

26.3.23 am

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Date: 26 March 2023

Preacher: Dr Antony Latham

[0 : 00] So good morning to everybody here and a special welcome to any visitors that might be here this morning. I think we're a little bit reduced in numbers because there's a lot of COVID and bugs going around, but it's just great to be here. Welcome to everyone who's online as well.

Tea and coffee are served after the service, to which all are welcome. So you'll see tables coming out here afterwards, just here, and you're very welcome to join us. The garlic service is at 6 p.m. and will be taken by Hamish Taylor.

The elders and deacons training via Zoom is tomorrow night at 7.30. And you'll have seen most of these things up on the screen. I won't go through everything, but there'll be a community lunch tomorrow.

That's Monday in the church from 12 to 2 p.m. Free of charge, donations for Crossroads Harris, if desired. So then we have the Ladies' Fellowship, the other things that go on during the week.

Just mention that the prayer meeting will be held in person and on Zoom on Wednesday at 7.30 p.m. Muriel McLeod will speak about her work in Cambodia with OMF.

[1 : 20] Service is next Sunday. David McLeod is leading the 11 a.m. and also 6 p.m. service next Sunday. And just to say that the retiring collection at the Communion for Slavic Gospel Association was £166.

So we're going to start our service by singing from Psalm number 46. Psalm number 46, the first seven verses. God is our refuge and our strength.

In straits a present aid. Therefore, although the earth be removed, we will not be afraid. This is a wonderful psalm, so let's sing this to God's praise.

God is our refuge and our strength.

In straits a present aid. Therefore, O Lord, the earth be removed, We will not be afraid.

[2 : 41] Though hills and hills and hills, the seas be cast. Though waters roaring wake, And troubled be.

Yea, though the hills by swelling seas do shake, A river is whose streams do glad, The city of our God, The holy place where in the Lord most high hath is our world.

God in the midst of her doth dwell, Nothing shall her remove, The Lord to her, And help her will, And the heart right early prove, The heathen rich, Dumeriously, The kingdom's moving where, The Lord God hath turned his voice, The Lord of hosts upon our side,

The Lord of hosts upon our side, Doth constantly remain, The God of Jacob's refuge, The God of Jacob's refuge, For us safely to maintain.

let's just bow our heads in prayer heavenly father we just thank you so much for bringing us here this morning we thank you lord that we are here to worship you and that we come in the name of Jesus Christ our savior thank you that we are only able to come before you in his name and we thank you that Jesus has opened the way for those who call upon him who put their trust in him that the way is open into the holy of holies and that we can come before you now lord we can come boldly before the throne of grace and we need you so much we pray for everybody here everyone who's online that in our different needs and in our problems and anxieties sicknesses whatever it may be we ask you lord to be with us this morning and as we worship you we pray that your spirit will be working mightily amongst us in each of our hearts we pray lord that you will open your word to us as well and that we will find wonderful things there things that will make us closer to you and better followers of Jesus so lord we commit this service to you we also commit all of those who are unable to be here through sickness whatever that may be through whatever may be preventing somebody to be here those who are perhaps afraid to come into the church we pray lord that you'll be close to them we lift up our community we pray for all of those who are grieving we pray for

those who are suffering from addictions we pray for those who have no interest at all in church or the gospel lord we lift up our community to you and we pray lord that we with your strength north or north or north may shine the light of Jesus into this community we pray this day for our nation and particularly at this time when a new leader is to be chosen and we ask for your sovereign will to be in charge of that we pray lord that our nation may turn again to you lord that instead of turning away that there will be a turning back and that your spirit will be working amongst our wonderful nation here we thank you for the wonderful weather that we've had even though we've had some hail just now it's been beautiful and we thank you that this is your creation and that we can praise you for the artistry you have the beauty that you've created and thank you for your power over your creation as we're going to talk about later in this service your wonderful power for you created everything in the beginning

[8 : 43] God created the heavens and the earth and through Jesus through the word all things that have been made have been made by him so lord we come before you we ask your forgiveness for our many failings we ask your forgiveness for our sins so that we can be cleansed now by the blood of Jesus shed for us on the cross so be with each one and particularly for the young ones we pray that as they go to Sunday school you will be helping them and their teachers to discover more about you we ask these in Jesus name amen so the young ones might like to come up forward here please that's great we've got quite a few this morning that's lovely excellent how are you this morning yeah good good so when were you last on the ferry you been on the ferry recently anyway sure you must have been yes when were you on the ferry

October in October okay do you like going on the ferry yeah okay have you ever been in really rough weather when there's a bit of a storm on in the ferry yes what was it like like it was like really like bumpy but really bumpy did you get sick no oh that's good that's good yeah yeah because it's a big ship isn't it it goes all over the place when you're out on the minch it can be wild out there oh no yes yes we I think we heard about that yeah okay so it can be really wild has anyone else been in a storm on the ferry when it's ready yeah what was it like yeah yeah just want to get off okay can you imagine what it's like if you're in a very small little say a little fishing boat but you're out in that water what would that be like you wouldn't like that much would you it'd be pretty scary well the bible has a story which most of you probably know about when Jesus was with his friends his disciples and they went out on one of these small fishing boats on a place called the sea of Galilee a big loch that they were often out there on and they were in a small boat and a big storm came along do you remember that story anyone remember it what happened then anyone remember what happened what was Jesus doing yeah he was sleeping absolutely sleeping in the middle of the storm quite amazing and the the disciples were getting very very anxious very very worried and these were these were strong fishermen they knew what they were doing but they thought that they were going to drown and there were no there were no lifeboats nothing like that in those days so they thought they were going to drown they probably didn't swim either like a lot of fishermen so they were in big trouble but then

Jesus what happened then do you remember anybody did they wake him up yes okay what did what did what did he do yeah he calmed the storm he calmed the storm exactly he just said one sentence he said be still be calm the wind stopped and the waves were completely flat and the disciples well they were absolutely gobsmacked they were amazed at this and they were actually quite frightened because they they could never seen such power before I'm going to show a picture hopefully it will come up on the screen what do you think that is yeah was that the boat that he was in well actually it might have been because this boat was discovered it was dug up recently on the shore on the shores of the sea of Galilee and it's a fishing boat and it was dated to just the same time as Jesus so this is amazing actually you can go and see it it's probably in Israel somewhere in a museum but this is the sort of boat that they would have been in and that's that just sort of makes it real doesn't it you know that's just the sort of boat that Jesus would have been in out on that I've got a little video clip which we're going to show and this by the way is of the sea of Galilee what you're going to see is the sea of Galilee the same place where they were it may or may not work the video if it does work and this is also for the people online who can't see anything shows a storm on the sea of Galilee quite recently we'll give it another minute or so here we are you can just about see some of that that is the same place where they were and that was taken quite recently and you can see that you can get some really rough weather it's not a huge loch but you can get incredibly big waves coming very suddenly so thanks thanks for that and I think there's one more picture that

we're going to have a look at but now you can actually hear we've got the video again showing the rough weather so that's the sea of Galilee okay and I think we've got one more picture just to show you that's the boat again the other yep there we are that gives another picture if you look at the when you're on the ferry it looks a bit like that but imagine being in that small boat it was really really scary so thanks

Simon that's fine but the thing that we have to remember is that Jesus he seemed to be completely calm he wasn't worried the disciples were really worried and these were experienced people out on the sea but Jesus was completely calm and he had complete authority he just said be calm be still and this is amazing and we will go through storms we'll go through difficult things in our lives you will and all the people here will as well and there are times when we get very scared but that story shows us that Jesus has this immense power he made everything and he has this wonderful power we can trust him and we can put our lives in his hands so let's let's remember that that incredible storm and that we can trust him and his mighty power so let's just say a wee prayer

[16 : 23] Lord we just thank you for that amazing story of what you did that you were completely in control sometimes we don't feel in control sometimes we feel that we're in big trouble all sorts of things going on but we can call upon you just as those disciples did and when we do that you respond you always do so we commit our lives to you now in Jesus name Amen okay we're going to sing mission praise number 760 when we walk with the Lord in the light of his word what a glory he sheds on our way while we do his good will he abides with us still and with all who will trust and obey trust and obey that's I think the message from this what we've been reading just now and also from this hymn thank you let's sing to God's praise when we walk with the Lord in the light of his word while the glory he sheds on our way while we do his good will he abides with us still and with all who will trust and obey trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey shadow can rise not a cloud in the skies but a smile quickly drives it away not a doubt or a fear not a sign or a tear can abide while we trust and obey trust and obey but there's no other way to be happy in

Jesus but to trust and obey not a burden we bear not a sorrow we share but our toil need doth richly repay not a grief nor a loss not a frown nor a cross but it's blessed if we trust and obey trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey trust and obey and never can go the delights of his love until all on the altar we lay for the favor he shows and the joy he bestows are for them who will trust and obey trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey and in fellowship sweet we will sit at his feet or we'll walk by his side in the way what he says we will do what he says we will go and that fear only trust and obey trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey and OMG Thank you.

So we're going to read from Mark chapter 4, beginning at verse 1. So we'll begin at verse 1, and we're going to go as far as the end of the chapter, which is verse 41.

And what I think is, rather than read the entire chapter, I'm going to read to verse 20, and then skip to verse 35. So Mark chapter 4, beginning at verse 1.

[22 : 28] And he said,

We're going to skip now to verse 35. But in between, he's giving more parables. You've got the lamp under a basket, the parable of the seed growing, and the parable of the mustard seed.

But then, moving on to verse 35. On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, Let us go across to the other side.

And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.

But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still.

[25 : 59] And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said to them, Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? And they were filled with great fear, and said to one another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

This is the word of God. We're now going to sing a Gaelic psalm. Psalm 121.

And it's the first three verses. I'll read this in English. I too the hills will lift mine eyes. From whence doth come mine aid.

them, and frightened shouts?

I think there are a few reasons. Firstly, he was exhausted because he was human. He'd been teaching all day, possibly with nothing to eat.

Maybe you've had that sort of exhaustion when you merely have to put your head down on a pillow and you're asleep in seconds. This was how Jesus was.

But what does that tell us about him? It tells us about his humanity. When he became one of us, he took on all of our humanity, subject to the same tiredness, same hunger, same thirst, same pain, as we all have at times.

[36 : 39] And this is so important. Becoming one of us did not mean that he miraculously avoided all the hardships. He was and is fully human.

And he was completely shattered, if you like. And it means that Jesus is our fellow human, as well as being God. It was as a human being that he lived a perfect life, even though tempted in every way as we are.

And as a human, Jesus, our brother, went to the cross on behalf of the rest of us. And this was the only way to save us. By becoming one of us, he was able to represent all mankind and take the curse of sin on himself and deal with it decisively on the cross.

The curse of sin with us since the sin of the man, Adam, was lifted for us by the obedience on the cross of the man, Jesus Christ.

The curse was broken by a man, Jesus. We read in Romans 5, 19, For as by the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners.

[37 : 51] So by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous. By knowing about his humanity, we can also relate to him as someone who understands us completely, having experienced life here.

He knows and feels our condition. And this is a comfort and consolation when we're going through temptations and storms in our lives. Hebrews 4, 15 says, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who, in every respect, has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. So the question for you and me is, have we put our trust in this Jesus, who is God and man, who understands our condition, our weaknesses, our temptations, and who alone could save us by his sacrifice on the cross?

Secondly, another reason why I think he may have been sleeping is because he had complete trust in his mission. What do I mean by that? We see it here in Jesus, complete trust, complete faith.

He knew his mission was to continue bringing the good news and ultimately to go to the cross. He knew that he was safe in his father's hands.

[39 : 26] He continues to sleep despite the storm, even though, because he is completely exhausted, but also completely certain that nothing would be able to stop him from achieving his goal of salvation.

On numerous occasions as he neared Jerusalem and the cross, he had to explain to the disciples that he was going to die and to rise again. His work was still to be completed.

No storm or danger was going to interfere with what he had to do. He had complete confidence in his father's mission for him, and so he could sleep peacefully when all around was chaos.

And can you and I see here and be encouraged by this single-minded certainty that Jesus had about his mission to save us? From the start to finish of his ministry, he set his face to the cross. He knew that nothing would hinder this work. No storm, no peril, no danger could possibly deflect him. Should we not be greatly encouraged by this?

[40 : 38] By his determination, by his faithful obedience to the Father, by his beautiful and consistent journey to Calvary. We see here a total surrender to what he had to do for us.

And no shipwreck could possibly hinder this. There was nothing accidental about the cross. It had to be planned, it had been planned, before time, and prophesied again and again in the scriptures. He could sleep peacefully just now. So that's another reason why I think he was sleeping. Let's be encouraged and put our faith in this awesome man who was also God, who knew exactly what he was doing.

Our salvation is no accident. Let's look at the reaction of the disciples. Meanwhile, the disciples were going to pieces. Seasoned fishermen who knew the Sea of Galilee, probably like Peter over

there knows the minch, and understood the waters around there.

They knew the place, but they were quite convinced that they were going to drown. What was Jesus doing? Sleeping. You can just see them shaking him.

[41 : 57] Don't you care, they cried, we're perishing. How could you possibly sleep in this dire situation? There was no lifeboat, no emergency services. By now, the storm was ferocious.

The waves were smashing over the boat. And we can sympathize with these disciples. Which of us would react differently? Teacher, they said, do you not care that we are perishing?

He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

So let's have a look at what's going on here. What do we learn about the disciples that so like ourselves at times? First of all, they called to him for help. Whatever else we can say about the disciples, they called upon Jesus when things were getting really bad.

So they had a faith of sorts. They saw Jesus as the best option to help them. They'd seen his miracles. They reckoned he might save them. And this in fact resulted in Jesus waking and calming the storm.

[43 : 07] It's almost like they had faith in Jesus but had little understanding yet of who he was. But at least they had that faith in him to help them.

Where would you put yourself in this situation? Do you have a faith in Jesus? And are you willing, am I willing, to call out to him to get help in life's storms?

Maybe your faith is weak. But at least, like these men, you would call out to him for help. And Jesus doesn't condemn them for waking him.

On the contrary, he reacts immediately and he calms the storm. Your faith might be weak, perhaps like the disciples. And maybe somebody here doesn't fully understand who Jesus is, but at least there's faith and you're willing to call upon him.

Be encouraged, just like in that boat about to sink. Jesus will respond to your weak faith. Why is that? Because the faith is in him.

[44 : 15] Your faith may be weak like a mustard seed, but it's in the one you pray to who can do all things. So let's not be afraid to exercise our faith in Jesus, however weak, to call out to him in your troubles.

He always responds to weak faith. We then see that they misunderstood his willingness to save them. Notice what they shout out to him.

Teacher, don't you care that we're perishing? They had faith in him to a degree, but they doubted his care for them. Do you not care? They cry. There's a progression in the faith and understanding of the disciples that we see clearly in the Bible.

And we read this because it helps us in our struggles to believe. They're so human in their reactions. Don't you care? This sort of honesty in the Bible makes me trust in it more and more. The disciples who wrote the Gospels never sugarcoat their credentials. They never tried to show how great they were. It's brutally honest. And do you struggle to believe that Jesus cares about you, particularly in a storm of life, a bereavement, an illness, losing your job, whatever it might be?

[45 : 35] It is difficult sometimes to believe that he cares. Like the disciples, we have to struggle with our understanding more and more of who this is we are following.

And at that time they had only a weak and imperfect knowledge of Jesus and were often just like them. But the good news is that the disciples did come to understand who he is and they became changed men afterwards.

And when we see their imperfections and weaknesses and their lack of understanding, we can be encouraged. Jesus never gave up on them. they were all he had.

And you and I are what he has. And he will never give up on you or me. And so when things are really tough and we feel like he doesn't care, take heart.

Your faith in him and his care can and will grow as you read his word, as you trust his promises, and you understand his mission to save you and me, even going to the cross for us.

[46 : 42] We then see, I think, the power and authority of Jesus. With one command, the sea and the wind obey him. Notice the verse says, he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, peace, be still.

It's not a gentle prayer, but a very strong command, he rebuked the wind. And this is one of the mighty miracles who showed who Jesus was, not just as a healer and a great teacher, but in complete control of nature.

The wind instantly obeyed him, and there was a great calm. Not just a bit of wave reduction, a great calm. Of course, we can know about Jesus in our heads, that he created all things, but do we really understand his complete command over nature?

nature. This is one of the signs that helped the disciples and helps you and I to understand just who he is. We read in John chapter one, all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

I've recently had a few meetings with a couple of youth fellowships to discuss science and Christianity. Christianity. And it's wonderful to be able to encourage young people to understand just what it means for Jesus to be our creator.

[48 : 13] And we live in a day when many see science, the investigation of nature, to be entirely separate from faith in God. How sad. Most of the great scientists of the past knew that they were simply examining what God has done and is doing, which is why they were great scientists.

Science is finding out what God has done. Nature is created by and is under the control of God. Jesus showed this clearly in this story.

We may not understand sometimes about nature, earthquakes, disasters, but God is nevertheless in control of all that he has made.

Why are we so afraid? afraid? See the words of Jesus after he calmed the storm. Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? Now at first glance you might think this is a bit unfair, but Jesus is never unfair.

He said these words not because he didn't know why they were afraid, but to help them to grow in their understanding and their faith. Why are you still afraid? Have you still no faith?

[49 : 29] And we naturally fear, I think, when things go terribly wrong. Jesus is essentially saying here that no matter what the circumstances are, even in the worst case, we can have faith in him and not be afraid.

It's a high bar, a very high bar of faith that's one that we should aspire to. And of course the best example of such faith is that of Jesus himself.

He went through worse than any of us will, but he kept the faith and he stayed the course right through to death and beyond. We will face very hard circumstances even when we are in obedience to Jesus.

Remember, the disciples were simply obeying him by taking the boats out to the other side. It is in obedience to him that they face disaster. We're also not immune.

We can be doing his will and bad things can happen, not because we are disobedient. So the bar of faith that Jesus challenges us is high.

[50 : 36] But is that not a great thing? Are we fearful? Listen to those words again. Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? Did they then switch to being unafraid?

Did these words of Jesus reassure them? Well, they likely stopped fearing the storm because it had ceased. But they had a different fear now. We read in verse 41, and they were filled with great fear and said to one another, Who then is this that even the wind and the waves obey him?

A new fear comes upon them, a fear of the utter mystery and awesomeness of this person in the boat with them. These were seasoned fishermen who had just seen the power and majesty of the creator in their midst.

They realised they were in the presence of someone out of this world. Their understanding of the predictability of nature and reality was shaken to the core, and such power is frightening.

What else might he do? Is he good? If not, then he might do something terrible. Their entire mindset was in turmoil. They depended up until then on, as we often do, on the rootedness of their lives in nature.

[51 : 58] Nature was what they understood, and this had been overturned. That stability was shaken completely. And the question for you and I is, are we prepared for an encounter like this with the risen Lord?

Do we understand that he is the Lord of the universe in all his majesty? Will you not put him in control of your life? One of the facts I like to tell the youth in the discussion about science is to do with the size of the universe.

And if you look up on a clear night, you may see the great sweep of the Milky Way across the sky. I'm sure many of you have seen that. What we're looking at is our own galaxy, billions of stars, and we're gazing through the enormous disk of the galaxy.

Our galaxy contains at least a hundred billion stars, including our own sun. Now imagine if you wanted to cross from one side of the galaxy to the other, and you're going very fast, even as fast as the speed of light.

Now the speed of light is 186,000 miles per second. You can't go that speed, but if you were, how long would it take? 100,000 years.

[53 : 22] And yet our galaxy is just one of billions of galaxies. What God has created is utterly awesome and vast and beautiful.

And now we begin to see some of the majesty of Jesus. It reminds me of that wonderful picture of the risen Christ in Revelation 1 13.

We see there the vision John had of the risen Jesus. The same John who had been in that boat with Jesus. And we read, in the midst of the lampstands was one like the son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

The hairs of his head were white, like wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace. And his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars. From his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword. And his face was like the sun in full strength.

[54 : 27] When I saw him I fell at his feet as though dead. That's Jesus. And so as we look back at this passage we see Jesus the man who took our nature fully sleeping with exhaustion.

He completely understands us and he can save us on the cross as the man, our substitute. We also see that Jesus knew his mission. It would be completed.

His father was in control and he could sleep peacefully. So be encouraged by the single minded faith he had in his mission for you and I. Storms happen in our lives even when we're obeying Jesus.

And like the disciples we should call upon him even if our faith is very weak. And we should grow in trust that he really cares for us whatever the situation. And his power is absolute in nature and in our lives.

So ask him now if you haven't to be Lord in your life. Let's pray. Amen. Father we thank you for this wonderful passage of scripture that shows us so much about Jesus our Lord and our Saviour.

[55 : 52] And we pray that each one of us here will understand more and more the nature of Jesus Christ God and man mighty creator the one who can save us the one who's always there when we call upon him with our weak faith.

So bless us now as we continue in your service and worship in Jesus name. Amen. So we're going to sing our closing singing which is from Mission Praise number 757.

When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, you've taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.

Sing this to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll.

Amen. Whatever my lot you have taught me to say It is well, it is well with my soul It is well with my soul It is well, it is well with my soul Though Satan should buffet, if trials should come Let this blessed assurance control That Christ has regarded my helpless estate

[58 : 19] And has shed his own blood for my soul It is well, it is well with my soul It is well, it is well with my soul I sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought I sin not in part but the whole Praise the Lord, praise the Lord O my soul, O my soul

It is well with my soul It is well, it is well with my soul For me, be it Christ, be it Christ, hence to live If Jordan above me shall roam No bind shall be mine For in death as in life You will whisper your peace to my soul It is well with my soul

It is well, it is well with my soul But Lord, it's for you For your coming we wait The sky not the grave is our goal O trump of the angel O voice of the Lord Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul It is well with my soul It is well, it is well with my soul

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ And the love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with us all now and evermore Amen Amen Amen Amen Genie Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen