



The Methodist Church In Ireland

Sunday 9th August, 'Faith within the Chaos'

This short act of worship has been prepared so that you can spend some moments with God, knowing that other people in your local congregation and beyond are sharing in this same act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

Lord, today we remember that you are faithful. Thank you for letting us walk with you each day. We know that you are with us in each and every moment. Help us always to be faithful to you. We thank you for fulfilling your promises and inspiring us with your goodness.

May we always praise you and come to know you better. Today as we join together in worship, may we sing with all of the angels of heaven of your greatness and wonder. Lord, we adore you. Lord, we love you. May we be guided by your light and mercy forever. Amen

Hymn: Faithful One

Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful song

Faithful one, so unchanging
Ageless one, you're my rock of peace
Lord of all I depend on you
I call out to you, again and again
I call out to you, again and again

You are my rock in times of trouble
You lift me up when I fall down
All through the storm
Your love is, the anchor
My hope is in You alone

Brian Doerksen (b, 1965))

Genesis 37: 1-4, 12-28

Joseph's Dreams

37 Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

²This is the account of Jacob's family line.

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

³Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate^[a] robe for him. ⁴When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him

Joseph Sold by His Brothers

¹²Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, ¹³and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them."

"Very well," he replied.

¹⁴So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron.

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, ¹⁵a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

¹⁶He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?"

¹⁷"They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'"

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. ¹⁸ But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

¹⁹ “Here comes that dreamer!” they said to each other. ²⁰ “Come now, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we’ll see what comes of his dreams.”

²¹ When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. “Let’s not take his life,” he said. ²² “Don’t shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don’t lay a hand on him.” Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— ²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵ As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? ²⁷ Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed.

²⁸ So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels^[a] of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

Let us pray

Almighty God, in Jesus Christ you called us to be a servant people, but sometimes we do not do what you command. We are often silent when we should speak, and useless when we could be useful. Have mercy on us, O God. Forgive us and free us from sin; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Romans 10: 5-15

⁵ Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.”^[a] 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,”^[d] 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.”^[e] 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.”^[f]

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!”

Matthew 14: 22-33

Jesus Walks on the Water

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."

Reflection

It's a story we all know well, the story of Jesus walking on water that then moves into the story of Peter walking on, then sinking into, the same water. When Peter tells Jesus to call him, too, onto the lake, the story transitions into an illustration of what it looks like when people express faith in Jesus.

A detail to consider is the place Peter asks to go. He and his companions have spent nearly the whole night struggling to get across the lake before Jesus shows up near daybreak. It's not a massive body of water, never more than seven miles across when traveling east-west. Yet they've not been able to traverse it, for the storm had "buffeted" their boat. As for the churning sea, in their worldview it represents chaos and danger. Then they think they see a ghost. Only then to realise amidst their fear that it's Jesus, walking over the watery chaos.

So, why would Peter want to go out there? After all, Jesus himself is not exactly respecting the natural boundaries everyone is used to.

I doubt Peter expects a walk on the sea will alleviate all his fears. Rather, his desire to join Jesus on the water expresses a desire for experience beyond anything normal. He's not trying to be Jesus, he's trying to be with him. Peter wants to share Jesus' unbounded place, to put himself beyond the forces and expectations that determine our usual existence, whether for better or for worse.

When Peter steps out of his boat, he enters a tumult. His motive isn't to escape from threat, for he goes into a situation where the threats will now look different, into a place where Jesus is defying and reordering the assumed boundaries.

God will be found in places where the regular descriptions and predictable endings don't apply as before. Sometimes incredibly turbulent places are also places where God breaks through.

It is the nature of faith — humble, active faith — to be willing to throw oneself into a disorderly world and expect to encounter Jesus there. It is the nature of faith, to want to transcend the normal "rules" and see what possibilities might be brought into being. It is the nature of faith to wonder what other supposedly unalterable outcomes Jesus might want us to take part in messing with. It is the nature of faith even to waver from time to time, when it has stepped into stressful, unfamiliar terrain.

Because, as Peter discovered, Jesus is there where the boundaries are being redrawn, extending life-giving stability when the chaos gets the upper hand.

Respond/Reflect

Take some time to reflect and respond. Are there boundaries that God is asking to push against. A step or steps he is asking you to take in your walk with him?

A time of Prayer

Let's pray

Jesus, we come to you today and thank you for the privilege of praying for others and we understand how powerful intercessory prayer can be.

We thank you that through your name, we can come boldly before you and pray with confidence, according to your will and know that you hear us.

We lift up those in our streets, in our areas, and in our churches. Begin with those who follow you, help them influence others for good. Let them be salt and light, pointing others to you. Deepen their love for you and for the people around them. Guard their hearts and minds amidst the world around them, so they can focus on you. Raise up leaders who will serve you faithfully at all costs. Help them to exemplify your values and make them bold in their faith. May our love for you help us to love and forgive others and make a difference in our world.

Today we pray for those who are feeling very anxious, who struggle on a daily basis with the challenges that the anxiety brings. May they feel your comfort, peace and especially your calming presence.

We pray for those who are feeling lonely. That you would surround them with your protective care. That you would send a supportive network of people to love them, care for them and speak words of hope over them.

Loving Father, there are so many hurting, so many needs, help us remember you are adequate for every hurt and every need. Your name is powerful, and your power is great. So, it's in your name we pray. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father...

Hymn: Have faith in God

Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful hymn

Have faith in God, my heart,
Trust and be unafraid;
God will fulfil in every part
Each promise He has made.

Have faith in God, my mind,
Though oft Thy light burns low;
God's mercy holds a wiser plan
Than Thou canst fully know.

Have faith in God, my soul,
His cross for ever stands;
And neither life nor death can pluck
His children from His hands.

Lord Jesus, make me whole;
Grant me no resting place,
Until I rest, heart, mind, and soul,
The captive of Thy grace.

Bryn Rees (1911-1983)

A prayer of Blessing

Faithful Father guide our steps and strengthen our faith. May we look for and take the opportunities that come our way to serve you and share about you.

Amen.

New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

Holy Bible, New International Version® Anglicized, NIV® Copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.