

Order of Service Sunday 20th June 2021 Burley in Wharfedale, Otley and Menston Methodist Churches

Welcome

Hello and welcome to our service for 20th June 2021 – those of you who are watching the premier and those who join us at a later time. The gospel reading set for today is the familiar story of Jesus calming the storm from the book of Mark and that will be the focus for our thoughts during our service. But first, let us calm ourselves as we pray for stillness of heart in order to truly worship God together. Let us pray:

Prayer

Breathe in time with the rhythm of the earth: ebbing tide, night and day; seasons of rest, growth, beauty and fruitfulness. Breathe in time with your own being: beat of heart, race of pulse, patterns of work and rest. Breathe in time with the Spirit of God: breadth of prayer, depth of solitude, height of hopefulness. Breathe in time with silence; be still and know that he is God. **Amen**ⁱ

Hymn

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And I will trust...

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

And I will trust...ⁱⁱ

He guides my ways in righteousness,

Prayer

When nothing is right, when we are weary and lost, when clouds dull the sky, help us to be still. When our cries are unheeded, when no effort bears fruit, when the sun sets, help us to be still. When love is over, when hope is gone, when darkness covers the land, help us to be still. For in being still, in refusing the panic or despair, we shall come to know God is there, suffering alongside and with us, waiting to show us stepping – stones through the swirling waters, and to help us sing a new song. **Amen**ⁱⁱⁱ

Reading

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4: 35 – 41)

Song

Calm me, Lord, as You calmed the storm
Still me, Lord, keep me from harm
Let all the tumult within me cease
Enfold me, Lord, in Your peace.^{iv}

Reflection

Prayers of Intercession

Steadfast God, you are our rock when we feel like we are sinking in quicksand. When we are confused as to which way to turn, you show us a clear path. When we feel bombarded from all sides you provide protection. When we are engulfed with a tsunami of fear you are on hand to calm us. Even before we step outside you are watching. Even before the storm has formed you are battering down the hatches. When life's currents drag us towards the coast of evil, we rely on Jesus to be the lighthouse that illuminates the safe way.

You are our weatherman looking ahead. You are our navigator steering a reliable course. You are our healer dressing our wounds. You are our comforter when we grieve.

Help us to trust in You: To live without anxiety; To act with boldness; To serve with certainty; To care with gentleness; To love without boundaries or prejudice; To rely on the strength and purity of your son Jesus, who encouraged us to talk to you as our father simply, in this way;

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.

Song

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death

Your perfect love is casting out fear

And even when I'm caught in the middle of the storms of this life

I won't turn back

I know You are near

And I will fear no evil

For my God is with me

And if my God is with me

Whom then shall I fear?

Whom then shall I fear?

Oh no, You never let go

Through the calm and through the storm

Oh no, You never let go

In every high and every low

Oh no, You never let go

Lord, You never let go of me

And I can see a light that is coming for the heart that holds on

A glorious light beyond all compare

And there will be an end to these troubles

But until that day comes

We'll live to know You here on the earth

And I will fear no evil

For my God is with me

And if my God is with me

Whom then shall I fear?

Whom then shall I fear?

Oh no, You never let go...

Yes, I can see a light that is coming for the heart that holds on

And there will be an end to these troubles

But until that day comes

Still I will praise You, still I will praise You

Oh no, You never let go...^v

Blessing

God has given us life. God has given us love. God has given us faith. Let us live our lives for God, share that love with those around us, and spread the good news of Jesus. And may God bless us with his presence, upholding us throughout the storms of life now and for always. **Amen**

Reflection

When I was a mental health chaplain, I remember one patient who was in deep distress talking to me one afternoon when I was visiting her ward. Through her tears she said, *'I just want someone to rescue me.'*

I understood what she was trying to tell me – her emotional pain was so great that she wanted someone to lift her out of it and she just couldn't understand why God wouldn't do so.

The initial message we perhaps receive from our reading today is that Jesus rescues the disciples and we interpret that to mean that he might do the same for us if necessary. Lift us out of a difficult situation and make it all go away. But we know that there's much more to this story than that. The Jews, apart from the fishermen were not seafaring people. The sea, through other Biblical stories they would have grown up with (like Noah, the parting of the Red Sea and Jonah) had come to symbolise the dark power of evil which had come to disrupt or even destroy God's creation, people and purposes. We also read in books like Daniel that the sea is the home of monsters.

So this story points us, with others in Marks gospel, to the kingdom of God being 'at hand' and God's sovereign power being unleashed. In calming the storm, Jesus is indicating God's power through himself and his role in defeating the forces of evil and chaos.

It is interesting to note that the words Jesus uses to calm the storm are the same ones he uses in Mark 1: 15 when addressing a demon possessed man. Waves and storms would have been seen as demons and the forces of evil in nature. In the boat, these forces appear like a storm raging around the passengers. But Jesus is so confident of God's saving presence, he is able to sleep. The challenging question he asks the disciples is this: *'Why are you afraid?'*

Jesus is highlighting their lack of faith, their failure to understand that he is the one who takes away fear and defeats evil. And winds and storms will come our way in many destructive guises. We will call out to Jesus to rescue us, no doubt. But we too have to be prepared for Him to ask us about the depth of our faith and our Christian commitment. This is the unsettling challenge within this otherwise comforting story.

However, when commenting on this passage from Mark, Barclay writes that to voyage with Jesus is to voyage in peace and explains the three types of peace he is referring to. Firstly, there is the peace we can discover when faced with sorrow. He suggests that Jesus changes the darkness of death into the thought of eternal life. In bereavement, we can hold onto our beliefs of the eternal life promised to us, however we interpret that. Barclay's traditional Christian viewpoint is that, *'In the storm of sorrow, Jesus tells us that those we love have gone to be with God, and gives us the certainty that we shall meet again those whom we have loved and lost awhile.'*

He goes on to explain his understanding that Jesus gives us peace within life's problems when we sometimes experience doubt, tension and uncertainty. I have several friends at the moment who are battling with the storm of cancer at present. One of them has been given around a year to live and is experiencing the roller coaster of emotions associated with such news. One is waiting and waiting for a clear diagnosis so treatment can be arranged and their faith has taken a real battering. This kind of peace is easy to talk about, but so hard to discover within ourselves. I can't be the only one to have a great deal of sympathy for the disciples in the boat can I? In those circumstances, I would have been terrified, wouldn't you?

But this peace can be achieved if we put our trust in God and not persist in trying to find answers which simply aren't there. As we read in Proverbs chapter 3, we are to, *'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.'*

And the third and final peace Barclay refers to is the peace which Jesus gives in the storms of anxiety. He states that the *'enemy of peace is worry.'* And by *'worry'* he means the worry for ourselves and those we love and also about the unknown future. I don't know about you, but this is the one I struggle with the most! I am definitely a worrier as was my mother before me. My husband Andrew says that I worry about not having anything to worry about!!

Sometimes, it is anxiety about the big things in life for example, health. But so often it's over the smallest things! This kind of *'fretting'* is definitely the enemy of peace. I just don't seem to be able to rid myself of it! I can hear Jesus asking me, *'Where is your faith, why are you worried?'*

But we must all pray for strength to live through our personal storms, reassured by the knowledge that Jesus never lets us go, but hangs on, even in the most difficult experiences. We also have to be ready for the challenge which comes our way when Jesus asks about the depth of our faith and be prepared to make the changes which ensure we are truly following the way of God and not our own paths.

In God, we will find peace within the storm but not be plucked from it. His peace is the inner calm which ensures survival and transformation as we journey through life, with our faith which hopefully grows and deepens as we place ourselves into His service. May we all find peace and joy as we travel knowing we are securely held in the everlasting arms.

ⁱ Collection, c. Hilton, 1997

ⁱⁱ Words and Music S Townend, 1996, Thankyou Music, StF 481

ⁱⁱⁱ Collection, c. Hilton, 1997

^{iv} Words by D Adam, SPCK Publishing, Music by M Rizza, 1998, Kevin Mayhew Ltd, StF 624.

^v Words and Music by M & B Redman, 2005, Thankyou Music, StF 626.