

Bulletin for Sunday 20th June 2021

Good Morning, Friends.

It's amazing how often the lectionary readings resonate with the situation we are in, and the distinctly wet and stormy theme of our readings this week certainly feels appropriate!

Let's pause as we prepare to worship..... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Praise the Lord, ye heavens adore him (R&S 116)

Prayer: Powerful God, creator of sea and sky, of wind and wave,
we are awed by the beauty and the energy of nature...
You are our refuge and our strength in troubled times,
and we praise you for the reliable support we find in you.
As we learn to listen for your voice, in silence or in storm,
speak... and help us to hear.....
Loving God, through the turmoil and the challenges of life,
we ask your blessing on everything we do,
and everything we give in your service,
now and always.
We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Psalm 107 verses 23-32 & Mark chapter 4 verses 35-41

Reflection: Have you ever been really seasick? I have, and I find that psalm disconcertingly graphic:

"...the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea.

They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;"

On the other hand, I find the disciples very comforting. Despite several of them being professional fishermen, they panic at the point that most of us would (the boat was being swamped, after all!) and they don't just keep quiet about it. They are often described in the gospels as asking questions - because they were puzzled, or, as here, because they were scared - and I think that sets a good example for us to follow. Just as it helped them to learn, and strengthened their relationship with Jesus, it can do the same for us. There is no question we can't ask God - even 'don't you care?!' is not off limits - and that means we can be completely honest in our prayers.

This is Refugee Sunday, and sadly there are more refugees in the world today than ever before in history. In numerous places in the Bible God's love and concern for the stranger and the refugee is made very clear, so it is right that we have compassion for those who have been forced to flee their homes; that we welcome the stranger and value the contribution refugees have made to our society; and that we recognise that they are created in the image of God, just as we are, and

equally deserving of dignity and worth. As we remember the disciples' fear in the storm, let's bear in mind also the dangers refugees face on their journeys, and those who have sadly lost their lives in the waters they sought to cross.

Hymn: Eternal Father, strong to save (R&S 58)

Prayer: God of love and power, we pray this morning:
for all those caught up in stormy relationships,
at risk of violence, or threatened by war.....
for those who feel their cries are unheard -
cries for justice, or cries for mental health support...
and especially for refugees, living in fear,
risking their lives on small boats in all weathers....
We hold before you the neighbours we live amongst,
the friends and family we love, and ourselves.....
Eternal God, hear our prayers, spoken and unspoken,
in Jesus' name Amen

Hymn: Will your anchor hold (R&S 598)

Blessing: May we turn to God for reassurance and direction in the storms of life;
and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love
now and always. Amen

In all our churches morning worship at 10.30am is now being held indoors. Please let your Church Secretary know you want to attend, and remember masks and social distancing; congregational singing isn't allowed, and services are short and well ventilated!

The evening 'Sunday at Six' service, with hymns, is on Zoom at 6pm. All welcome.

And the best chances to chat are at the 11.30am 'After Church Coffee' Zooms!

Anne Lewitt