

Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit

At Home Worship – 25th July 2021

Hymn (StF 103) – God is Love let heaven adore him - Timothy Rees (1874-1939)

1 God is Love: let heav'n adore him;
God is Love: let earth rejoice;
let creation sing before him,
and exalt him with one voice.
He who laid the earth's foundation,
he who spread the heav'ns above,
he who breathes through all creation,
he is Love, eternal Love.

2 God is Love: and he enfoldeth
all the world in one embrace;
with unfailing grasp he holdeth
every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking

under sorrow's iron rod,
then they find that selfsame aching
deep within the heart of God.

3 God is Love: and though with blindness
sin afflicts the souls of all,
God's eternal loving-kindness
holds and guides us when we fall.
Sin and death and hell shall never
o'er us final triumph gain;
God is Love, so Love for ever
o'er the universe must reign.

Prayer

Loving Lord God,

We come before you and still ourselves in your presence.

We come to you because you are our God and we long to know you in our lives.

We worship you so that we may reconnect with your love.

We come seeking your love,

We come because we are hungry and long to be fed by you

We come in our lostness seeking community in you. We are astounded that you notice us

And in Jesus you speak to us, you spend time with us and by your Holy Spirit's presence you feed us.

So, we praise you and thank you in our worship – for feeding us, loving us and calling us.

In our separation from you we are fearful

We set ourselves adrift on the sea of our own self-interest.

And yet walking upon the chaos of our separation you come to us.

You speak your name to us – and we are calmed.

For your love in Jesus – we praise you

For the strength to live by you Spirit – we thank you.

May we be yours forever.

Amen.

Gospel: John 6:1-21 (NRSV)

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.'

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, got into a boat, and started across the lake to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The lake became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land towards which they were going.

Prayer of St Patrick

Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me,

Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me,

Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,

Christ in the heart of those who love me, Christ in friend and in stranger.

Reflection

John paints his Gospel with broad brushstrokes. He communicating to us his picture of who Jesus is. The word made flesh. In Jesus we see God at work. The gospel of John is not a detailed reporting of every day of Jesus' life. In these two stories we had big, bold statements of who Jesus is for John. The statements are in many ways bigger than the stories that hold them. For John the feeding of the 5,000 is a demonstration of who Jesus is. He's not overwhelmed by the crowd, rather he knows precisely what he is about to do for he is Lord of this and every situation. The problem is more of a test for the disciples than an issue for Jesus. What John wants to say is 'Jesus feeds us'. When we seek him and are hungry and in need Jesus is there for us. Our seeking may be self-centered, we might be in it for a miracle or two, we might just be following the crowd but, no matter, Jesus feeds us. When we find ourselves in desolate places, he takes what little we have, blesses it and enables the world (and us) to be fed. What vision! A much bigger picture than feeding a few thousand in a field – however wonderful that may be. John wants us to be aware that Jesus is the God who feeds us when we seek him. And not only are we satisfied but there is enough left over for the entire community of Israel (signified by the twelve baskets) and beyond.

Hymn (StF 248) - I heard the voice of Jesus say – Horatious N. Bonar (1808 – 1889)

1 I heard the voice of Jesus say,

“Come unto me and rest.

Lay down, O weary one,
lay down your head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
so weary, worn, and sad.
I found in him a resting place,
and he has made me glad.

2 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
the living water, thirsty one;
stoop down and drink and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank

of that life-giving stream.
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.

3 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am the dawning light.
Look unto me, your morn shall rise,
and all your day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun,
and in that light of life I'll walk
till trav'ling days are done.

Reflection

John's telling of Jesus walking on the lake, like the previous story, is a broad brushstroke story with a big point to make. When we are lost and at sea, when the winds blow, and we feel we're losing control – Jesus comes to us. And he speaks God's name to us. 'I am' says Jesus. Not 'I am here' as many translations have it, but the Greek contains a noticeably clear 'I am'. When the winds blow, 'I am' says Jesus. When the storm rages around us, 'I am' says Jesus. It is the name of God spoken to Moses. And he calls for our trust as he reaches out to us. By his grace, when we cry out in our fear (for the disciples were terrified) before we know it we find ourselves of safe ground. Somehow Jesus guides us home.

Prayer

Calm my heart Lord and bring peace to your world.

We hold before you your suffering world, we acknowledge that we afraid of drowning.

The winds blow and the seas are rough.

Walk towards those whose worlds are engulfed by the storms of life.

Calm my heart Lord and bring peace to your world.

We hold before you those who are hungry, we acknowledge that we are fearful of starving.

Bless the resources of this world so that all may be fed.

Nourish your world with love, justice, and security.

Calm my heart Lord and bring peace to your world.

Lead me in your ways.

May I share what little I have,

May I know your blessing,

May I feed those I have contact with love and actual food if needed.

May I trust in you, that by your presence I may sail through the darkness and the winds.

And may I bring your calm to those I sail this sea of life with.

In Jesus name we pray,

Amen.

Hymn (Stf 465) - Guide me O Thou great Jehovah – William Williams (1717-1791)

1 Guide me, O my great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but you are mighty;
hold me with your powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore,
feed me now and evermore.

2 Open now the crystal fountain,
where the healing waters flow.
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through.

Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
ever be my strength and shield,
ever be my strength and shield.

3 When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside.
Death of death, and hell's Destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever sing to you,
I will ever sing to you.

Blessing

May the Lord bless you and keep you,

May the Lord make his face to shine upon you

And give you peace.

Amen.