The Parishes of Crail and St Ayle

Reflections for the **church of the moment**, from Rev John Murray

Sunday 9th August 2020

*Grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*

Lord, may this time of worship be a moment of ‘*faith nurturing’* in the midst of life. Create vision within us, that we might be resilient and ready. We are all ‘in the same boat’, often in darkness and storm. May we sense you coming near us, saying ‘It is I, be of good cheer’.

‘Be still and know that I am God’: The risen Christ present with us by the Spirit is our ‘temple’, our true and lasting place of worship



*Light at the end of the tunnel*

**God comes near to us through his Word and in the Spirit, and today the bible readings introduce us to Joseph the ‘dreamer’, yet also the most practical of people, and we reflect on Jesus walking over the water to be near his disciples in the storm.**

[**Genesis 37:18-24**](http://www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/online-bible/niv/genesis/37/) But his brothers saw Joseph in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams." When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe-the ornate robe he was wearing- and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

#### Jesus Walks on the Sea

Matthew 14:22-33: Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.  Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.  When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."  "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"  Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"  And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God.’’

***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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen*

**Keep a hold of those dreams…and don’t panic.**

John Ortberg wrote a book entitled ‘If you want to walk on water, you’ve got to get out of the boat’. Life involves risk, and risk management, as Joseph and Peter experienced.

There are things, and people (including ourselves!) that can snatch our dreams and hopes away. For Joseph, it was his brothers, and then a false charge which put him in prison, but through God’s help and his intuitive ‘dreaming’, he became a great practical help for others in times of national disaster. But it wasn’t easy for Joseph: he had to dig deep.

And in the storm in the middle of the night, Jesus made himself ‘clear’ to the disciples, and told them to take courage, and not to be afraid. Peter was inspired to follow the example of Jesus…and Jesus encouraged him to give it a go, and having sunk a bit, Jesus again encouraged him to keep faith. But it wasn’t easy for Peter. He had to dig deep.

In his book, Ortberg quotes Henri Nouwen who describes what it’s like to be a trapeze artist: the one who flies through the air towards the ‘catcher’. The flier, has to learn the feeling of being suspended in nothingness: which has to be learnt by practice. The flier has to give himself or herself to that feeling *with confidence*. ‘The flier must wait in absolute trust’, says Nouwen. Now we are probably not trapeze artists! But we are called to *wait and trust.*

So big lessons here for us, from Joseph and Peter, and good words for us from Jesus, as we go through the ups and downs of life. Matthew, who was in that boat on the choppy sea, is hoping that we hear this story in terms of our own journey of faith – our own struggles and doubts. Joseph languished in prison, and Peter knew rising damp, yet what characters they became. Bringing change and blessing into so many lives.

Friends, it’s completely natural to be discouraged at times, but hey, we can remember how God keeps ‘being with’ Joseph and Peter, and we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

***Our prayers***

Lord God, you come to us in the midst of our life

When we feel the wind and the waves

How good that we are not alone, and that you are with us

Coming to help and comfort us, to encourage and give us fresh strength.

You know exactly how we feel, and all our thoughts and fears, and shortcomings.

We don’t need to list these: you know, and we pause to listen to your words of forgiveness, and the deep, deep, love of Jesus which redeems us

But also mixed in there are our dreams and our desire to follow you more dearly. And Jesus you ask us now to ‘come’: to walk on the water.

Today, Lord, we pray for our community, our country, and the nations of the world, all in the same boat, tossed about in the currents of life, the winds of all that is going on: the pandemic and its dire effects, on health, economies, on education. And we remember in prayer Beirut, the Lebanon and that whole area, suffering with yet more tribulation and disaster.

We pray for those you are inspiring in these trying times: to dream, to walk out of comfort zones, to bring hope and healing, health and wellbeing to the poor and needy, and to those for whom these days are really difficult and disorientating.

We remember all those who suffer through prejudice, those who are thrown into prisons and metaphorical invisible ‘pits’, looked down on, because of their colour, appearance, their differences, and for those who do the discriminating and persecuting, that they may see a new way to look out on others.

*Lord, in such persons and places, your kingdom come, your will be done*

Loving God, we give thanks for the joy of home and family.

For the companionship and chat of neighbours  
For the things that give us fulfilment, a laugh,  
Strength, and hope: in good times and in bad.  
Lord, as we continue this journey into the ‘new normal’, give us a sense of perspective, kindness, and of patience, in all our thoughts, words and actions.  
  
God of all comfort, we pray for all who are not well, in mind or in body  
Who are walking in a shadow life, feeling dull and disorientated,  
And for those around them. Be with those who mourn, and those close to death.  
  
Lord, hear our silent prayers....  
In all our prayers today, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Amen

**Blessing**

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,

Wherever He may send you.

May he guide you through the wilderness,

Protect you through the storm.

May He bring you home rejoicing

At the wonders He has shown you.

May He bring you home rejoicing

Once again into our doors.

In the Name of the Father,

And of the Son,

And of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

*from the Northumbria Community*

**Reflections**

Victor Frankl was an Austrian psychiatrist who survived the Nazi death camps. He discovered that those who can find *meaning and purpose* in their difficult situations, gain a resilience in their suffering. For Joseph in prison his life had purpose… the Lord was with him. And Joseph hung on there until it was his time.

Ponder on some ‘prisons’ that you might be in at the moment: in our heads and hearts. Need we stay there any longer, if it is Christ who sets us free?

Or are we perhaps feeling like Peter, we’ve risked but we are sinking? Consider that ‘the Lord is with you’, as the Lord was with Joseph and Peter. What difference does that make, and what might be the purpose of this present moment in your life? Let us pray that Jesus would make himself clear to us and that we would respond well.

Where might you be being a blessing to others? Joseph and Peter go on to do wonderful things that help so many. Pray that our lives may be so used.

**Thought for the week**

You need to be generous to yourself to receive the love that surrounds you.

*John O’Donohue*