

WELCOME

First, a few notices:

- Today, Margaret is on (a well-deserved) holiday, and our service has been planned by Jane Peers, who is leading worship in Ettrick Kirk, and we share the same hymns, readings and theme for our service.
 - Although COVID restrictions are being reduced, at the end of the service, you will be guided out by our welcome team. Please don't rush away, but join us in the hall for some socially-distanced fellowship.
 - Taking part this morning:
 - Linda White reading Jane's first prayer
 - Harry Dooley reading the bible passage
 - David Taylor with the prayers for other
 - Moira and Jamie providing our music
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And so to worship:

A call to worship from Psalm 77 – crying out to God in a time of distress:

We'll read it together – I'll read the text in white, and invite you to read the text in yellow print.

I cried out to God for help;

I cried out to God to hear me.

When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;

**at night I stretched out untiring hands,
and I would not be comforted.**

I remembered you, God, and I groaned;

I meditated, and my spirit grew faint.

You kept my eyes from closing;

I was too troubled to speak.

I thought about the former days,
the years of long ago;

I remembered my songs in the night.

My heart meditated and my spirit asked:

'Will the Lord reject for ever?

Will he never show his favour again?

Has his unfailing love vanished for ever?

Has his promise failed for all time?

Has God forgotten to be merciful?

Has he in anger withheld his compassion?'

Then I thought, 'To this I will appeal:

the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand.

I will remember the deeds of the LORD;

yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

I will consider all your works

and meditate on all your mighty deeds.'

Your ways, God, are holy.

What god is as great as our God?

You are the God who performs miracles;

you display your power among the peoples.

With your mighty arm you redeemed your people,

the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

The waters saw you, God,

the waters saw you and writhed;

the very depths were convulsed.

The clouds poured down water,

the heavens resounded with thunder;

your arrows flashed back and forth.

Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind,

your lightning lit up the world;

the earth trembled and quaked.

Your path led through the sea,

your way through the mighty waters,

though your footprints were not seen.

You led your people like a flock

by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

So, to our first hymn:

Hymn 153 Great is thy faithfulness

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not,
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be.

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided —
great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

Summer and winter, and seed-time and harvest,
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside.

Prayer of adoration: (read by Linda White)

O God, you set the earth in orbit around the sun,
the stars and the moon in their places.

We praise you.

We adore you.

The hills and valleys, plants and animals
declare your loving gift of life.

We praise you.

We adore you.

To you all people and rulers on earth will bow.
You are Ruler of all.

We praise you.

We adore you.

You rule eternally with love and justice
reliable and trustworthy.

We praise you.

We adore you.

Prayer of Confession

Holy God,

We remember those things we would rather forget, times when we have not loved you with all our heart and mind and soul and have not loved our neighbour as ourselves. Times when we have thought and done or said things and times when we have been silent or inactive.

Father, forgive us and help us to live as your well-loved children. Amen.

And together, we say the Lord's prayer, using the words on the screen:

Our Father in heaven,
 may your name be kept holy.
May your Kingdom come soon.
May your will be done on earth,
 as it is in heaven.
Give us today the food we need,
Forgive us our sins,
 as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
Keep us from being tested and rescue us from evil.
For the kingdom and the power and the glory
 are yours forever.
Amen.

Matthew 14:22-36 Reader Harry Dooley

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."

³⁴ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵ And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him ³⁶ and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

Hymn 356 Meekness and Majesty

Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity,
in perfect harmony — the man who is God:
Lord of eternity, dwells in humanity,
kneels in humility and washes our feet.

*Oh, what a mystery — meekness and majesty:
bow down and worship, for this is your God,
this is your God!*

Father's pure radiance, perfect in innocence,
yet learns obedience to death on a cross:
suffering to give us life, conquering through sacrifice —
and, as they crucify, prays, 'Father forgive'.

Wisdom unsearchable, God the invisible,
love indestructible in frailty appears:
Lord of infinity, stooping so tenderly,
lifts our humanity to the heights of his throne.

Reflection 1 The King is Here

A story.

When Jane's family first brought their new kitten home from the farm, he managed to escape from the house, ran up the garden and ran across the 10 foot wide pond, walking on water.

Food eventually brought him home and he happily joined the family.

You don't believe the evidence of their eyes? Neither do I!

I put it down to the supersonic speed with which he ran from the terrible people who had kidnapped him from his farmyard. His speed is how he got his name 'Sonic'.

The big lily pads in the pond might have helped too!

Jesus, who usually obeyed the laws of nature with which we live, walked on water.

We "know" that cannot be done. So why does Matthew tell us that he did?

People have come up with lots of "explanations" of what the disciples saw.

But Peter believed Jesus was walking on water, and that if Jesus had the super-powers to walk on water, Jesus could enable Peter to walk on water. And Peter was enabled to walk on water.

Men and women do not have super-powers. We cannot walk on water.

Yet Jesus of Nazareth was a real, normal man. But he is also the Son of God. The Messiah.

For God, all things are possible.

Why does Matthew tell us that Jesus walked on water? After all, only the disciples witnessed this miracle. Matthew's first readers might have thought this was a step too far.

But Matthew wanted to be sure we all know that Jesus of Nazareth, his friend and leader, the Son of Man, is also Son of God. One with God.

Matthew has more to say.

Not only did Jesus walk on water, but he also enabled Peter to walk on water. Jesus is not an absent God. He is present with Peter. Coming to his aid.

Jesus is not King in his heavenly castle, surrounded by a bodyguard of angels.

Jesus, the King, is present with his friends, rushing to their aid in their difficulties.

Matthew is assuring us that Jesus is with his friends in their difficulties, and that was not just for an odd occasion during his earthly ministry in Palestine 2000 years ago. Jesus is with his friends in their difficulties at all times and in all places.

Here.

Now.

Jesus can and will walk on water to save us.

(pause)

We proclaim our confidence in Jesus, our Redeemer, God and King as we sing his praise. (one of Charles Wesley's great hymns)

Hymn 352 O for a thousand tongues to sing

O for a thousand tongues, to sing my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace!

Jesus! the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears, 'tis life, and health, and peace.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin, he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean, his blood availed for me.

He speaks, and, listening to his voice, new life the dead receive,
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe.

Hear him, ye deaf; his praise ye dumb, your loosened tongues employ;
ye blind, behold your Saviour come; and leap, ye lame, for joy!

My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad the honours of thy name.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Reflection 2 Responding to the King

Let's return to our reading.

We learn a lot about Peter in this incident. He had decided to follow Jesus. He trusted Jesus and believed in his leadership and power. Peter got out of a boat that was making hard progress against a strong contrary wind to walk on water!

This might be seen as a wee bit mad!

How strong is our desire to follow Jesus?

Peter's action challenges us as individuals, congregations and communities.

Do we trust Jesus enough to step out of our comfort zones and be more Christ-like?

When we hear people dismissing others on grounds of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability or with any other excuse, do we stand up for *all* God's children, loved by him?

When we see needs in our communities, do we shrug our shoulders and say, "that's too big a problem for me to get involved with"?

In Matthew 8:20 Jesus said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." We have church buildings which are used about once a week. Is that Christ-like behaviour?

Maybe we need a little of Peter's madness? The courage to step out of our comfort zones. The courage to ask Jesus to lead us in his way, and the trust to follow.

We may, like Peter, waiver and fail, but Jesus, The King *is here*.

(pause)

Prayers by David Taylor

Pray with me first of all for the Christians in Afghanistan - very few in number, but very precious to you, Lord Jesus, who knows every one by name - where they are, whether they have fled the country, come safely here to the West or are in mortal danger still in the country - we commend them to your loving care and protection, right to the last, if it be your will. Also, for your people suffering persecution in so many other countries as we know about them - ease their pain, we pray and grant that help may reach them.

Then let's think about the young people in our country, as they begin another year, perhaps worried about a spike in Covid, perhaps about their work or future if they are in the senior classes, perhaps living in a class atmosphere of indiscipline, homophobic abuse, sexual harassment and interference. Let's pray for them and for wisdom and strength for teachers and parents as they seek to control exposure to porn, to alcohol, drugs and lots of other dangers that our generation didn't experience - may your Holy Spirit be allowed to minister somehow into all that turmoil.

As we give thanks for this town of Selkirk and the lovely area we live in, we pray a blessing and thanksgiving for Selkirk Parish Church - for the fellowship here, for Margaret's ministry, for the devoted people who help her, for the church's ministry and outreach to the town and around about. May we be kept safe from spiritual harm in the warfare waged by all your church world-wide. May we support your world-wide church in prayer and giving. We pray too for our members who are unwell, house-bound, unable to be at church maybe for a long time, perhaps anxious about something, burdened even.

There's a saying - 'wit's end corner is where Jesus loves to come!' 'wit's end corner is where Jesus loves to come!' If anyone is at wit's end corner, we pray in Jesus's name for them.

Finally in the silence we bring those for whom we particularly care about and ask a blessing for them - perhaps saying over them or to ourselves, the Aaronic blessing - a wonderful thing and why should it be confined to Baptisms? - 'The Lord Bless you and keep you - the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.'

All these prayers we ask in your precious name – Amen

Building the Future

Before we sing our final hymn, the Kirk Session has asked me to say a little about "Building the Future". You may have read about it in the last Hird, and you can read more in the new Hird, which you should receive this week.

Our Victorian predecessors bequeathed us a lovely solid traditional church building, which we continue to use nearly 150 years later.

Over the years, it has been improved and altered to meet the needs of each new generation:

- The hall built out the back
- The new ceiling installed
- Space made at the back for the meeting house
- Space made at the front and sides for the small chapel and other uses
- The hall upgraded, new kitchen added and toilets
- Disabled access provided

But the needs of our church and community don't stand still, and the Kirk Session asked a small group to gather views on what further improvements might be worth considering, especially when we have some money from the sale of the former St. Mary's manse.

New activities require new facilities.

- Open Door needs more kitchen and food storage space.
- New forms of worship require more flexible space.
- Storage is a problem for all sorts of equipment.
- The front entrance is less than welcoming for newcomers or the community.
- Could we make more creative use of the front garden?
- Does it make sense in a "climate emergency" to heat this massive space for one hour a week?

These are just a few of the issues that have been mentioned.

We want to know what you think! Speak to any of the Building the Future group – myself, Andrew Laing, Elissa Jones or Jack Peers. Or send us your thoughts by email or letter. Look on the church website for some of the thoughts of others, and tell us whether you agree with them or not! Jesus encouraged Peter to step out of his comfort zone. Let's do that too, and see where it leads.

Above all, we want to make best use of these buildings to enhance our vision, to be

- an open, growing, enthusiastic and supportive Christian community, which
- nurtures members and welcomes newcomers
- offers a range of inspiring worship and teaching
- reaches out with the good news of Jesus Christ
- serves the community and world in practical ways

We invite you to share your thoughts.

Once we have your thoughts, our next step may be to engage a designer to sketch out a wide range of possibilities, which we can then share and discuss. Exciting! Challenging! And this, not just for ourselves, but for our community and for those who will follow and live, work and worship here, perhaps in 25 or 50 years time. Please pray, please think and please let us know your ideas.

Our final hymn reminds us of the needs all around us, and challenges us to follow Jesus “out of the boat”.

Hymn 360 Jesus Christ is waiting, waiting in the streets

Jesus Christ is waiting, waiting in the streets;
no one is his neighbour, all alone he eats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am lonely too:
make me, friend or stranger, fit to wait on you.

Jesus Christ is raging, raging in the streets,
where injustice spirals and real hope retreats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too:
in the Kingdom's causes let me rage with you.

Jesus Christ is healing, healing in the streets,
curing those who suffer, touching those he greets.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I have pity too:
let my care be active, healing, just like you.

Jesus Christ is dancing, dancing in the streets,
where each sign of hatred he, with love, defeats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too:
where good conquers evil let me dance with you

.

Jesus Christ is calling, calling in the streets,
'Who will join my journey? I will guide their feet.'
Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few:
walk one step before me, I will follow you.

John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958) Reproduced from CH4 CD-ROM edition, number 360 Words and Music: © WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH Scotland. <www.wgrg.co.uk>

We bless each other as we read together a blessing *written by Margery Kempt (c1373-c1438)*

Be to us at all times, O Lord, our unending joy, our eternal bliss and our enduring comfort.
Be to us light in the darkness, strength in temptation and refreshment in the desert.
Amen
