

FLEET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, FLEET
Morning Worship – Hymn Book: Rejoice and Sing
Order of Service for Morning Worship at 10am

Led by Graham Hoslett

Date: 15th March 2020

Speaker enters the church and sits behind the communion table.

The Peace Candle is lit.

Speaker invites the congregation to stand for the Bible

Vestry Elder, carrying the Bible, enters and places it on the Communion Table

Welcome & Notices given from Lectern by Church Secretary or Deputy

Invite the congregation to stand for the Call to Worship: Psalm 46:1-7

Hymn R&S 94 "Give to our God immortal praise..." (Tune Duke Street)

Family Time [Short talk or story] – The story of the Barn Fire, the Mother Hen, and the Chicks – also the Hen and the Sparrowhawk!!

Prayers and Lord's Prayer

Offering and Dedication

Hymn R&S 528 "Jesus, good above all other..."

Groups leave

As the children prepare to leave the congregation say to them "The Lord be with you" and the children and group leaders respond with "And also with you"

Bible Reading Psalm 121, and 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Hymn R&S 600 "Christ is the world's Light..."

Sermon (see pages 4-7)

Groups Return

COMMUNION:

Prayers of Intercession – From Lectio 365, the meditation for 10th March 2020 - Using Psalm 57:1, 79:8b-9a, 2 Corinthians 1:10, Jeremiah 32:17, Psalm 46:1-2, Psalm 4:1.

Communion Hymn: R&S 448 "Here, Lord, we take the broken bread..."

Communion

Hymn R&S 413 "What a Friend we have in Jesus..."

Blessing

Psalm 57:1: ¹ Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me,
for in you I take refuge.
I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings
until the disaster has passed.

Jehovah shalom, Lord of peace:

I remember those living in Corona virus hot spots, and those currently in isolation.

May they know your presence in their isolation, your peace in their turmoil, and your patience in their waiting.

Prince of peace, you are powerful and merciful.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Psalm 79:8b-9a may your mercy come quickly to meet us,
for we are in desperate need.

⁹ Help us, God our Saviour,
for the glory of your name;

God of all comfort and counsel, I pray for those who are grieving, reeling from the loss of loved ones.

May they find your fellowship in their suffering, your comfort in their loss, and your hope in their despair.

I name before you those who are grieving, and those who are vulnerable or scared, the frail, the sick, the elderly...

God of all comfort, you are powerful and merciful.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

2 Corinthians 1:10 ¹⁰ He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

Jehovah Rofah, God who heals.

I pray for all medical professionals, dealing daily with the intense pressures of this immediate crisis. Grant them resilience in weariness, discernment in diagnosis, and compassion upon compassion as they care.

I thank you for the army of researchers working quietly and carefully towards a cure.

Would you rise above this current darkness with healing in your wings.

God of all comfort, you are powerful and merciful.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Jeremiah 32:17 ¹⁷ 'Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

God of all wisdom, I pray for our leaders, national and local, leaders of governments, councils, hospitals, schools:

Since you have positioned these people in these places for this hour, I ask you to give them wisdom beyond their own wisdom, faith beyond their own faith, strength beyond their own strength, to face this trouble and fight this fear.

God of all wisdom and counsel, you are powerful and merciful.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Psalm 46:1-2: God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.

² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,

I pray the blessing of Psalm 91:3-7 ³ Surely he will save you
from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.

⁴ He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

⁵ You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,

⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.

⁷ A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.

Psalm 4:1. ¹ Answer me when I call to you,
my righteous God.

Give me relief from my distress;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

Here's a question – can you ever know help, if you've never been in trouble?

Can you know the comfort of another, if you've never been in pain?

We're at the beginning of a very worrying time, for many people - the Coronavirus crisis, Coronavirus outbreak.

From the empty shelves in the shops, to the cancellation of the Football and other sporting events.

The Prime Minister three days ago: And it's clear that coronavirus, COVID-19, continues and will continue to spread across the world and our country over the next few months. We've done what can be done to contain this disease and this has bought us valuable time.

But it is now a global pandemic.

And the number of cases will rise sharply and indeed the true number of cases is higher - perhaps much higher - than the number of cases we have so far confirmed with tests.

I've got to be clear, we've all got to be clear, that this is the worst public health crisis for a generation.

Some people compare it to seasonal flu. Alas, that is not right. Owing to the lack of immunity, this disease is more dangerous.

And it's going to spread further and I must level with you, level with the British public, many more families are going to lose loved ones before their time...

There's much we should be preparing ourselves for, as individuals and as churches.

Changing, if only for a short while, how we've always done things. You'll see that in Communion today...

At Westborough we've cancelled our Coffee Morning for the elderly while promising to keep in touch, while continuing to offer support to childminders... And exploring how to live stream Services.

And preparing for the possibility of not being able to meet together as church, at Westborough we've begun to take steps towards improving our social media access – live streaming messages.

If some of us in the days to come, if each of us is asked to stay at home, how will we as a church make sure that everyone is looked after, even if we're apart?

Preparing ourselves for restrictions on our normal social routines, even readying ourselves for isolation.

We should perhaps be readying ourselves for loss, grief, bereavement.

In 2 Corinthians 1 Paul begins his second letter to the church there with these words:

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Paul, it seems, had been through a pretty difficult time, a dreadful time.

In 1 Corinthians 16:5-9: ⁵ After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you – for I will be going through Macedonia. ⁶ Perhaps I will stay with you for a while, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. ⁷ For I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸ But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

Isn't that the way it is often? In verse 9 he wrote that a great door for effective work had opened to him at Ephesus, in the midst, though, of difficulty and opposition.

In 2 Corinthians he continues: ⁸ We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters,^[a] about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us...

This is what we read, this is our experience as Christians, in the Christian life: That the Lord doesn't deny trouble and difficulty and suffering and pain to us, we will, even as Christians, especially as Christians, still face these things – the Lord doesn't deny trouble and difficulty and pain and suffering to us, but neither does He abandon us to them in it.

He comforts us in all our troubles.

I've been thinking this last week of the two storms we read the disciples facing with Jesus, in the Gospels.

The storm Jesus calmed, and the storm He called Peter to walk with Him in the midst of.

In Matthew 8:23-27: ²³ Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴ Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵ The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We're going to drown!'

²⁶ He replied, 'You of little faith, why are you so afraid?' Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

²⁷ The men were amazed and asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!'

But also in Matthew's Gospel, in Matthew 14, following the feeding of the 5000, another storm:

²² Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵ Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. 'It's a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'

²⁸ 'Lord, if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.'

²⁹ 'Come,' he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came towards Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'

³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?'

³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

But the question I have – Given the storms of life, the troubles, trials and tragedies that come my way, which would I choose? Given these two storms, which would I choose?

To always have Jesus calm every storm for me the moment it arrives, or to do as He did with Peter, to call me out of the boat to walk with Him in the midst of it?

Which would you choose? To have Jesus immediately calm the storm, or to walk with Him in it?

Actually, I would always choose never to have to face the storm in the first place!! Jesus, can't you not so much make the storm go away, but cause it to never come in the first place!!

There are some storms I need to see Him calm for me, to know that He is in control.

But there are other storms I need to walk with Him in the midst of, to know His power and protection and shielding of me.

But if I want to know the power of His presence and His love, these things can sometimes only be known not in times of peace, but times of pain and trouble.

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles...

I like Psalm 34:19: The righteous person may have many troubles,
but the Lord delivers him from them all;

The promise that the Lord will keep us. He doesn't abandon us in our pain and difficulty, however great the pain, however deep the difficulty.

The righteous person may have many troubles,
but the Lord delivers him from them all;

Who knows, but some of us may face isolation in the days to come. Either to protect ourselves from infection, or to protect others.

Two isolations I've been thinking about in the Bible – Passover

In your mind's eye, see the Blood of Jesus painted over your doorway.

And also the self-imposed isolation of the disciples on the first Easter Sunday night in John 20:19:

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'

With the doors locked and the windows closed, yet Jesus still came and stood among them.

In isolation, that you would know His protection and His presence.

Take this meal we share today home with you, in your heart!

But in Psalm 121, the repeated phrase four times in the Psalm, "the Lord watches over you..."

Not "the Lord watches" – that's how some view the Lord, as a dispassionate, distant observer. There are those who believe in God without really trusting in Him.

The Lord watching, to judge us...

But: ¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?

² My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

³ He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;

⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

- ⁵ The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

But Psalm 34:19 begins with this important reminder: The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all;

We are told in Isaiah 50:10: ¹⁰ Who among you fears the Lord
and obeys the word of his servant?
Let the one who walks in the dark,
who has no light,
trust in the name of the Lord
and rely on their God.

Jesus said to His disciples in John 16 and indeed still says to us all:

³³ 'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'

Know yourself sheltered under His wings. Whatever trouble might come your way.