

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Readings Psalm 85.8-13; Matthew 14.22-33

**Call to Worship.** Jesus said: 'Take courage, it is I. Don't be afraid.' Our God is a powerful God, who does things way beyond our understanding. But we have no need to fear, for we know we are safe in God's presence. Let us come to our God now. Let us bow down and worship. Amen

MP 625 Take time to be Holy

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;  
abide in Him always, and feed on His Word.  
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,  
forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;  
spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone.  
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be.  
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy, let Him be thy guide;  
and run not before Him, whatever betide;  
in joy or in sorrow, still follow the Lord,  
and, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.

**Prayer and Lord's prayer.** As we approach you today, Lord, we probably feel pretty much like Peter – full of bravado to begin with, but then just not quite so certain of ourselves. We come to you, Jesus, trusting that even if we feel ourselves beginning to sink under the pressures that we face, we know you are still there holding us up. Please reassure us that you won't let go, no matter how we feel. Father we are sorry for the times we take our eyes off you, and seek to do things in our own strength. Sorry for the times we doubt that you can keep us on the straight and narrow. We are sorry for the times we ask you for signs. Lord, we pray that you will forgive our doubts and hesitations, show us your loving presence, especially when we most need it, and teach us to trust you at all times. God of the earth and the waves, we praise you that you more than meet all our needs. You call us out from our security to experience your adventures and blessings. You don't want us to be stuck in the harbour. You want us out in deep water –and you'll be with us. We praise you, Lord. Lord's prayer  
Amen.

MP 147 Fill your hearts with joy and gladness,  
sing and praise your god and mine!  
Great the Lord in love and wisdom,  
might and majesty divine!  
He who framed the starry heavens  
knows and names them as they shine.

Praise the lord, His people, praise him!  
wounded souls His comfort know; those who fear Him find His mercies,  
peace for pain and joy for woe;  
humble hearts are high exalted,  
human pride and power laid low.

Praise the lord for times and seasons,

cloud and sunshine, wind and rain;  
 spring to melt the snows of winter  
 till the waters flow again;  
 grass upon the mountain pastures,  
 golden valleys thick with grain.

Fill your hearts with joy and gladness,  
 peace and plenty crown your days;  
 love His laws, declare His judgements,  
 walk in all his words and ways;  
 He the lord and we His children,  
 praise the Lord, all people, praise!

**All Age** One morning, when the disciples were out in their boat on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus taught the disciples and especially Peter a great lesson, the lesson was how to trust in Jesus. The lesson began as Jesus was walking on the water towards the fishing boat that the disciples were in. They were quite frightened. After all they were fishermen and knew that they could not walk on the water. The disciples thought that Jesus must be a ghost. But Jesus spoke to them to calm their fears which let them know that it was Jesus walking towards them on the water and not a ghost. Peter, then asked Jesus if he could join him walking on the waters of Galilee. When Jesus said "Come", Peter got out of the boat and walked towards Jesus. Can you just see the picture in your mind's eye of Peter stepping out of that boat and onto the water. Would that not just be so amazing to be able to walk on the sea or lake? Peter was fine until he heard the wind howling around him and he looked down at his feet and the water was swirling around his feet. Peter lost his concentration on Jesus and was scared because he was sinking. Peter called out to Jesus for help and Jesus reached out His hand and caught Peter and said to Him: "You of little faith - why did you doubt?" When Peter concentrated on Jesus, he was enabled to join Jesus and to walk on water. But when Peter took his eyes off Jesus and listened to the wind and saw the waves, he became afraid and started to sink. We are asked occasionally to do things in life that are not always easy. Like for example lead a prayer group with people you do not know well but if you put your trust Jesus He will give you the words to say. Just focus your eyes and ears and listen the words will come to you. So be encouraged to keep your focus upon Jesus. Trust him in your walk by faith!

MP 1003 sing twice

My Jesus, My Saviour Lord there is none like You.  
 All of my days, I want to praise the wonders of Your mighty love.  
 My Comfort, my Shelter tower of refuge and strength,  
 let every breath, all that I am never cease to worship You.

*Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing.  
 power and majesty, praise to the King.  
 Mountains bow down and the seas will roar  
 at the sound of Your name.  
 I sing for joy at the work of Your hands,  
 forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.  
 Nothing compares to the promise I have in You!*

Psalm 85 8-13 <sup>8</sup>I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people his faithful servants—but let them not turn to folly. <sup>9</sup>Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. <sup>10</sup>Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. <sup>11</sup>Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. <sup>12</sup>The LORD will indeed give what is good, our land will yield its harvest. <sup>13</sup>Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps. Amen.

**Prayers of intercession** Faithful God, we bring you our prayers for all who are fearful. We pray for those who face physical danger as part of their work; for those who risk their lives to help others, for police and ambulance services, fire fighters and armed forces, for those who travel to war-torn countries to take food, medicines and relief to those in wisdom, care and protection. We pray for those who are fearful for the future; those anxious about their work and possible redundancy or unemployment; for patients facing pain or surgery, or waiting for results of tests; of the new pandemic outbreak in pockets in and around our cities and for those who are grieving, unsure how to face the future in the loss of a loved ones. We especially pray for the people of Lebanon. God of hope, we pray that you will give them strength to face their fears, and to trust you for the way ahead. We pray for those who live with the fear of violence day by day; those struggling to survive in places of conflict, those who fear attacks on the streets, those who live with violence and abuse in the home, and those who face hostility because of discrimination and prejudice. God of freedom, we pray that you will give them confidence and courage, and help them and others to work for places and communities of safety. We pray for ourselves, when we are fearful and uncertain, conscious of the forces that threaten us and aware of our own vulnerability. God of encouragement, we ask that we will find confidence and strength in your faithfulness.

Amen

MP770 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!*

Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,  
when the breakers roar and the reef is near?  
While the surges rave and the wild winds blow  
shall the angry waves then your bark o'er flow?

*Refrain*

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 forever more?

*Refrain*

**Mathew 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. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night 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." Thanks be to God for the reading of His Holy Word and to Him be all praise. Amen

**Sermon** Keep Your Faith's True Focus. A young man was learning to fly and was in a small plane with his tutor on landing he hit the runway and bounced several times before stopping. The instructor said, "That was a very bad landing you just made." "Me?" replied the student. "I thought you were landing!" God never makes a mistake with your life, but you must let Him take control.

If you are playing football or tennis or rugby and you do not listen to your coach when he or she tells you to keep your eye on the ball? What are the consequences when you are chopping vegetables and don't pay attention? DIY is another possible danger in the home. Driving the car is especially one which you have to focus your attention on, as with the others concentration is a must. We have to learn to focus on what we are doing not just in sport, cooking or doing DIY in the home, but in our faith life. The fundamental meaning of Faith is our trust in God. If we do not focus and trust in what we have been taught, then our faith is lost. It is a big strong message that Jesus was giving to his disciples on the Sea of Galilee. He was teaching them to trust and have faith in Him. We today have to learn this lesson and focus on our faith and trust in God. When trust is failing then our focus on God fails also. Then it is hard to trust anyone or anything. In keeping our faith and trust fresh we will learn to trust and obey.

Just as last week's reading being so well known to us then so does this one. Many of us have probably heard them numerous times and we can maybe think. Oh, Here we go again what can I learn this time around? I hope we can always learn something new from the Gospels. Jesus told the disciples to go on ahead and he would catch up with them, He at last got the space and time needed to pray to his Father in Heaven. He was in prayer for quite a long time before he followed on to catch up with the disciples. In the meantime, a storm had blown up and the men were finding it difficult to make headway in the boat. They were wary of being in the middle of the storm. While they were fighting the wind and waves they saw something ahead on the water, but it was not a thing, it was Jesus walking towards them on the water. They thought they were seeing things and were frightened by this phenomenon. But Jesus speaks to them and says "**Take Courage**" and "**Ego eimi**" when translated means "**I Am.**" Their Faith was certainly knocked sideways and this is what Jesus focused on. He reminded them of Moses and the burning bush where God had promised He would always be with them. But of course not just in the old days, He is with them, as he is with us now and into the future. He is always with us guiding, supporting, forgiving, and loving us here and now. We have to have patience to focus and trust in faith. God will give us what we need in time not when we say God we want it now. Just as he went to the Disciples in the middle of a storm and calmed the storm then he will come to us in our time of trouble to bring order and calm back to our lives. We have to do as Jesus says to his disciples, "**Take courage; don't be afraid, I AM.**" Peter thinks if Jesus can walk on water then I can do likewise and says. "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water." Jesus invites him to come. The image comes to mind of him scrambling out of the boat, full of faith focusing totally on Jesus, but as we know he took his eyes off the ball saw and heard the wind and the waves around him and began to sink. Mathew being one of the witnesses to this tells us in his Gospel that, Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him. There is a small scolding on Jesus part, "Why did you doubt?" but it is more a question than a scolding. "**Why doubt? Remember I can always take care of you.**". I am certain that you and I have been like Peter at some time in our lives. Focusing on trying to sort out a problem by ourselves without asking God first for assistance in our troubles. Do we lose some of our faith in the everyday trials and forget to focus on the one who gives us life and cares for us always. Yet even when we are not focusing on our faith and are sinking and feel unable to solve the problems in our lives Jesus is focused on us and takes us by the hand like he did for Peter and pulls us from the depths he forgives our lack of trust and reminds us "**You of little faith,**" "**Why do you doubt my love for you? Why do you doubt my ability to protect and help you? Why do you doubt my forgiveness?**" Jesus trusted God in

all that he did even to the cross to forgive our sins. That is true love and faith in the, " I am" Let us be like Jesus and Focus our Faith in God who loves us unconditionally and cares for us not just today but tomorrow and forever more. As in the hymn 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.

#### MP178

Go forth and tell! O church of God, awake!  
 God's saving news to all the nations take;  
 proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord, and King,  
 that all the world his worthy praise may sing.

Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;  
 He will in grace respond to all who call:  
 how shall they call if they have never heard  
 the gracious invitation of His word?

Go forth and tell where still the darkness lies;  
 in wealth or want, the sinner surely dies:  
 give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,  
 a love like Yours which cares for all mankind.

Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide:  
 share God's good gifts let no one be denied;  
 live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,  
 your ransomed powers for his sole glory use.

Go forth and tell! O church of God, arise!  
 Go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;  
 go till all nations his great name adore  
 and serve him, Lord and king for evermore.

#### **Benediction**

God calls us to step out in faith, to follow where He leads even if what He calls us to do seems impossible. So let's go from here with courage, trusting in God's presence and power, and eager to do God's will. And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and forever more.  
 Amen