup> He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

<sup>41</sup> They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!".

HYMN: Will your anchor hold

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

1 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?  
[Refrain]

*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!*

2 Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,  
when the breakers roar and the reef is near?  
While the surges rage, and the wild winds  
blow,  
shall the angry waves then your boat  
o'erflow?  
[Refrain]

3 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 you will still prevail.  
[Refrain]

4 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?  
[Refrain]  
*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!*

Priscilla J Owens (*altd*)

#### SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 107: 1-3 & 23-32

<sup>1</sup> "Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good; his love is eternal!"

<sup>2</sup> Repeat these words in praise to the Lord, all you whom he has saved. He has rescued you from your enemies <sup>3</sup> and has brought you back from foreign countries, from east and west, from north and south.

<sup>23</sup> Some sailed over the ocean in ships, earning their living on the seas.

<sup>24</sup> They saw what the Lord can do, his wonderful acts on the seas.

<sup>25</sup> He commanded, and a mighty wind began to blow and stirred up the waves.

<sup>26</sup> The ships were lifted high in the air and plunged down into the depths. In such danger the sailors lost their courage; <sup>27</sup> they stumbled and staggered like drunks— all their skill was useless.

<sup>28</sup> Then in their trouble they called to the Lord, and he saved them from their distress.

<sup>29</sup> He calmed the raging storm, and the waves became quiet.

<sup>30</sup> They were glad because of the calm, and he brought them safe to the port they wanted.

<sup>31</sup> They must thank the Lord for his constant love, for the wonderful things he did for them.

<sup>32</sup> They must proclaim his greatness in the assembly of the people and praise him before the council of the leaders.

ADDRESS: *Andy & Lynn Levesley*

### Stormy weather

The psalm we have just heard, Psalm 107, is a psalm of thanksgiving extolling God for delivering God's people from a variety of troubles. It forms a parallel to the first reading from Mark, the account of Jesus stilling the storm. In fact, the selection from the psalm ends up forming a striking commentary on the Gospel text – and on Jesus' ministry as a whole.

The introductory verses 1-3 begin with a call to praise and then give a warning to those redeemed by God to confess their redemption. Verse 1 is as basic and essential a call and statement of the human relationship to God as one can imagine: "Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good; his love is eternal." The original Hebrew was just seven words, one of which is *khesed*, which some bible versions translate as 'steadfast love' or 'loving kindness'. *Khesed* is the word expressing God's fundamental covenant relationship to Israel; its meaning is difficult to capture adequately in English, thus we see different English Bibles using a variety of translations in different contexts: steadfast love, loving kindness, love, kindness, mercy, loyalty, favour, devotion, goodness, and others. The assurance in verse 1 is that this quality of God is eternal: God will never abandon Israel. The rest of the psalm elaborates on that claim.

Verse 2 builds on the call to praise with a call to confession, not of sin but of God's redemption: "Repeat these words in praise to the Lord, all you whom he has saved." Being redeemed by God is thus at the core of the identity of God's people. For the ancient Israelites, this naturally harkens back fundamentally to the experience of the exodus and verse 3 also includes in their redemption the return from exile. For Christians, the experience of redemption from sin most naturally comes to mind; but the references to being gathered from all directions in verse 3 also reminds us of how God through Christ has added all the peoples of the world to the covenant people. This is eloquently expressed in Ephesians chapter 2, where the Gentiles are declared to be "no longer foreigners and strangers", but "fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household". Jesus strongly echoed the language of verse 3 of the psalm when he spoke in Luke chapter 13 of people who will come "from east and west, from north and south, and sit down at the feast in the kingdom of God".

Psalm 107: 23-30 describes a group who get caught in a storm while on a trading trip at sea. Navigation was so little practised among the Israelites that mariners were invested with a high mystery: their craft was looked upon as one of daring and peril. But no fault is attributed to the group; their predicament is not said to be the result of any sin. What is surprising about the description is that the trouble is specifically said to be brought about by God, despite the lack of any cause for punishment. In fact, in the beginning of the scene it sounds as if the travellers are privileged to see the mighty works of God while on their voyage: "They saw what the Lord can do, his wonderful acts on the seas". Their trouble seems mainly a matter of their own fear — "In such danger, the sailors lost their courage".

Nonetheless, the group cries out to God and God delivers — “He calmed the raging storm, and the waves became quiet”. The people are then encouraged to “thank the Lord for his constant love”, recalling the opening verse of the psalm. Moreover, they are also to be thankful “for the wonderful things he did for them”. In other words, the group’s experience is not to be regretted, but rather even their experience of danger is to be taken as an encounter with the might of God.

The description of the group’s experience is remarkably parallel to that of the disciples’ experience when Jesus calms the storm, as in today’s first reading. It is hard to imagine that Mark would not have had Psalm 107 in mind when he first recounted his story of a calmed storm, just as it is hard to imagine a Christian today reading Psalm 107 without thinking of the Gospel story.

What does such a parallel suggest? Among the possibilities are that Jesus re-enacts the Old Testament text. While it would be hard to argue that Psalm 107: 23-32 should be read as a prophetic text, that Jesus so closely re-enacts this account contributes to the idea of Jesus as the embodiment and completion of Israel’s scripture.

Another is that Jesus’ power is the power of God. The role played by God in Psalm 107: 23-32 is played by Jesus in the Gospel account. Jesus’ calming of the storm should be understood as an expression of God’s own saving power. Jesus’ saving activity is an expression of the *khesed* of God.

Finally it suggests that the experience of Jesus’ disciples mirrors the experiences of Israel in their own encounter with God’s mighty power. This raises the vital question: how do we similarly experience God’s power today?

#### PRAYERS of intercession

*Let us pray*

Let us pray to God, who alone makes us dwell in safety...

for all who are affected by coronavirus, through illness or isolation or anxiety,  
that they may find relief and recovery;

for the vulnerable and the fearful, for the gravely ill and the dying,  
that they may know your comfort and peace;

for those who are guiding our nation at this time and shaping national policies,  
that they may make wise decisions;

for doctors, nurses and medical researchers,  
that through their skill and insights many will be restored to health;

for our world family now more impacted by coronavirus than us, places like Africa and India where the rollout of the vaccine is low,  
that they may soon come on an equal footing to us;

for our own church, for all of us going through these difficult times,  
that we can sustain ourselves until fellowship comes to feel normal again.

Lord, you taught us to love our neighbour, and to care for those in need as if we were caring for you. In this time of anxiety, give us strength to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick, and to assure the isolated of our love, and your love.

Lord, in your name we pray,  
**Amen.**

HYMN: Take my life

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

1 Take my life and let it be  
consecrated, Lord, to thee.  
Take my moments and my days;  
let them flow in endless praise.

2 Take my hands and let them move  
at the impulse of thy love.  
Take my feet and let them be  
swift and beautiful for thee.

3 Take my voice and let me sing  
always, only, for my King.  
Take my lips and let them be  
filled with messages from thee.

4 Take my silver and my gold;  
not a mite would I withhold.  
Take my intellect and use  
every power as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will and make it thine;  
it shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart it is thine own;  
it shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
at thy feet its treasure store.  
Take myself, and I will be  
ever, only, all for thee.

Frances Havergal

THE GRACE

*Let us pray*

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all for evermore.

**Amen.**