

Sources and Thanks

Call to Worship from *Feasting on the Word Year A Prayer of Approach*
from *Spill the Beans 35 Affirmation of Faith* from the Reformed Church of
France. *Prayer of Dedication, Invitation to Communion & Post
Communion Prayer* by Roddy Hamilton - <https://www.nkchurch.org.uk>
All other liturgical material by Stewart Cutler.

Eternal Father sung by the Military Wives' Choir for Songs of Praise.
Will Your Anchor Hold? – Songs of Praise
I Come With Joy unknown artists.
Santo Santo, Santo Mi Corazon t'adora – Unknown author, unknown
artists recording.
Jesus Calls Us O'er The Tumult – Songs of Praise

Organ Pieces played and recorded by Brian Cotterill. *Opening Ach Gott
Von Himmel Sieh Darein* ("O God from heaven see this") by Johann
Pachelbel (organ of The Spire Church, Farnham – 2020) Closing: *Komm
Gott Schöpfer Heiliger Geist* ("Come God, creator Holy Ghost") by Johann
Sebastian Bach (organ of Basilica Santa Maria Dei Assunta, Montecatini
Terme, Italy – 2016)

Thanks to Anne Hewling, Ray Fraser, John Young, Kathleen Haynes, Carol
Tubbs, and to the choir of Barrhead URC for recording the Lord's Prayer,
to Kathleen & Callum Haynes, Elfreda Tealby-Watson & Greg Watson,
David & Christine Shimmin, Elizabeth Kemp, Marion Thomas, Tina
Wheeler and Myra Rose for recording, virtually, the *Call to Worship* and
Affirmation of Faith.

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Daily Devotions from the United Reformed Church Sunday Worship for 9th August 2020



Holy Communion The Rev'd Stewart Cutler St Ninian's Church, Stonehouse

Introduction

Good morning and welcome to worship.

My name is Stewart Cutler and it's my privilege to get to be the minister of St Ninian's Church in Stonehouse. St Ninian's is a Local Ecumenical Partnership between the United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland so I'm in a slightly unusual situation in the URC now... I only have one church to minister to but it is the parish church and so has all

the things that comes along with that. Stonehouse is a somewhere between being a large village and a small town with around 6,000 residents. Its history includes weaving and coal mining along with farming. It's still disconnected from the great Lanarkshire conurbation but these days it is very much a commuter town for Glasgow. Today we will be thinking about one of the most striking stories in Matthew's Gospel, the time when Jesus walks on the water, and when Peter gets out of the boat. We will also join together to celebrate Communion, so you might want to have some bread and some wine or a suitable alternative to hand for when we come to that part of our time together.

Call to Worship

One: To all who are imprisoned,

Many: God says, "Come out."

One: To all who are living in darkness,

Many: God says, "Show yourselves"

One: To all who hunger and thirst,

Many: God gives food and springs of water.

One: To all who are far away,

Many: God makes smooth the way home.

God will not forget us,

we are inscribed on the palms of His hands.

Blessing

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord make his face to shine upon you
and be gracious to you.

May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you
and give you great peace,
this day and always.

Amen

Hymn: *Eternal Father, Strong To Save*
William Whiting 1825-1878

Eternal Father,
strong to save,
whose arm doth bond
the restless wave,
who bids the mighty ocean deep
its own appointed limits keep;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
for those in peril
on the sea.

O Trinity of love and pow'r,
thy children shield in danger's hour;
from rock and tempest,
fire, and foe,
protect them where-so-e'er
they go;
thus, evermore shall rise to Thee
glad hymns of praise
from land and sea.

Prayers of Approach

Lord God, creator of the elements, we come to you today,
not because we are worthy, but because we are broken and helpless
without you.

Lord God, creator of fire, we thank you for the sun that brings us warmth,
that nourishes life, that brings light to our world.

You alone are the light of our lives. You alone fight of the darkness that
sometimes covers our hearts. We ask you to forgive us when we have
covered the light you have put in each one of us. Forgive us for times
when we have caused harm or hurt.

Lord God, creator of water, we thank you for rain. We often complain
that we have too much of it, but we realise that the bountiful water we
enjoy is not shared by those in other places. We thank you for our green
land and our plentiful crops that exist because of the rain you send us.

We ask your forgiveness for times when we have diluted your love, for times when we have extinguished someone's hopes or dreams through our thoughtlessness or spitefulness.

Lord God, creator of the air we breathe, breathe new life into each one of us. Renew our souls with your awesome spirit. Breathe you healing spirit into those we name in the silence of our hearts before you now.

Lord God, creator of the earth, we give you thanks all that we have and all that we take for granted. We realise that we have much while others have little and we promise now before you to work to make sure that all those who are thirsty and hungry are fed, all those who are in need are sustained and all those who are lonely are comforted. Lord God, creator of all, hear our prayers. Amen

Prayer of illumination

May the words of our mouths and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our God and our redeemer. Amen

Reading *St Matthew 14:22-33*

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.' Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat, started

We pray today:

for those drowning in the sorrow of their grief, and the emptiness of their loneliness;
for those drowning in squalor, poverty and hunger, for those drowning in the inadequate availability of basic resources;
for those drowning in a sea of violence and hatred as victims and as those embroiled in it;
and for those drowning in an ocean of despair as they see no way out and no prospect of change in their life's circumstances.

God, your love for people is no illusion, it is no trick of clever rhetoric, it is no mere opiate created by the Church to ease people's pain. Your love is real, it is living, and it is present. Through your Church may this love be known in the world, and made available through us to all we come across.

May people come to believe in the constancy of your love by the words and actions of our own faith. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Hymn: *Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult* Cecil Francis Alexander

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
of our life's wild, restless sea;
day by day
his sweet voice soundeth,
saying "Christian, follow me."

3 In our joys and in our sorrows,
days of toil and hours of ease,
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,
"Christian, love me more than
these."

2 As, of old, apostles heard it
by the Galilean lake,
turned from home & toil & kindred,
leaving all for His dear sake.

4: Jesus calls us; by thy mercies,
Saviour, may we hear Your call,
give our hearts to Your obedience,
serve and love You best of all.

Prayer

We believe the time is now, with the taste of bread fresh on our lips, to go into the world and face the darkness. We believe the moment is right, with the bitterness of the wine sharp in our mouths, to face the powers of the world with the love of heaven. We believe the place is here, with the sound of covenant echoing in our ears, to endure the suffering love calls us to. We believe the path is before us (with the crumbs of heaven still scattered across the table) to side with truth in a deafened world. We believe the hour is come, with the table conversation a turmoil in our minds, to conspire with Christ and move against injustice. We believe the gospel is this, with bread lying broken and a goblet left empty, love was betrayed, but death shall not have the final word. Amen

Intercessions

Lord God, show us how to have trust. Lead us to know the full conviction of our faith that whatever strife or storms we find ourselves in, you will come to us, extend your hand, and invite us to take hold of it.

Show us how to believe. Reveal the full breadth of your glory that we might lift the limits on what we are prepared to, and are able to, envisage as the possibilities of life and creation under the energy of your Holy Spirit.

Show us how to live. Teach us through the stories of the Bible and the example of others that we might understand 'The Way' of discipleship and apply it in the way we set about living our own lives.

Compassionate God, many in our world live with fear, and many find it difficult to do anything other than cower away from the world as if beaten by the pressures, challenges, anxieties and the worries of day-to-day existence.

walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

Sermon

Today, for just a short while, I want to talk to you about possibilities. The things that we only dare to imagine, the things we have always wanted to do, but for some reason or another have never quite got round to. All our lives are full of 'If only's and 'I wish I had's. There are many reasons we don't do things. We have other priorities, commitments, fear and pride. The thing is, 'If you want to walk on the water you've got to get out of the boat.' That sounds like an obvious statement doesn't it? If you want to walk on water you've got to get out of the boat.

The story of Jesus walking on the water has always fascinated me. Or should I say the story of Peter walking on the water? I mean which is the more unlikely? Son of God walks on lake? 'or 'fisherman steps out of a perfectly good boat'?

It's a story that is perhaps harder to believe because it isn't just another one of Jesus miracles. It's not about a healing or even turning water into wine. It's a story in which an ordinary man does an extraordinary thing.

Jesus was having a bit of a day. He had just heard that his cousin, John the Baptist, had been beheaded by Herod and some of the disciples had brought John's body to Him. Jesus understandably wanted some time to himself so the disciples took him out in the boat to the quiet of the lake. When they got back to the shore there was a huge crowd and Jesus

healed the sick, taught them for a while and fed them all with a few loaves of bread and some fish. We are told that there were about 5,000 of them.

As Jesus was finishing up with the crowd He sent the disciples away in the boat to go ahead to the other side. So, there they are in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, a place well known for its fierce and sudden storms. By the fourth watch of the night the disciples would be tired, cold, probably wet and hungry.

They were all huddled together in the back of the boat when out of the storm a figure comes walking towards them. They are terrified! And no wonder. They think it is a ghost. Then Jesus speaks to them. 'It's me. Don't be scared.'

I'm sure that Jesus' words might have had a calming effect on at least some of the disciples but it has an extraordinary effect on Peter. Bold as you like Peter calls out 'If it's you Lord tell me to come out on the water to you.'

Can you imagine the other disciple's reaction?

What?

Tell you to come out on the water.

Have you lost your mind?

There is a storm blowing.

Sit down!

You'll rock the boat.

Peter!

For goodness sake.

Don't be stupid.

But Jesus' response is simple, 'come'.

holy name. And here we offer and present to you our very selves, to be a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for your acceptance; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory are yours, almighty Father, now and forever.

God in community, Holy One hear us as we pray in the words of Jesus;

Our Father...

As we share this bread and wine together we symbolise our unity in Jesus, the one who calls us to follow him, who calls us from the safety of our traditions and our comfort zones, to journey with him. And so at this sacred moment we re-enact the events on the night before Jesus died, when, sitting with his friends at the table, he took the bread, gave thanks, blessed it and broke it. Jesus then shared it with them. We will do the same, breaking the bread as the symbol of his body broken by the sins of the world. And after sharing the bread, Jesus took the cup of wine, blessed it and then shared it with all his friends. We do the same, we will drink it as the symbol of his lifeblood. Through the work of God the Divine Spirit, and as we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, this simple bread and wine are reminders of the sacred. By sharing this bread and wine together we remember Jesus, who he was, who he is, and who he will always be. So come, all of you, the table is ready. Come all of you who are burdened, and receive again these symbols of our tradition, our history and our eternity. We eat and drink together.

The Peace

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

The Apostle Paul reminds us why we share this simple meal:

The tradition which I handed on to you came to me from the Lord himself: that on the night of his arrest the Lord Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks to God broke it and said: 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in memory of me.' In the same way, he took the cup after supper, and said: 'This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this in memory of me.' For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11: 23 - 26

Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.
We lift up our hearts to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God because it is right to give him thanks and praise. God of abundance and mercy, we give joyful thanks for your eternal love and healing presence in our celebration of bread and wine. Bless us, the body of Christ, that we may attend faithfully to our call to be your servants with each other and throughout the world.

Therefore, with your people of all places and times, and with the whole company of heaven, we proclaim your greatness and sing your praise in the angels' song:

Santo, Santo, Santo.
¡Mi corazón te adora!
Mi corazón te sabe decir
¡Santo eres Señor!

Holy, holy, holy.
My heart, my heart adores you!
My heart is glad to say, the words:
You are holy, Lord!

Send down your Holy Spirit to bless us and these your gifts of bread and wine, that they might help us grow in grace, to the glory of your most

So Peter gets out of a perfectly good boat in the middle of the lake in the middle of a storm. And for a glorious few seconds Peter, the big, rough, never understands what's going on fisherman, is walking on the water towards Jesus.

I wonder what was going through Peter's head when he saw Jesus?

Did he know who it was out there on the lake? Did he recognise Jesus' voice? If he did why on earth did he ask Jesus to tell him to get out of the boat and come water walking? Why not just be glad that Jesus was out there looking after them?

But Peter wasn't the kind to sit back and watch. He wanted to follow Jesus wherever He went, and if that meant out onto the lake in the middle of a storm then that's where Peter was going.

It's unbelievable isn't it? Peter was walking on the water. Unfortunately that's what Peter thought too. He was suddenly very aware of what he was doing. He realised that a minute ago he was in a boat and now he was out on the water in the middle of a storm.

How did that happen?

Wait a minute.

I'm not in the boat!

I'm in the middle of a storm.

Look at the waves!

What am I doing?

I'm sinking!

Help!!!

As soon as he asked for help Jesus reached out to Peter, lifted him up and put him back in the boat. As Jesus saves Peter from the storm Jesus

whispered to him what might be the harshest thing Jesus ever says, 'You of little faith. Why did you doubt?'. Ouch.

Peter got out the boat. The rest of the disciples were huddled together in the boat, scared out of their minds, but Peter got out of the boat, asking only for the confirmation that it really was Jesus out there.

'You of little faith'? I wish I had a tenth of the faith Peter had at that moment. I know where I would have been... I would have been with the other eleven, huddled in the back of the boat, not out there having a life changing experience.

Peter was getting out of that boat. He had made up his mind already. Jesus saying 'Come 'was just the confirmation. Whether he ended up swimming in the water or dancing on top of it Peter wanted to be where Jesus was, doing what Jesus did.

I bet that day lived with Peter forever.

I wonder if the other disciples talked about it when they got together. Remember that day Peter got out of that boat in the middle of the storm? Fancied a wee swim did you Peter? What were you thinking?

But Peter, just for a moment, a glorious, life-changing moment, walked on water towards his Lord and master. This story is a fascinating one for all kinds of reasons. It is full of mystery and imagery we can relate to.

Firstly there is the storm. Commentators often describe the society around us in terms of a storm. It is fast, changing, sweeping us along on currents we seem powerless to swim against. We have little or no control over it. It can be frightening. It can seem alien to us. We don't understand where it comes from, how it is created or what drives it, but we can see all too clearly the power it has, and sometimes, like in our

**We believe in the coming of a new world
where Jesus Christ, our Lord, will be all in all. Amen.**

Hymn: *I Come With Joy to Meet My Lord*
Brian Wren © 1971, 1995 Hope Publishing Company,
380 S Main Pl, Carol Stream, IL 60188

I come with joy,
to meet my Lord
forgiven, loved and free,
behold I wanted to recall,
His life laid down for me.

3: As Christ breaks bread,
and bids us share,
each proud division ends.
The love that made us,
makes us one,
and strangers now are friends.

2: I come with Christians
far and near
to find, as all are fed,
the new community of love
in Christ's communion bread.

4: And thus with joy
we meet our Lord
His presence always near
in this is friendship better known,
we see and praise Him here.

5: Together met, together bound we'll go our different ways,
and as His people in the world we'll live and speak His praise.

Communion

Invitation

What table is this that bears the weight of sacrifice: heaven's intent, broken in each morsel? What moment is this that spills with holy love restless in this the world, crushed in the taste of wine? What place is this where heaven shatters into a thousand crumbs in the hands of a vulnerable Saviour? What hour is this that calls the bread-maker to break body and spill blood in the name of love?

Prayer of Dedication

Loving God,
we offer ourselves, we offer our gifts, our dreams, our hopes;
we offer our talents, our skills, our generosity;
we offer our questions, our wonder, our doubts;
we offer our vision, our energy, our enthusiasm;
we offer our prayers, for the world and for each other;
we offer our longings for places of conflict and people with hunger
and those without homes;
we offer all we are and hope to be and we offer it all in the name of love.
So be it. Amen

Affirmation of Faith

**We believe in God, creator of all,
whose word sustains the life of humanity,
and directs our history.
God is our life.**

**We believe in God's Son,
born amongst the poor, light in our night,
first-born from the dead. He is alive.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
who gives birth to the new life of God,
who breathes life into the struggle for justice,
who leads us to hope.
who is a living force.**

**We believe in the holy universal Church,
herald of the Good News
which frees people and brings new life.**

current times, the destruction it causes. We can feel overwhelmed. We can feel tossed and thrown about.

So we retreat to the place that we can be safe from the storm. Our boat. For many of us that boat is our church. What kind of boat is our church? Is it a luxury liner sailing from port to port allowing people off for a brief visit to the nice parts of the world? Is it a yacht that we can escape in at weekends, getting away from everything? Or is our boat a lifeboat, braving all kinds of storms, crewed by willing volunteers, searching for lost souls out there in the ocean?

I know what kind of boat I'd prefer to be in. The big, comfortable, luxurious, safe kind. The church has in many ways become that kind of boat. From the inside we might not recognise it, but those on the outside, out there in the storm, they can see it.

The church is often criticised for being 'all talk and no action'. We can create our own safety here. We mix with people like us, take part in our own activities, speak our own language and listen to our own music. We have created a safe haven from the storm.

Of course we all have our own personal boats too, our own little comfort zones. The places we feel safe and secure. We take refuge in the things we know we can do. The places where no one will ask us to think too much about what we believe or why we believe it. The places where we won't be asked to do anything new or hard or difficult.

Margaret Mead, the anthropologist, said "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, that is all that ever has." Well, if a small group of committed people can change the world, imagine what a large group of committed people can do in each of our communities. All you have to do is step out of the boat.

And here is possibly the most important thing for you to remember as you step out of your comfortable boat. Sometime the experience of the journey is more important than arriving.

It's there in those experiences you will find out things about yourself and each other that you never knew.

You will discover that God can use you in ways you never dreamed possible. You will deepen friendships. You will have a better understanding of your faith. You will feel a sense of belonging stronger than anything you have felt before. This journey won't all be plain sailing. Stepping out of the boat is dangerous. It's the unpredictable thing to do.

It is safer in the boat. Ok, you might get bounced about by the storm occasionally, but our boat is sound and it will survive, for a while at least.

But how much more did Peter gain from taking that one step of faith? How much more did he believe when he took those small faltering steps on the water? How much more did he trust in Jesus when he felt his strong arms rescue him as he sank down into the storm? And how much greater was his reward? Faith in Jesus demands that we take risks, that we step out of the boat.

It is our choice to be risk takers for the sake of the Gospel. To follow Peter's example, asking only for the slightest confirmation that it is Jesus we are walking towards.

Jesus chose this man, this Peter, this fisherman who would deny even knowing Him not once, not twice, but three times in one night to found his church on. That gives those of us like me who get it wrong, who ask questions, who never really fully understand, great hope. And when Jesus got into the boat the wind died down and the storm stopped.

Hymn: *Will Your Anchor Hold?*
Priscilla J Owens

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?

*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!*

Offertory

We ponder the many gifts that God has given us, deeply aware that we are also given the choice to put them to good use or not, to build us or tear down, to empower others or to hold onto power ourselves, to build the kingdom or to stand by in our indifference.

So, in this moment, we offer our gifts back to God, choosing to use them for their rightful purpose, to do justice and live mercifully, to bring peace and to foster love. We bring our gifts and offer them back to God.

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

3 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
for evermore?