

Barthol Chapel and Tarves Sunday 6 September 2020 9.45 for 10.00 am

Worship Materials



Foundation Rock or Stumbling Block?

Praise CH4 129 The Lord is king

1 The Lord is King! lift up thy voice,
O earth, and all ye heavens, rejoice;
from world to world the joy shall ring,
'The Lord omnipotent is King!'

2 The Lord is King! who then shall dare
resist his will, distrust his care,
or murmur at his wise decrees,
or doubt his royal promises?

3 The Lord is King, child of the dust;
the judge of all the earth is just;
Holy and true are all his ways:

Let every creature speak his praise.

4. Come, make your wants, your burdens
known,
Christ will present them at the throne;
for he is at the Father's side,
the Man of love, the Crucified.

5 One Lord one empire all secures;
he reigns, and life and death are yours;
through earth and heaven one song shall ring,
'The Lord omnipotent is King!'

The Word of God: St Matthew 16:21-25

21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' 23 But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' 24 Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.'

Reflection

If you have today's order of service in front of you, you will see that the picture is of some rocks. Underneath the picture I've posed the question "Foundation Rock or Stumbling Stone?" Rock can of course provide a good foundation on which to build. But equally if you are trying to navigate

your way up a mountain, rocks can provide obstacles, sometimes bringing our progress to a halt, or even causing us to trip and fall.

Our bible reading today features the disciple Peter. As most of you will recall, Peter was not his original name. When Simon, the fisherman, the brother of Andrew, recognised Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God, Jesus gave him the name Peter and told him that he would be the rock on which Jesus would build his Church. But today we find that that same rock becomes a stumbling block – a source of risk and potential injury.

Poor Peter, one minute, Peter is being blessed for his insight in recognising Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. The next he is being accused of opposing Jesus. One minute Jesus is describing him as the rock - the next Peter is a stumbling stone. And what was Peter's mistake? Peter's mistake was to think like a human being. And each one of us is like Peter. Each of us has within us the capacity to be both rock and stumbling block.

Peter had enough faith to confess that Jesus was the Son of God but he had not as yet allowed his recognition of who Jesus is to shape his understanding of life or the way in which life is to be lived. To Peter's mind rejection, shame, suffering and death were surely not the concern of the Son of God. But Jesus is adamant that they are. The darkest places in life are the very places through which Jesus will walk. And as he does so Jesus identifies with all who find themselves in these places. And these places of darkness and difficulty and distress are the very places which the Son of God transforms by his presence.

But what about Peter. What about the rest of the disciples? Well Jesus is quite clear about this – Peter is to get back behind him. In other words Peter is to stop going his own way. He is to stop treading his own human furrow and get back to the serious business of following Christ. Notice that Peter is not banished or excluded from the circle of disciples because of his blunder. Instead he is put back in his proper place – behind Jesus, following Jesus. Christ still loves him, still believes in him, still trusts him with that task of building his church.

Jesus goes on to explain, not only to Peter but to all the disciples what following him entails. And he doesn't mince his words. "If any one would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me". Not only will Jesus travel the road to Jerusalem and face the challenge, the suffering and the sacrifice that await him there but His followers will be cross-bearers too. They too have a road to travel, challenges to meet, sacrifices to make. They must be prepared to do what Jesus himself did – to risk all in the adventure of faith. In this respect the cross is not simply a symbol of the Christian faith and of what Jesus has done for us but it is also a way of living.

Following Jesus means entering into a relationship with Him that governs every area of our lives – and that includes the moral and ethical decisions that we have to make daily, decisions that affect not only our own lives but the lives of other people, some of whom are extremely vulnerable. It involves asking ourselves daily what would Jesus do in this situation in which I find myself here and now.

Perhaps you've heard the story of the great explorer who returned to her hometown after many years of journeying through uncharted territory. There was great excitement among the crowds who gathered to cheer as she returned for they were very keen to hear about her travels.

But when they asked she could find no way of describing the emotions that ran through her when she remembered the beauty of the mornings and the wildness of the night; the shades and sounds hidden in the jungles and the terrors of the fast-flowing rivers; the smells contained within the flowers and the animals that followed her as she moved through the mountains. All that she could say for the people was "Go and see for yourselves". And she drew them a map of the land she had visited.

Immediately the elders of the town took the map and carefully framed it and hung it in a place of importance in the Town Hall. Many people came to gaze at the map, a number talked about it, a few wrote learned works about it, and experts arose who knew every hillside, every turn in the river, every waterfall, every valley. But not one person turned it into an adventure for themselves.

When we accept the challenge to take up our cross and follow Jesus, then we embark on the adventure of being a cross-bearer in a needy world. And doubtless we will find that living life God's way will involve some tough choices, some hard decisions, some trying times. But it will also bring about a growth in our relationship with God. And like Peter we will discover the extent of God's commitment to us and that is a commitment which is capable of transforming every situation, for ourselves and for others.

Ellen was a young woman who had suffered from ME. Every task she undertook was a mountain to climb. As she slowly recovered she became very depressed at feeling so useless. Then a friend, Christine offered her a job. It involved working with damaged young people. It was risky. The atmosphere was often charged with violence. But Ellen flourished. People commented on her commitment. She replied that what made the difference was that Christine believed in her, when others wrote her off. When someone believes in you, you can achieve wonders.

God believed in Peter. God believes in us. God is committed to us. And it is this fact that makes being a cross-bearer and walking a path of sacrificial love not only possible but even a joy.

Pointers for Prayer

- Those suffering from or bereaved by the corona virus
- All key workers, those adjusting to working from home and those who are returning to their workplace •
- The governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland and their advisers as they seek to guide us out of the restrictions
- School staff and pupils as they return to their school life routine
- Businesses struggling and all who are facing redundancy and financial hardship
- Family, friends and neighbours, those most affected by the restrictions and those finding it difficult to move forward
- Those who have lost a loved one during the pandemic
- Churches as each take difficult decisions whether to re-open for worship and how best to implement health and safety measures

Praise CH4 110

1 Glory be to God the Father,
glory be to God the Son,
glory be to God the Spirit,
Great Jehovah, Three in One!
Glory, glory, glory, glory
While eternal ages run.

2 Glory be to him who loved us,
washed us from each spot and stain!
glory be to him who bought us,
made us kings with him to reign!
Glory, glory, glory, glory
To the Lamb that once was slain!

3 Glory to the King of angels,
 glory to the church's King,
 glory to the King of nations;
 heaven and earth, your praises bring!
 Glory, glory, glory, glory
 To the King of glory bring!

4 "Glory, blessing, praise eternal!"
 Thus the choir of angels sings.
 "Honour, riches, power, dominion!"
 Thus its praise creation brings.
 Glory, glory, glory, glory
 Glory to the King of kings!

Blessing

Notices

Next Sunday 9.45am Joint Worship (Service commences 10.00am)

Worship will be led by Christine McWhirter. If you would like to be added to the e-mail list for the link to Sunday's live worship gathering on zoom or join in on your landline please contact:

Rob e-mail sessionclerk@bartholchapel.org or Susanna Tel 851345 or e-mail smbichard@aol.com.

Care in the Community if you are aware of anyone in Tarves who needs help of any kind please contact Ruth 851887

Tuesday 11.00am Tarves Session Coffee Morning

Wednesday 9 September 4.30pm Barthol Chapel Board and Session meeting on Zoom