

Sunday, 9th August – Kingswood

Theme 'Courage! Don't be afraid!' - Colin Firbank

Welcome – For the last few weeks I have been attending the Sunday morning Zoom service arranged by Beeston Methodist Church. There are usually around 60 computers linked to the service which means an attendance of about 100 people from as far afield as Somerset and Teesside. Although I have occasionally been involved in the services this is the first service which I have led since March when we had our last service at Beeston Methodist Church. It is good to be sharing with you today.

Today we are using two of the lectionary readings, both of which, I feel, offer encouragement in times of difficulty.

Call to Worship – As Jesus went up a mountain to pray, so we come together in God's presence, to pray and worship. We come from lives that are stormy or calm, rough or smooth, far from secure or somewhat becalmed. Wherever we are we see Jesus and he calls us to come. He calls us to follow him, sometimes out of our safe place and into the difficult waters of life. We need have no fear, as he takes our hand, lifts us up and saves us. However small our faith we need not doubt, for he truly is the Son of God.

StF 86 Praise the Lord! You heavens adore him

Prayer of Praise – Living God, we praise you for the way we experience your presence as we come to worship, the way this time enables us to focus our thoughts upon you.

Ever-present God, help us to find you here.

We praise you that you are with us wherever we may be and whatever we may be doing, and so help us consecrate not just this short time week by week but every moment of every day. Help us to recognise that you are involved in every aspect of our lives, in every part of the world and every situation, and grant that this brief drawing aside from the routine of life may equip us to go back to it with new conviction, vision, hope and faith.

Ever-present God, help us to find you here.

Living God, speak to us as we worship you. Challenge and confront us through your word, meet with us in our prayers, respond to the worship we bring you and fill us with a new sense of your majesty.

Ever-present God, help us to find you here.

Living God, as we return to our daily routine may we know you there as much as anywhere, waiting to meet us in those around us, unfolding your purpose in the events of life, demonstrating your handiwork in the wonder of creation.

Ever-present God, help us to find you here, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Confession – Loving God, you have called us to be your servants – to offer our service to Christ, to one another, to your Church, to your world. **Forgive us that so often we have failed you.**

Forgive us that we are often concerned to serve only ourselves, our own interests, our own needs, our own desires, our own ends. **Forgive us that so often we have failed you.**

Forgive us that we are sometimes more concerned with what we can get out of our faith than with what we can put into it; more concerned with what you can do for us than what we can do for you; more concerned with what we can receive from others than what we can give them. **Forgive us that so often we have failed you.**

Teach us to serve seeking no reward, to love without expecting love in return, to give without counting the cost, to follow without holding back, to live each day as your people, offering ourselves in glad and joyful service. Amen

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen

Psalms 85 – as you follow the psalmist's prayer think about how much the hopes being expressed by someone almost 3000 years ago are reflected in your hopes today.

Matthew 14 v 22 -33 – There are many times when Jesus took time out to pray. He had just been involved with about '5,000 men' (not counting women and children), healing those who were ill and then ensuring that all were fed. Try to imagine the experience of the disciples in the boat as the journey was obviously taking a longer time than expected because of the wind blowing against it.

StF 666 Master, speak! Thy servant heareth

Message Matthew 14 v 27 'Courage!' he said. 'It is I. Don't be afraid!'

Both our readings today include something of the challenges which people faced, how they responded and how support is offered.

a) The Psalms cover a whole range of experiences and emotions. In the reading I included the first 7 verses as they help to show the situation in which the psalmist found himself. He recalled in the opening verses how God had helped the people in the past. However, it seems that, at the time the psalmist was living, the people had felt God's displeasure and the psalmist was looking forward to a change taking place. At verse 8 there is a distinct change of mood, almost as if the psalmist comes to his senses, realising that God is always there wishing the best for his people. There is a challenge of putting their faith in Him

b) In the reading from Matthew's gospel the appearance of Jesus on the lake is a revelation of divine power and glory. A miracle revealed who Jesus is and helped the disciples to put their trust in him as he prepared them for their future role.

As the disciples had accompanied Jesus through various experiences of his teaching, healing and caring for people they would be continually asking themselves who Jesus really was. 5,000 people and more had been inspired to leave their towns and walk to where Jesus was, many of whom came for healing. They had hope in what Jesus offered, but could not have expected his response to the need for food. For the disciples the solution for providing

food was to send the people to go to the villages to buy food for themselves, but Jesus knew a different way and more than enough food was provided for all. When Jesus decided to end the time with the crowd he made the disciples get into the boat and go across the lake without giving any indication of how he would join them. The journey was a difficult one and as Jesus, walking on the water, approached them they were terrified and screamed with fear. That is no surprise as they really would be wondering what was going on and who was Jesus to be doing this. As Peter wanted to be assured that it was Jesus he asked, in his usual impulsive way, to be invited to walk towards Jesus. That seemed to start well but he became afraid and started to sink down until he was saved by Jesus. He was reprimanded for his lack of faith and his doubt. As Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat and the wind died down the disciples worshipped Jesus and exclaimed, 'Truly you are the Son of God'. In his time with the disciples Jesus was showing the disciples in many ways the importance of facing up to difficult situations knowing that faith in Jesus would offer them support.

c) During the past 6 months we have all had to get used to doing things in different ways and doing new things. There have been amazing responses and great things have been achieved by many people as they have used their knowledge, their skills, their time and their enthusiasm to make a difference in difficult situations. In some cases it is the professionals who have cared for the seriously ill and vulnerable, and those who have ensured that as much of normal life as was allowed could continue. In other cases it was ordinary people seeing a need and meeting it in a practical way. Churches have also had to find new ways of doing things and this will have an impact on how things are done in the future. Just as Jesus encouraged his disciples to trust in him we need to be open to ways in which we may be being led. Amen

Prayers for the world

Lord God, we come before you to pray for all those people for whom taking risks is a way of life.

Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.

We pray for our emergency services – paramedics, the police, the fire service – all who daily face difficult situations as they seek to help to protect us and make our world a safer and more peaceful place.

Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.

We pray for people who work in troubled areas – the armed forces in war zones, those who bring humanitarian aid into areas of natural disaster, and many more.

Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.

We pray for people who take risks in your name, Lord Jesus – those who take your word where it is most needed – and for people who grapple with faith and doubt.

Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe. Amen.

StF 470 Lord for the years

Blessing – Loving God, lead us out into the world, renewed in vigour, in hope, in faith, and in purpose. Send us back to live and work for you, sharing your love and living your life.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen