

Hello and Welcome and the peace of our Lord Jesus be with us all, once more as we listen and take part in our recording for Kirkgate Parish Church on this the 9th August 2020.

I know some of you personally who listen in, but there are others very close and some distant so hopefully we might one day meet. I hope, also, you will yet again find a blessing worshipping with us. There are lots of online services today so listeners have an amazing choice across the land.

Let me just say, right now there are some folks who are considering how we can get back into the church hall once more for services in the near future. Risk assessments and physical precautions must be in place for this so I'll let you know how it is going when I get back from my break. You see I'm going off for a couple of weeks to visit family elsewhere as most holidays have been cancelled this year. But there will still be an audio available to you from James our Interim Moderator so that's a treat. I'll be back on the air for the 29th August.

Hope you enjoyed Kirkgate by Request the other night, if you haven't listened yet then go online and tune in it is such a blessing. I found great peace listening to some of the beautiful renditions of hymns and music. "When I survey the wondrous Cross" is definitely worth a listen. Stuart puts together a pod cast that is very up-lifting. Its still available on the web site; Oh and he is looking for requests for the next Kirkgate by Request in September so get them in - what's stopping you?

Let us come and worship for a little while and enjoy singing in our homes or wherever we are at this time and praying and reflecting on God's word.

So take a few seconds or so to calm your hearts and minds and take a couple of deep breaths.

Call to worship psalm 46 verses 1-3 GNT

God is our shelter and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.

*So we will not be afraid, even if the earth is shaken
and the mountains fall into the oceans depth;
even if the seas roar and rage,
and the hills are shaken by the violence.*

Come and join in singing with the recording of

CH4 485 Dear Lord and Father of Mankind

1 Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
re clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
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.

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

4 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.

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

Let us join together in prayer, let us pray.

Faithful and loving Lord God,
We gather for this time in Your presence where ever we sit:
Those of us who come to You often
and those who have not looked for You for a long time.
Those who are full of faith
and those who don't know what to believe as yet.
Those who can hardly keep from singing, and those who can barely
face the day.
We gather because You have called us, because You love us,
because You are our God.
We praise You, faithful God,
for the steadfast love which has always guided us,
for the promise which has never faltered,
for the light which has lightened our way,
for the story which has reminded us of those who came before us.
For Your steadfast love and mercies new with each morning,
We join with one the voice
To give You praise and thanks.

We gather, not because we are good or pure or holy,
but because of our need.
We gather, knowing that again and again
we have failed to live as You would have us live, that we have not
loved one another the way Jesus taught,
that we have not loved Your creation,
that we have not loved You,
that we have not loved ourselves.
Forgive us Father,
and renew us to be Your people.

Make us one in Christ once more,
and reassure us in our true identity
as children of the One who is above all things. For we pray this in
the name of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray as we say together

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 the power and the glory
Forever

**Our Scripture Reading continues this week in Matthew chapter
14 verses 22-32. Jesus walks on water.
Let us hear the word of God**

Jesus Walks on the Water

22 Then Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people away.

23 After sending the people away, he went up a hill by himself to pray. When evening came, Jesus was there alone; **24** and by this time the boat was far out in the lake, tossed about by the waves, because the wind was blowing against it.

25 Between three and six o'clock in the morning Jesus came to the disciples, walking on the water. **26** When they saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. "It's a ghost!" they said, and screamed with fear.

27 Jesus spoke to them at once. "Courage!" he said. "It is I. Don't be afraid!"

28 Then Peter spoke up. "Lord, if it is really you, order me to come out on the water to you."

29 "Come!" answered Jesus. So Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water to Jesus. **30** But when he noticed the

strong wind, he was afraid and started to sink down in the water.
“Save me, Lord!” he cried.

31 At once Jesus reached out and grabbed hold of him and said,
“What little faith you have! Why did you doubt?”

32 They both got into the boat, and the wind died down.

Amen

Let us sing once more a hymn by Willian Whiting sometimes used to commemorate those who sail the seas for us, but if we look at the sea as all of life's tempests we can place ourselves in that boat as well. “Oh hear us as we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea”.

CH4: 260 Eternal Father strong to save.

1 Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm does bind the restless wave,
Who bids the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

2 O Saviour, whose almighty word
The winds and waves submissive heard,
Who walked upon the foaming deep,
And calm amid the rage did sleep;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

3 O Holy Spirit, who did brood
Upon the waters dark and rude,
And bid their angry tumult cease,
And give for wild confusion peace;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

4 O Trinity of love and pow'r,
Your children shield in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire, and foe,
Protect them where-so-e'er they go;
Thus, evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

Sermon. My reflection today is entitled - "Treading water with Jesus".

Have you ever met a person who seems to be totally unflappable, always knows just what to do in a stressful situation? A person you can trust to do the right thing with confidence even when everything else is falling apart around them?

Maybe you are a bit like that yourself - life is full of challenges and you meet them with courage and confidence in your abilities and capabilities and when you need help, if you are a Christian, you pray for the help of the Holy Spirit of God.

Well our passage today is all about being calm in the face of storms. A calm that overtakes us as Jesus draws near or gets in beside us in that stormy blast. He is the one who can calm hearts, bring peace even in the midst of worry and anxiety when we keep our focus on the Lord.

There is much we can unpack from our passage from Matthew today, and we can also read similar accounts of Jesus walking on the water of Lake Galilee in Mark 6 and John 6. Mark is closer to Matthew in his account, John uses the occasion in slightly different ways. We'll stick with Matthew at the moment as we follow on from last week where Jesus has just spent all day ministering to the crowds and has fed the 5000+ and it is evening.

He compels the disciples to get into the boat and make for the other side of the lake, but He himself must go and say goodbye to the people and send them on their way after which He will take that quiet time at last and go further up the hill to pray as was his custom at times.

We read that while He was up there he looked out either by sight or intuition, but He saw the disciples caught in one of the lakes storms that can come up at any moment because of the low altitude of the water and surrounding lands. It was getting very dark and the winds buffeted the boat. This is similar to the time when Jesus was asleep in the boat and He stood up and calmed the storm as found in Matthew Chapter 8.

He set out to walk to them on the water. It seems a crazy thing to just say, but on face value it is a continuation of the miracles that Jesus performs because of who He is, God and King of the elements.

He comes to them in the early hours between 3am and 6am in the morning, and they see a white vision of a man walking towards them. They scream in terror we can read in some translations, but Jesus calls out for them to have courage using the term 'I' the I being the form of 'I am' that we know as the name of God. Jesus now calls himself equal with God.

This fourth watch is a most important time. It is the last watch of the night. This watch is the time when satanic agents who went out to perform their evil are returning. This is the time of the morning when the Israelites were delivered in Exodus from slavery in Egypt. This is also the time we read when Jesus walked on the water to help the disciples who were struggling at the oars in the storm. This is a quiet time perhaps to pray and prepare for the day ahead by speaking God's Word and binding all that would attempt to block our path through Jesus to the Father in our daily walk.

Matthew tells us that Peter, in his compulsion, wanted to walk on water too, but he asks Jesus first. "Order me to get out of the boat and come to you on the water" verse 28. Note Peter might be compulsive in his actions leading with heart on most occasions, but he is not stupid enough to try and walk on water without the command of Jesus to do so. Sometimes we need Jesus to be clear and command us in our efforts.

Remember there is still a storm raging around them - it is very dim. Peter asks "Lord if it is You" Lord here holding more reverence than mere formality. The translation of the word is for God alone.

So Peter clammers over the side of the boat while the others watch from within. He looks to Jesus and moves over the water towards him. We know that moral of the story by now, don't we, while he looks towards Jesus he is safe, but when some way towards the master he notices the storm again and takes his eyes off Jesus just for that split second and the doubt makes him sink? Jesus, ever ready with a steady arm to help, gave out His hand and to Peter and rebukes him mildly with the little quip,

"How little faith you have, why did you doubt?" verse 31.

'Sorry Jesus but that would certainly be me as well', and I would imagine most of us for we might struggle to step out of that boat in the first place.

The two get into the boat where the faces of the others would be struck with awe and we are told they worshipped Jesus, Son of God for as they did so the storm left once more and all was calm.

We can read this again as we did last week with the feeding of the 5000+ as a great story on the face of it. But if we delve deeper we spoke last week of Jesus being the new Moses, but instead of delivering the law, He delivers a very different gift from God. The gift of salvation, of redemption and life everlasting through a new Covenant of Love. All who believe on the Son of God, who honour the cross at calvary where Jesus gave up His life on the cross for all original and personal sin can find forgiveness through repentance and belief in the Son.

Jesus has provided the bread, the mana by feeding the 5000+, now like Moses He guides through the waters as Moses opened up the red sea. Jesus makes a calm way for disciples through the turmoil to a place of safety on the other side. In John's gospel there is a verse that can be missed, but it is an incredible statement.

John 6 verse 21

Then they willingly took Him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached land at the place they were heading for. Immediately, wow I often pray to God to do the same for me when I'm driving up the M6 on a rubbish night! Just land me home immediately.

Safe on the other shore! Further, Jesus had gone up to a high place to commune with His Father in Heaven. Moses went up the mountain to speak with God and came down with the stone tablets with the commandments upon them. Here Jesus arrives, but with nothing in hand for He was the new commandment. He was God come to save and bring a new covenant of love for all who have faith in Him.

Life throws curved balls all the time, doesn't it? There is nothing particularly fair about life many a time. Sometimes through no fault of our own we find ourselves caught up in the midst of trouble, the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job. A spiritual dark place maybe, a terrible depth of doubt about our faith. Then there are times where we might be rash and make decisions we later regret. I guess many of us can relate to that one!

We say - "I should never have got involved with that person", or "that job", or maybe we should not have moved away and now we are not happy being distant from our church or home. There are all number of trials that raise their head like the serpent in the garden of Eden, all promising things that will be better, many empty gestures. The only person we can fully trust is Jesus. He will never act against us, never tells us lies in fact He will tell the truth for us no matter how hard that truth is to hear. He is pure and holy and He beckons us on to be the same.

Jesus walks toward the trouble with us, holds our hand when we feel we are sinking too deep in the sea and He brings us into the place of safety as He did for Peter.

There is symbolism aplenty in this passage as well. The sea seems to be a catalyst for Jesus to perform miracles over the elements. The sea can be beautiful and a lovely place to be beside as the song goes, but it can be a siren's seductive calling when it is calm

and promises the bounty that lies beneath, but it is a tempest when least expected.

In scripture the sea is cast as a dark place of death and sin. It is a place where souls can be lost. It is a place where John tells us in revelation it will be no more for God will remove such darkness and death in the New Jerusalem.

Rev. 21 verses 1 and 2. (Berean Study Bible)

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband....

In Heaven there will be no sea, no turmoil and sin, there will be no sun for God will shine bright among the elect for all eternity. A difficult thing to imagine or understand, but Heaven is peace, calm and love.

When Jesus gets into the boat there is calm. When Jesus walks with us in the terrible time of life He brings calm. **Let Him so minister to You this day if the heart and mind are sore and troubled. Pray to the Lord to have mercy and to come close so you can feel His reassuring presence. Let us not be like Peter and start to sink for we doubt.**

I have been saying quite a few times over the year or so that I have been with you that we must focus on Christ. Watch and wait - see what He wants us to do, not just what we want personally and corporately as a church family.

And while we do it keep looking to Him for guidance and strength. Peter's fault was that he took his eyes away from looking at Jesus and looked out at the overwhelming tempest gathering around him. When we take our eyes away from Jesus we will start to sink until he reaches out for us once more. What wonderful words were penned in the old hymn 'Turn your eyes upon Jesus', by Helen H. Lemmel, 1922

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.

Oh soul are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Saviour
And life more abundant and free.

Jesus - the one greater to the Jews than Moses, the one greater than any for all the world. The one who calms the storms, takes away sin and death and brings light peace and strength.

Maybe we can never be that person who knows instinctively what to do and to do it calmly, but there is one who does and one who we can rely on in Jesus our Lord and Saviour. There is no shame in weakness and doubt for then Jesus is closest and ready to reach out that hand to hold us up, lets take it and feel the warmth and the strength He will bring to our hearts and minds while we steer through this time of easing lock-down and the worries that it brings to bear. While we worry about our lives and those we love and pray for mercy and blessing.

Amen

Let us pray.

Loving Lord God help us to remember You are the one who comes to calm the storms we face. Help us to look to You in the times of trial and yet even in the times of joy. Let us walk with You every day of our lives for in that way we will never lose sight of You.

Father God we bring our lives to You once more as living sacrifices, we have forgotten just how blessed we are.

We sometimes forget we have no need to fear while You seek us and call us to come.

Help us then to have a deeper understanding of our faith that we can rely on it as we come from our homes once more to meet those in the community, those in our church and those we have missed for these past months.

Gracious Lord God grant that we may speak boldly of You and the saving grace of Your Son Jesus for this world is a sea, dark and deep full of sin and disruption. A tempest that roars like the hungry lion seeking the lamb.

Too many times we hear of wars in the world and an apathy or inaction on the part of Christian nations to speak out or to act against it.

Too often we see pictures of natural disasters on our tele screens and we might forget to pray or to help in any way.

Too often people around us cry out for help, broken physically and mentally and we look away or ignore them.

Lord God we pray for all those caught up in the terrible explosion in Beirut this week, for the many who lost loved ones, the people who have been affected in all ways. Lord God in Your mercy bring peace and calm in Lebanon and draw close to those in desperate need at this time.

Lord God in Your mercy bring peace, bring provision and bring love in this world. Calm the sea of despair we witness daily on this beautiful planet You have given us dominion over.

Lord God we pray for our churches as they begin to awaken and put in place all the necessary precautions against the Corona Virus. Help us to safely meet to worship You once more in our churches whatever denomination that proclaims Jesus Lord and Saviour.

For those elderly and shielding friends - bless them with courage to venture beyond the door step once more, bless them with peace of mind and heart.

We pray for the children and the teachers and staff as schools go back in a few days. Father God protect and bless them as they all seek to catch up on lessons, keep safe and get back to some form

of normality. Help the teachers to be understanding and reassuring for the children who are worrying about all this and the exam results they received recently.

Lord God we have our own concerns and petitions to bring to You now in this time of personal prayer as we remember others less fortunate than we are in provision and health and faith.....

Abba Father hear these the spoken and silent prayers of the heart in Jesus name and for His sake.

Amen

Well until I return keep safe and well and I hope you have a peaceful August.

Our concluding Hymn is one Stuart played on Kirkgate by Request recently to up lift our hearts. I nearly said let us stand and sing, for it is maybe difficult to sit and give it good voice.

CH4: 737 Will Your anchor hold in the storms of life.

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?

Chorus (after each verse):

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!

Will your anchor hold in the straights 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 back o'erflow?

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 within the veil.

Will your eyes behold through the morning light,
The city of gold and the harbour bright?
Will your anchor safe by the heavenly shore,
When my storms are passed for evermore?

**Now let us hear the words of the sending and blessing as we
take our leave of each other once more.**

Witnesses to something amazing, something unbelievable.
Jesus walked on water.
Witnesses to something frightening, someone's failure.
Peter fell in.
But Jesus reaches out to help his friend, and the waters calmed.
We go now to find ways
of doing the same.
Reach out and give someone
a hand up this week.
And the blessing of God Almighty Father Son and Holy Spirit go
with us and remain with us now and forever more.
Amen