

Service of the Word 9 August 2020

Pentecost 10

Welcome

Good Morning and welcome to our service. Hopefully this week many of us have enjoyed a burst of summer weather. Such a treat usually comes around just as the children are about to return to school. It is often fleeting, lasting just a day or two, so a burst of summer weather is a joy to be savoured. Especially true this year as we learn to navigate a new normal in this pandemic. The most certain thing about this new normal is that it is fleeting in nature just like our burst of summer weather. No sooner are lockdown restrictions eased than they are reimposed for some as the Covid 19 virus springs into action once again. In church this morning I will be learning a new skill of leading worship and preaching while wearing a face mask. That we are able to share our worship together in virtual or actual presence is a joy to be savoured just for today.

Gathering

We are gathered together as the family of God
to offer praise and thanksgivings
to ask forgiveness of our sins
to hear and receive God's holy Word
to pray for the needs of the world
and to seek God's grace
that through Jesus Christ our Lord
and in the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to God's service.

Penitence

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit.
Lord, have mercy.

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart.
Christ, have mercy.

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided.
Lord, have mercy.

O Lord, all we long for is before you;

and our deep sighing is not hidden from you.
But we acknowledge our wickedness;
we are filled with sorrow at our sin.
Be pleased O Lord, to deliver us;
O Lord, make haste to help us.
May the Lord forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are
and direct what we shall be,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Praise

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
with God the Son, Jesus Christ,
and God the Holy Spirit,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect of the Day

Loving God,
you comfort the sad,
and strengthen those who suffer:
hear the prayers of your children
who cry out in tribulation;
and grant, we pray, to all who are distressed
mercy, relief, and refreshment;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
ever one God, world without end. Amen.

First Reading Psalm 85

- 1 You, Lord, showed favour to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
- 2 You forgave the iniquity of your people
and covered all their sins.[b]
- 3 You set aside all your wrath
and turned from your fierce anger.
- 4 Restore us again, God our Saviour,
and put away your displeasure towards us.
- 5 Will you be angry with us for ever?
Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
- 6 Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?
- 7 Show us your unfailing love, Lord,
and grant us your salvation.
- 8 I will listen to what God the Lord says;
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants –
but let them not turn to folly.
- 9 Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.
- 10 Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
- 11 Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven.
- 12 The Lord will indeed give what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.
- 13 Righteousness goes before him
and prepares the way for his steps.

Second Reading Matthew 14.22-33

Walking on the Water

22-23 As soon as the meal was finished, he insisted that the disciples get in the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he dismissed the people. With the crowd dispersed, he climbed the mountain so he could be by himself and pray. He stayed there alone, late into the night.

24-26 Meanwhile, the boat was far out to sea when the wind came up against them and they were battered by the waves. At about four o'clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them walking on the water. They were scared out of their wits. "A ghost!" they said, crying out in terror.

27 But Jesus was quick to comfort them. "Courage, it's me. Don't be afraid."

28 Peter, suddenly bold, said, “Master, if it’s really you, call me to come to you on the water.”

29-30 He said, “Come ahead.”

Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus. But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, “Master, save me!”

31 Jesus didn’t hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand. Then he said, “Faint-heart, what got into you?”

32-33 The two of them climbed into the boat, and the wind died down. The disciples in the boat, having watched the whole thing, worshiped Jesus, saying, “This is it! You are God’s Son for sure!”

Reflection

“we have travelled so far, so fast, that now it is time to sit and let our souls catch up with us” (repeat)

This phrase from my reflection last week is one that I feel we need to sit with for a while longer. It is no good talking about the need to lament one week and then moving on swiftly to some other topic. This strategy, to paraphrase St Paul, does not do justice to the length, breadth and depth of the grief experience. Before we can even start to process our many losses resulting from this pandemic; before we can think about moving forward in this new world, to live in a new normal, we need to simply rest awhile in God’s healing presence - to let our souls catch up with us. We need to breathe deeply and let the Holy Spirit in to calm our troubled minds, bodies and souls. This is a time to name our losses; a time to acknowledge our grief; this is a time for lament.

I would like to reflect one major loss which has been on my heart this week. A loss which underpins probably most of the other losses we are currently experiencing. This is the loss of trust; trust in our world, trust in each other, trust in ourselves and trust in God. This week I had to take my much overworked sewing machine in for a service. Now this involved a trip to the Quilt Shop in Locharron, which seems a bit of journey but is one that I usually enjoy very much. I get to see my friends who run the shop, enjoy a nice lunch and drive through some stunning Highland scenery. In the past I would simply have trusted that all this was possible. This week I had to plan the journey very carefully; making contingency plans for food, toilets, and extra traffic, it was August on the North Coast 500 after all. The Shop is small so an

appointment time in advance was needed. As it happened Thursday was a glorious day and the journey went well, including the small cafe next door being open without pre-booking. But I could not trust that anything would fall into place and collecting the sewing machine at the end of the month may be an entirely different kind of journey.

This is just a small example of the trust which is now lost for doing any of the simplest things in life spontaneously and confidently. There are so many bigger losses of trust facing us every single day that if a simple journey to the Quilt Shop, supermarket, local shop feels overwhelming it is no wonder that we like Peter on the Sea of Galilee are scared witless *when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink*. Loss of nerve is a loss of trust. When Peter jumped out of the boat to walk across the lake towards Jesus, his friend and teacher - when Peter confidently began this journey he was full of faith and trust that this was possible. He was fine as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus but as soon as he looked down into the churning waves his faith and trust simply melted away. This is what many, if not all of us, face every single day now - we face a world without any certainty, an unstable and unreliable world. We face a world which we no longer trust.

Like Peter we need to learn, relearn and learn again to lift our eyes from the chaos of the world and look directly into the face of God. To echo the words of this morning's Psalm we need to trust in God, even when or especially when the world fails us.

*I will listen to what God the Lord says;
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants –
but let them not turn to folly. . . . Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven.
. . . Righteousness goes before him
and prepares the way for his steps.*

Regaining our trust, finding our nerve again, learning to keep our eyes on God and not rely as we have done for so long on the certainty of the world - all of this will take time. It is so easy to turn our focus back on the worldly

things we thought we could trust and harder to keep our focus on the God in whom we can trust. As we lament our loss of trust in things of the world we can rediscover our trust in the promises of God. Just as Peter did when Jesus reached out his hand and rescued him from the chaos that churned beneath his feet

“we have travelled so far, so fast, that now it is time to sit and let our souls catch up with us”

Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Let us pray, for the church and the world, thanking God for the blessings in our lives

Intercessions

Blessing

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen

Act of Dedication

Almighty God,
we thank you for the gift of your holy word:
may it be a lantern to our feet,
a light upon our paths,
and a strength to our lives.
Take us and use us to love and serve all people
in the power of the Holy Spirit
and in the name of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Praise

You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; *
you renew the face of the earth.
You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; *
you renew the face of the earth.
May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; may the Lord rejoice in all his works.
You renew the face of the earth.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; * you renew the face of the earth.

Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord: And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Be with you and all those for whom you have a care this day and evermore. Amen