

WELCOME

The Risen Jesus, now sitting on His throne in heaven, welcomes us to worship today as we welcome one another. Together we, as part of the world wide church, the church throughout the years and the church in heaven, use the words which *Revelation 4* tells us the elders there use, “*Our Lord and God! You are worthy to receive glory, honour and power. For You created all things and by Your will they were given existence and life*” Jesus is indeed the name we honour as we bring our praise to Him.

HYMN 481 Jesus is the name we honour

1. Jesus is the name we honour
Jesus is the name we praise
Majestic Name above all other names
The highest heaven and earth proclaim
That Jesus is our God.
We will glorify,
we will lift Him high
We will give Him honour and praise
We will glorify,
we will lift Him high
We will give Him honour and praise

2. Jesus is the name we worship
Jesus is the name we trust
He is the King above all other kings
Let all creation stand and sing
That Jesus is our God
We will glorify . . .

3. Jesus is the Father’s splendour
Jesus is the Father’s joy
He will return to reign in majesty
And ev’ry eye at last will see
That Jesus is our God
We will glorify . . .

Phil Lawson-Johnston

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

King of kings, Your Majesty, Lord Jesus Christ, we bow before you in wonder, love and praise. There at the Creation of the World, there in time and space in Galilee, there in a dead body in the empty tomb, You rose victorious from the grave bringing new life from death, hope from despair, all so that we, Your people, might know You in our lives here, now and forever as we place our trust in You. Your Holy Spirit reaches into all hearts, minds and souls who are willing to acknowledge You – there for everyone but the choice is ours. Father, Son and Spirit we bring you our praise and our worship.

As we worship You, please help us to recognise our waywardness, our fickleness, our deliberate decisions to ignore You. Gently You invite us to turn again to You, the One who is willing to forgive and is willing to help us sin no more. Forgiving Father please bring us Your forgiveness and may we willingly give our lives to You once more. In recognition of this willingness we give You our offerings made here and through the bank. Use them to bring glory to Yourself. In Jesus' name we pray, saying together the prayer which He taught us: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

READING

Matthew 14:22-36

Read by Gordon Junor

Jesus Walks on the Water

²² Then Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people away. ²³ After sending the people away, he went up a hill by himself to pray. When evening came, Jesus was there alone; ²⁴ and by this time the boat was far out in the lake, tossed about by the waves, because the wind was blowing against it.

²⁵ Between three and six o'clock in the morning Jesus came to the disciples, walking on the water. ²⁶ When they saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. "It's a ghost!" they said, and screamed with fear.

²⁷ Jesus spoke to them at once. "Courage!" he said. "It is I. Don't be afraid!"

²⁸ Then Peter spoke up. "Lord, if it is really you, order me to come out on the water to you."

²⁹ "Come!" answered Jesus. So Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he was afraid and started to sink down in the water. "Save me, Lord!" he cried.

³¹ At once Jesus reached out and grabbed hold of him and said, "What little faith you have! Why did you doubt?"

³² They both got into the boat, and the wind died down. ³³ Then the disciples in the boat worshiped Jesus. “Truly you are the Son of God!” they exclaimed.

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

³⁴ They crossed the lake and came to land at Gennesaret, ³⁵ where the people recognized Jesus. So they sent for the sick people in all the surrounding country and brought them to Jesus. ³⁶ They begged him to let the sick at least touch the edge of his cloak; and all who touched it were made well

REFLECTION

From the feeding of the 5000 to Jesus walking on water, the man born blind, the man with the evil spirits right through to Lazarus being raised from the dead, people this week are reacting to Jesus. From fear and puzzlement to delight and ecstasy the miracles of Jesus divide reactions. The miracles of Jesus have to do with people’s physical needs and their spiritual ones too and as they are met, so too are their emotional, mental needs.

The miracles are all about the Kingdom of God and how the kingdom breaks in to the present physical world.

The everlasting, impacts the instant now of today or their day.

Sometime after the feeding of the 5000 Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” The answer, “John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the other prophets from long ago.” “Who do you say that I am?” Jesus persists. And it’s left up to good old Peter to come up with, “You are God’s Messiah, the Christ.” That provokes from Jesus the response, “Yes but not what you think the Messiah should be or do.”

I wonder when asked the same question what would you say – who is Jesus, what impact does He have on your life? What do you think He should be doing in your life? For as we know the Jews thought that the Messiah, God’s chosen Saviour would come and save them from a physical enemy not a spiritual one. What battle are you facing at the moment, the battle perhaps where Jesus seems to be so silent – is it because you are expecting him to act in one particular way, when in fact he will act in his way and in his time. Peter’s confession evokes the response from Jesus – if you want to be my followers you must take up the cross and follow me – not the picture of a great saviour winning the battle in victorious style is it? Rather a long hard slog through the murky mires of life.

Our next reading this week will remind us of this very starkly. Imagine the disciples totally and utterly exhausted – they’ve been out in twos spreading the good news of Jesus, they come back for a rest and were immediately pitched into a long teaching session by Jesus followed by his command to feed these thousands of people – their eyes startled awake at God’s generosity but then as so often happens after a great spiritual/physical experience they flop. Jesus realising that the crowds are going to attempt to make

him king by force sends the disciples away – into the boat, on to the water at some unearthly time of night. Those of the disciples who were fishermen I'm sure were screaming, "No Jesus don't you know the tides and the winds - a storm can brew at the drop of a hat – it's madness to go out there at this time of night." How often does God's ways seem like madness? What battle are you facing at the moment that seem as if God has sent you into the darkness of the night with the winds howling round and round, the waves threatening to overwhelm you?

And him not present – at least the last time the disciples were in the storm Jesus was in the boat with them – even if he was snoring his head off. At least he was there. But now he's not. And if the physical threat is not enough what about the spiritual one too – here's a ghost coming walking on the water. These disciples are about to go through a steep learning curve. They were alone and afraid in the darkness of the night adrift on a bottomless sea... and then Jesus came. Let that thought sink in for a moment.

Everything was wrong... **and then Jesus came.**

Do you hear these four words? These four words divide all time and eternity. With these words God draws a line in the sand of every soul... and then Jesus came.

Jesus has sent them into danger, but here he now comes to them in the danger. Mark had it that Jesus was going to pass them by and stopped only because they asked him too. It's an amazing picture. Jesus doesn't quickly step in and take control. Here he is still outside the boat, still in the storm saying, "Don't be afraid – it's me trust me." And do you know the same thing happens with the raising of Lazarus – Jesus doesn't immediately step in – he invites trust, faith, belief while in the midst of the storm.

Well good old Peter steps up to the challenge and you have to admire him – only 1 out of 12 willing to take the risk and go to Jesus. We all know the phrase if you want to walk on the water you have to get out of the boat. That's Peter – so let's give him his due. Yes he falters when he looks down and forgets to look at Jesus, forgets to keep his hand in the hand of the man that stilled the water but he's about to learn the most amazing fact – Jesus **is** the Saviour and once Jesus' has affected the rescue, once he's in the boat and the storm has been calmed then the wide eyed disciples can do nothing but worship him as God's own Son. From Saviour and Messiah to Son of God progress has been made in the answer to the question who am I.

I wonder what it means for you to have the Son of God on your side, by your side day by day? How does that influence the way you live your life? How does that influence the way in which you work through the problems of your life? The Son of God is the one who is willing sometimes to send us into seeming danger, all so that our relationship with him can deepen, all so that we can get new insight into how he can affect our lives.

The readings take us further on the journey of answering the question who am I? After arguing with the Pharisees the man born blind answers them with the thought, "Unless this man came from God he would

not be able to do a thing.” Physically healed, his spiritual sight was heightened too. He knew Jesus as someone who came from God. The evil spirits that were about to be cast out in the next story knew what the Pharisees didn’t – “Jesus Son of the most High God they cried.”

After the pain, desolation, desperation of the death of Lazarus, Jesus comes and brings new life, new hope into the worst possible situation. Martha has been his friend for years now – she’s watched him, she’s waited on him she’s wondered about him and now after thinking that she’s been rejected by him, she finally wakes up to the fact that this Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the Messiah of the world. But it takes the darkest time of her life to bring her to that realisation and the realisation that knowing Jesus as Saviour brings hope and new life to this life as well as hope of a future life.

God’s Messiah, Son of God, Son of the Most High God. Jesus, King of all those who put their trust in Him. Jesus, someone who doesn’t compromise, someone who longs for each person to draw near to Him but also to think through what that will cost. Next week we will remember the crowd that shouted Hosanna to the King of Kings on the Sunday while a few days later it would be shouting, crucify him, give us Barabbas. The cost of discipleship too great. We too are asked to give serious thought to who Jesus is and what it is that he is asking of us, with the knowledge that although the path will not be easy, His presence with us is assured as we put our trust in Him. Our next hymn reminds us that Through the love of God our Saviour ALL will be well.

HYMN 562 Through the love of God the Saviour

1. Through the love of God, my Saviour,
all will be well
Free and changeless is his favour;
All, all is well
Precious is the blood that healed us,
perfect is the grace that sealed us,
Strong the hand stretched forth to shield us;
all must be well.
2. Though we pass through tribulation,
all will be well.
Ours is such a full salvation,
All, all is well
Happy still in God confiding,
fruitful if in Christ abiding,

holy through the Spirit's guiding;
all must be well.

3. We expect a bright tomorrow;
all will be well

Faith can sing through days of sorrow;

'All, all is well'

On our Father's love relying

Jesus every need supplying

Or in living, or in dying,

all must be well.

Mary Peters (1813 – 1856)

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Ann Blundell

Dear Lord, we thank You for gathering us together today to listen to Your word, sing Your praises and bring our prayers to You.

Thank You for the knowledge that our prayers, though small and feeble, will be heard by You.

We pray now in Your name from wherever Your spirit unites us.

Lord may You find ways to bless the places we call home and the ones with which we share them.

We thank you for our lifelines - the shops, the businesses, the utilities and amenities, the mail and electronic communications.

We pray too for our hospitals, health centres, and chemists and those who use their skills in them. Let them feel your presence along side them when the days are difficult.

We name to you the people we know for whom the pandemic has meant procedures delayed, treatment postponed and worry compounded.

Lord make Your presence known to those who have been bereaved.

May the knowledge of your love help them in their time of sorrow.

We pray for those in our community who are vulnerable, marginalised or oppressed. May we be good neighbours, offering support so that their needs are met and their voices heard. Be close to those living in poverty and with those whose work is to help them.

We pray for our young people at schools, colleges and universities. Grant them renewed enthusiasm for their studies. Give educators inspiration and the skills to guide their students to look ahead to their futures with hope.

We pray for those in authority at every level of government, local, national and international. Guide and direct those who set policy, uphold the law and keep the peace.

God of peace, we pray for all those suffering in places of conflict and environments of fear and instability. We pray especially for the people of Afghanistan, both those who have fled to find safety and those who have stayed.

We pray for the many organisations seeking to provide help for those caught up in conflict zones and in areas of natural disasters. Especially our friends in Kenya where so many people are facing starvation due

to drought. And the people of Haiti who are without shelter due to the recent earthquake and the devastating flooding caused by Storm Grace.

We acknowledge the importance of our own safe places. We are grateful to those who have shown us kindness. Give us opportunities to extend the same gift to others.

Show us Lord how to use the skills, which you have given us, to make our contribution towards a more caring world.

In Jesus name

Amen

HYMN Come people of the Risen King

1. Come, people of the risen King,
Who delight to bring Him praise.
Come, all and tune your hearts to sing
To the Morning Star of grace.
From the shifting shadows of the earth
We will lift our eye to Him,
Where steady arms of mercy reach
To gather their children in.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Let every tongue rejoice!
One heart, one voice, O Church of Christ, rejoice!

2. Come, those whose joy is morning sun,
And those weeping through the night.
Come, those struggling in the fight.
And those struggling in the fight.
For His perfect love will never change,
And His mercies never cease,
But follow us through all our days.
With the certain hope of peace.

3. Come, young and old from every land,
Men and women of the faith.
Come, those with full or empty hands,
Find the riches of His grace.
Over all the world His people sing,
Shore to shore we hear them call
The truth that cries through every age;

Our God is all in all.

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BENEDICTION

The love of God be your strength, the power of the Saviour be your hope. The grace of the Spirit be your peace. Go, knowing the blessing of the Presence of Almighty God Father Son and Spirit at work in your life and through your life today and every day, Amen