

August 9th 2020 P14. T9. YA. LD19.

Psalm 105,1-6,16-22,45b. Romans 10. 5-15. Matthew 14.22-33.

Lord look upon us your people and help us so that through the mystery of preaching and the ministry of hearing we may behold you in our midst

Today's Gospel reading is I think a very apt one for the times we are living in, it is the story of a storm and a saviour. You may recall from last week last week that Jesus had heard of the death of John and had wanted some time alone, however the crowd got to his quiet place before him and having compassion on them he spent the day working with them. By the night he must have been exhausted and really in need of time for himself so this time he dismisses the crowd and sends the disciples of in the boat to the other side of the lake and he goes up on the mountain to pray.

Later when the boat is far out on the lake a storm blows up and the disciples are in fear for their lives. Just before dawn Jesus walks across the water to help them. Seeing a figure walking on the water towards them they were terrified and thought it was a ghost, but Jesus makes himself known saying 'take courage. Peter always the impetuous one issues a challenge saying.'Lord, if it's you,' 'tell me to come to you on the water.'

Jesus does so and Peter got off the boat and walked toward him. He was fine until he remembered the wind and the waves then he began to sink and cried out 'Lord, save me!' Jesus catching hold of him, says 'You of little faith,' 'why did you doubt?'

Then they walked together back to the boat and those in it fell down in worshiped saying to Jesus 'Truly you are the Son of God.' They are now sure of who it is they have got involved with.

They are in the middle of a storm surrounded by the chaotic waters of the lake, not even sure which shore they were best heading for going to the one they had left or the one they had set of to go to. But they are sure of who they are travelling with.

It rather reminds me of the of the storm the whole world is currently going through.

A storm of unbelievable dimensions and unknowable outcomes. A storm where the winds of change blow rather a lot and mean a new and constantly changing landscape to navigate our way through and where even the chief navigators seem to be very unsure of the way forward.

With constantly changing the rules and guidelines, depending on the advice they are given and at times in seemingly contradictory ways.

Just take for example the wearing of face coverings. When places of worship were allowed to reopen in July, for the first two weeks we were told there was no need to wear them unless we couldn't keep the 2 metre distance rule, at the same time as we were told not to allow in more people that could meet the 2 metre rule.

Last week the guidance changed and we were strongly advised to wear them then this week they are mandatory but worship leaders are allowed not to wear them.

When just this one small piece of guidance is then set amid the vast amount of guidance and rules being sent out and regularly changed and then all that is laid alongside the other stuff that comes along with the virus the medical and personal implications in the lives of so many millions and the sorrow of sickness and bereavement and then set all that alongside other world events such as the explosion in Beirut where at least 137 have been killed and 5000 injured and we can see that the whole world is beset with very stormy times.

So what can we do to get through the storms. We can follow Peter's example and call on the Lord and knowing that as long as he kept his eye and focus on Jesus he managed to walk amid the storm we can try to keep our focus on Jesus. The storm didn't instantly disappear when Peter stepped out into it but he felt able to cope with it, to walk in it and to feel safe and secure even amid the wind and waves and while walking on a very shaky ground.

We need to remember, though, that as soon as Peter took his eye off Jesus and put his focus on the storm he began to sink. And only when he was brought back into focus by Jesus was he able to keep going.

We need to learn how to focus on Jesus how to walk with him though the storm to trust him and trust that he will guide us in the right direction.

At the moment I hear many people talking about getting back to normal and others about the need to create a new normal, well we all know that going backwards isn't possible.

Jesus seemed to take Peter backwards as he led him back into the storm tossed boat, but though the setting, the boat and the storm were the same everything had changed for there came the realization that Jesus was indeed the Son of God.

At that point the way forward could not be seen at all and all the disciples could do was worship and trust.

I think we all experience such moments in our lives, when our life seem to be at a crossroads when nothing much has changed yet something new has entered the picture.

For me one such moment was when I finally admitted there must be something in this 'religion' business because so many of my friends were believers, nothing else changed for many years I simply became a bit more open to the idea that God might be real and maybe I should find out a bit more about him.

The setting of my life was the same but everything became different I could not go back to my certainty that religion was 'the opium of the masses' but while I hadn't yet reached the stage of being able to bow in worship I did have a new respect for faith.

And I am sure we have all experienced times when there are big changes in our life settings maybe a bereavement or a sickness or the one we are all experiencing now with this virus, we know we can't go backwards that the old 'normal' is simply not available anymore and yet the pull of the feeling of the security of the past is so strong that we try to reproduce it in the present rather than face up to the uncertainty and the insecurity of facing a changed future.

While sitting In their boat the disciples knew that they were facing a very different future to the one they had anticipated, and knew they couldn't be sure any longer of how their lives would go or have very much control over it but they did know that the one who would lead them into the future was there in the boat and they had to simply trust him.

In the Reading from Romans we find the words : ⁹ If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

If we like the disciples on the boat declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in him, then we will be saved and no matter what storms life throws at us no matter what deep and stormy waters we find ourselves in if we keep our focus on our faith and do what we can to help both ourselves and others then we will weather the storm.

Probably not in the ways we anticipate, often in ways we really didn't expect and at times in ways we don't really want to go but come to realize are the ways we need to go to get where God needs us to be.

The Romans reading also tells how others need to hear this message so that they too can be saved and guided though the storm and so part of the job of those in

the 'boat' that is the church is to risk walking on water to bring those people on board .

We are the ones who need to have the beautiful feet Paul writes about and use them to walk to others and give them the good news that no matter what storms rage about us focusing on our Lord and Saviour and obeying his command to go out and baptise all nations will help us to find the way forward and calm our fear and apprehensions about the future, it won't take the storms away but it will help us navigate a way through them and lead us to a safe harbour.

Amen

Romans 10. 5-15.

Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.”⁶ But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down)⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim:⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.¹¹ As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”)

Here the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Gory to you O Lord

Matthew 14.22-33.

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 toward 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 worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you O Christ