

Worshipping God Together : Apart
Sunday 1st May 2022 at 10.30am
Church; Physically Distanced but Spiritually United
Worship Prepared by Rev. Janine Atkinson



A Call to Worship God

Jesus calls us to walk with him,
to eat with him
and to work with him.
As Jesus' friend, his guest
and his disciple
praise him with all our heart
and serve him with all our
strength.

Hymn – R&S 104: MP 560:

H.F. Lyte (1793-1847) altd. Based on Psalm 103

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven; to his feet thy tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like me his praise should sing?

Praise him! praise him! Praise him! praise him!
praise the everlasting King.

Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people, in distress;
praise him still the same for ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless:

Praise him! praise him! Praise him! praise him!
glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like he tends and spares us; well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hands he gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes:

Praise him! praise him! Praise him! praise him!
widely as his mercy flows!

Frail as summer's flower we flourish, blows the wind and it is gone,
but while mortals rise and perish God endures unchanging on.

Praise him! praise him! Praise him! praise him!
praise the high Eternal One!

Angels help us to adore him, ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him, dwellers all in time and space:

Praise him! praise him! Praise him! praise him!
praise with us the God of grace!

Approaching God in Prayer

Sometimes it is hard to find time to worship you, Lord God.
Sometimes things aren't going so well;
tiredness has crept up on us;
busyness has drained us;
failure has robbed us of joy.

But, however we feel,
and whatever we have done,
Jesus knows, Jesus understands,
Jesus offers us a new beginning
again and again and again.

And so, I bring my heart to you
to be cleansed, renewed and strengthened.

Lord Jesus, here I am:

use me, reassure me, and help me to love you more. *Amen*

Setting the Scene

Now, Jesus appeared to many people after his death - risen from death!

Without looking them up, what can you remember about any these encounters with the **risen** Jesus?

- Mary at the tomb
- The Road to Emmaus
- In a locked house Jesus appears to the disciples (minus Thomas)
- Jesus appears again (a week later) with Thomas there this time
- A mountain above Galilee where Jesus gives the great commission to teach and baptise, possibly as he ascended to heaven
- Breakfast on the beach beside Lake Galilee.

This week's reading tells us about that breakfast meeting between Jesus and some of his disciples on a beach

Reading – John 21: 1 – 19 **Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples**

21 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ² Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³ Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' ⁶ He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So, they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards^(a) off.

⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus and Peter

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.' ¹⁸ Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' ¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we have all come 'ashore' from different places.
We have all come with differing needs.
We have all come with a longing to meet with Jesus.

And you long to meet with all of us:
to challenge us, to call us, to equip us, to forgive us,
to feed us and to strengthen us.
So we thank you, Lord Jesus, for your amazing love.

We praise you, living God,
that when the nets of our lives are empty,
you fill them with the abundance of your love;
when we are afraid, you hold out your hand to steady us;
when we fail to love as you ask us to,
your hand offers us forgiveness;
and when we are tempted to give up,
you call us afresh and give us strength for our journey.
Thank you so much Lord God
and hear us when we pray as Jesus taught us

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.

Hymn – R&S 543: MP 400: *James Edmeston (1791-1867)*

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us, for we have no help but thee;
yet possessing every blessing if our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us; all our weakness thou dost know,
thou didst tread this earth before us, thou didst feel its keenest woe;
lone and dreary, faint and weary, through the desert thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending, fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
love with every passion blending, pleasure that can never cloy:
thus provided, pardoned, guided, nothing can our peace destroy.

In verse 2 line 3 the word 'dreary' has its older meaning, 'sad',
rather than the modern 'dismal' or 'gloomy'.

Reflections - From Hospitality to Encounter

Why had those disciples gone fishing? It's a bit of a puzzle!

And perhaps life was a bit of a puzzle for the disciples too. They had given up everything to follow Jesus, but he had been crucified, dead, and all hope seemed to be lost.

Now, somehow, Jesus is risen from the dead! It's a mystery! But they have seen him with their own eyes!

However, how on earth do you carry on following Jesus now? How do you get people to listen to you and to follow a mystery?

Simpler, perhaps, to get on with life, go back to the familiarity and safety of life as it was – fishing was the life these 7 disciples knew.

Perhaps it felt strange going back to it, but they had families who needed looking after, families bemused to have them back again after their adventures. Perhaps *they* were suggesting that the wanderers should settle down now and do something sensible for a change! Like earn some money! Like catch some fish!

But it didn't work. They knew the lake, they were old hands. They knew where the fish congregated, where you could normally find shoals. Yet they worked all night and caught nothing. They were despondent.

They were fishermen and they knew, as fishermen do, that if you don't make a catch at night, you're far less likely to by day.

But the thing is, once you've encountered *Jesus*, you really can't go back to your old ways, things can never be the same again. Once Jesus calls you to a new life, to God's *kingdom* oriented *new* way of living and behaving, your old life will be lacking in fruitfulness. Having encountered God's generosity through Jesus, our old ways seem empty. Once we have truly encountered Jesus, we can never be the same again, we cannot go back to the way things were.

For those 7 disciples, just as dawn was breaking and the sky and the sea were filling with colour, just as they were stretching and shivering, feeling tired and hungry (though what would they eat?) it was at that moment, that Jesus came again! And with a word of greeting and a word of command, their nets were filled!

They encountered Jesus again - calling them afresh! They were to do as Jesus said - follow instruction, and receive abundant blessing.

And we are to listen afresh for Jesus' voice, do what he says, even if it sounds a strange! After all, who would take advice about fishing from someone who isn't a fisherman?! But when it is the Lord speaking to us and commanding us, who knows what we will achieve, if we will only act on what we have been invited and advised to do.

Now, Peter, as impulsive as ever, takes a risk as he steps out of the boat – what happens if Jesus rejects him? We are also called to take risks, and leave the safety of known and comfortable places and views. Perhaps there are things we need to give up in order to gain so much more.

Jesus offered advice and the disciples responded, before they even knew it was him - they had become accustomed to following strange requests, in faith!

They caught a massive haul of fish – so much that they struggled to bring it ashore! And when they reached the shore they found Jesus had already got the catering in hand!

So, the story of Jesus cooking breakfast, is an image of hospitality - both offered and received. Jesus instructs and equips the disciples to bring something to the table themselves - enough fish to feed a village! But without his guidance they would have had nothing to offer.

And yet, despite equipping them, Jesus didn't wait for their catch of fish before starting cooking – he prepared and shared a meal with them without them needing to bring anything - other than themselves.

This hospitality is offered to Peter *before* his *rehabilitation*, before he knows himself to be forgiven. So, Jesus' hospitality isn't dependent on our offering of anything other than ourselves.

Peter is invited in before he's asked to recommit himself. There is no doctrinal test or scripture exam to complete before sharing in Jesus' hospitality. So often, we limit our hospitality, but Jesus sets no limits.

In this meal, the ordinary things of life become sacramental.

Peter in the lake reminds us of our own baptism.

The meal, of bread and fish, reminds us of being fed by God at the Lord's Supper; at communion.

Peter's call reminds us that we are *all* called to discipleship and some form of ministry or service in God's kingdom – flawed and unreliable as we might be.

I wonder if, amongst other things, in this snippet from John's Gospel God is challenging us to turn our hospitality into an opportunity for people to encounter Jesus.

Perhaps Jesus is calling to us, struggling and tired and despondent though we are sometimes, to do the same things differently, perhaps to do new things - but always to follow him, just as he told Peter to do so as to build the Church.

Like Peter, we might need to take the plunge, take the risk, leave the safety of the boat and be challenged by Jesus to consider how we turn our invitations to share our hospitality into opportunities to encounter the risen and lively Christ.

Who else can you enable to discover that life can never be the same again, once you've encountered Jesus? Who will find out through *you* or *me* that a life of fruitlessness can be transformed into a life of abundance through the joy of a lively relationship with God through encountering Jesus Christ - our risen Lord?

Amen

Hymn – R&S 503: MP 346:

*W. W. How (1823-97) altd.**

It is a thing most wonderful, almost too wonderful to be,
that God's own Son should come from heaven and die to save a child
like me:

And yet I know that it is true; he came to this poor world below,
and wept, and toiled, and mourned, and died, only because he loved
me so.

I sometimes think about the cross and shut my eyes, and try to see
the cruel nails and crown of thorns, and Jesus crucified for me:

But even could I see him die, I could but see a little part
of that great love, which, like a fire, is always burning in his heart.

It is most wonderful to know his love for me so free and sure;
but still more wonderful to see my love for him so faint and poor;

And yet I want to love thee, Lord; O light the flame within my heart,
and I will love thee more and more, until I see thee as thou art.

Holdiing the World in Prayer

Open my eyes Lord!

Along with all your disciples, I long to see you.

I long for you to call me afresh and, like Peter, to turn my life around.

Loving God, I pray for those who carry the burden of guilt,
and all who bear the weight of failure...

Lord Jesus, turn their lives around.

I pray for all who are afraid of their past,
and all who are fearful for their future...

Lord Jesus, turn their lives around.

I pray for those desperate for forgiveness,
and determined to begin again...

Lord Jesus, turn their lives around.

I pray for those whose mistakes are public,
and for leaders who have misused their power...

Lord Jesus, turn their lives around.

I pray for the people of Ukraine besieged and terrified,
torn away from those they love - grieving.

Lord Jesus, turn their sorrows into joy – soon, Lord Jesus, very soon.

I pray for myself and for each of us worshipping you
together yet apart...

Lord Jesus, turn our lives around.

Amen.

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Jesus said... “come and have breakfast”

Imagine Jesus with you as you eat your next meal.

Make it the Lord’s table, as you invite Him to meet you at your table.

Allow Jesus to be part of your meals by thanking Him for your food.

Hymn – R&S 367: MP 302:

C Simmonds, 1964 Copyright © C. Simmonds*

I want to walk with Jesus Christ
all the days I live of this life on earth,
to give to him complete control
of body and of soul:

*Follow him, follow him, yield, your life to him,
he has conquered death, he is King of kings.
Accept the joy which he gives to those
who yield their lives to him.*

I want to learn to speak to him,
to pray to him, confess my sin,
to open my life and let him in,
for joy will then be mine:

I want to learn to read his word,
for this is how I know the way,
to live my life as pleases him,
in holiness and joy:

I want to learn to speak of him;
my life must show that he lives in me,
my deeds, my thoughts, my words must speak
of all his love for me:

O holy Spirit of the Lord,
enter now into this heart of mine,
take full control of my selfish will
and make me wholly thine:

Closing Words and Blessing

May Jesus bring abundance where there is scarcity,
confidence where there is fear, purpose where there is staleness;
and may each of us encounter his forgiveness, his love
and his blessing, in the days ahead and always.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, evermore. Amen

A personal prayer

Simon Peter says he is going fishing,
and the disciples go along with him.
I thank you, Lord God,
for the people who accompany me
in my day-to-day activities;
and I pray that I will be able
to take the risk of sharing Jesus with them.
Amen.

Use this space for your own reflections...

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