**Service – Sunday 9th August 2020**

*Service conducted by Ken Greer*

**Welcome and Introduction**

Good morning, and welcome to worship this morning. My name is Ken Greer, and it is lovely to be invited into your homes this morning.

Jesus said “I assure you that if you have faith as big as a mustard seed, you can say to this hill “Go from here to there”, and it will go. You could do anything.”

My theme this morning is Faith, so let us start our worship, by singing that great B.B.

**Opening Hymn: Will your anchor hold**

We may be tossed around by all sorts of troubles, but we can rely on our Saviour to see us through.

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| 1.Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,  when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?  When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,  will your anchor drift, or firm remain? | 4. Will your eyes behold through the morning light,  the city of gold and the harbour bright?  Will your anchor safe by the heavenly shore,  when life's storms are passed for evermore? |
| 2. Will your anchor hold in the straights of fear,  when the breakers roar and the reef is near?  While the surges rage, and the wild winds blow,  shall the angry waves then your back o’erflow? | Chorus: *We have an anchor that keeps the soul*  *steadfast and sure while the billows roll;*  *fastened to the rock which cannot move,*  *grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!* |
| 3. Will your anchor hold in the floods of death,  when the waters cold chill your latest breath?  On the rising tide you can never fail,  while your anchor holds within the veil. | Priscilla Jane Owens (1829 - 1907)  ccli 169737  Streaming Licence 595811 |

**Prayers**

And now that we have praised the Lord in song, let us turn to the Lord in prayer. Let us come together to make our prayers of Praise and Confession.

O Lord, we come together this morning in very different surroundings from those we would normally worship you, but this reinforces to us the fact that your church is the people, not the building. We are here today to give you are heartfelt thanks and praise for everything you have poured upon us. We cannot list your gifts to us; there are too many to even contemplate the task, but we are so grateful for all you have done for us.

We see ourselves surrounded by all the wonderful things that have been invented in recent years, the web, the machines we have to make our lives easier. Frequently we think that this is all due to us, but in fact there is an all creating Power behind it, and this morning we give you thanks for all you have led us to discover.

As we look out our windows, we see the wonders of nature that surround us. I give thanks that in the last 10 weeks, I have possibly for the first time truly appreciated the wonders that take place in a garden, the different birds that feed and flock around the trees, even the insects that frequent the hidden corners. All Nature bears witness to an all creating power, and so we thank you again for giving us all this beauty to see. We also pray that we will be good guardians of the wild life for future generations.

Today we thank you particularly for the greatest gift of all, that you gave to us, your undeserving children, and that is the gift of Jesus. He lived an earthly life, suffered the temptations and disappointments that we face, but never for a second lost his trust and faith in you. We know that we still have Jesus as our shining example before us, and we also know that we have a further gift, the Holy Spirit, available to us to help us through all the challenges we face in our lives.

We praise you for the way you changed the lives of the early disciples, and go on changing lives today, if only we will let you. And so we open our hearts to you in confession, for all the times we have fallen short of what you would want from us. We know we could have done more, we had ample opportunities to talk about your impact on our lives, and backed away. Forgive us for our lack of faith, and help us to grasp the chances in the future to spread your name around our local areas

Jesus said if we had faith the size of a mustard seed, we could move mountains. Give us that faith, so that we can bring your Kingdom closer

And now let us bring these prayers together, using the words that Jesus taught his disciples, and saying: “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 tine is the kingdom, the power and the glory

For ever and ever

Amen

**Children’s address**

Now for a word with the boys and girls who may be listening to our service this morning

Today my theme is “Faith”. What is Faith? Basically, it means believing that something is true, even if you are not able to prove it is true. Most of you have been away from your schools for a long time now, and won’t have had the enjoyment of having Science lessons. I used to love the bits of Chemistry lessons where we could carry out an experiment, making lots of smoke and smells, but in the end we could prove that if you added something to something else, you would achieve a certain result. You could prove that just as you can prove that 2+2= 4. There is no doubt about it.

Much of our religion is to do with Faith. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God and came down to Earth to live a life like you and me. He lived a life of just over 30 years, doing lots of good things, curing people and showing people how to live better lives. But the Jewish authorities felt threatened by his popularity and by some of the things he said, so they plotted with the Romans to get rid of him, and Jesus was crucified. He died on a cross, and was buried. But he then rose from the dead.

Now evidence exists that he lived and did lots of good things, but we have no evidence that he was the Son of God, or that he rose from the dead. But that is what we as Christians believe happened, we have to take it on faith. As you get older, you will find the truth in it, as you get to know Jesus in your lives, you will realise that Jesus lives and that he is there to help you every step of your way through life.

You won’t need any other evidence, through your faith, you will know Jesus as your Friend and Saviour.

**Let us sing again, and our hymn is “I heard the voice of Jesus say.”**

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| 1. I heard the voice of Jesus say,  'Come unto Me and rest;  lay down, thou weary one, lay down  thy head upon My breast':  I came to Jesus as I was,  weary, and worn, and sad;  I found in Him a resting-place,  and He has made me glad. | 3. I heard the voice of Jesus say,  'I am this dark world's light;  look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,  and all thy day be bright':  I looked to Jesus and I found  in Him my star, my sun;  and in that light of life I'll walk  till travelling days are done. |
| 2. I heard the voice of Jesus say,  'Behold, I freely give  the living water; thirsty one,  stoop down and drink, and live':  I came to Jesus, and I drank  of that life-giving stream;  my thirst was quenched,  my soul revived,  and now I live in Him. | Horatius Bonar  ccli 169737  Streaming Licence 595811 |

**Let us now hear the word of God, as we listen to our readings this morning.**

***The first reading is from Matthew 14:22-33 (NIV)***

(This is a video version that Ken found on the internet. The words of the reading are below for those following the script only)

**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.” (NIV)

***The Second reading us taken from Romans 10:5-15 (NIV)***

5Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.” 6But 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). 8But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: 9If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For 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. 11As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” 12For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

14How, 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? 15And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Thanks be to God for His Word.

**Let us sing our next hymn, which is a call to follow Jesus, “Will you come and follow me.”**

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| 1.. Will you come and follow me,  if I but call your name?  Will you go where you don't know  and never be the same?  Will you let my love be shown,  will you let my name be known,  will you let my life be grown  in you and you in me? | 3.. Will you love the 'you' you hide  if I but call your name?  Will you quell the fear inside  and never be the same?  Will you use the faith you've found  to reshape the world around  through my sight and touch and sound  in you and you in me? |
| 2.. Will you leave your self behind  if I but call your name?  Will you care for cruel and kind  and never be the same?  Will you risk the hostile stare  should your life attract or scare,  will you let me answer prayer  in you and you in me? | 4.. Lord, your summons echoes true  when you but call my name.  Let me turn and follow you  and never be the same.  In your company I'll go  where your love and footsteps show.  Thus I'll move and live and grow  in you and you in me. |
| John Bell and Graham Maule ccli 169737 Streaming Licence 595811 | |

**Sermon:**

2020 has been a very different year, and probably not at all what we had been expecting. Like me, you might have been making plans for what you were going to do, holidays, seeing family, going to new places, but all these dreams were to turn to ashes. I am writing this in mid June, and the lock down is still in full swing, I have virtually been out of the house on one occasion over the last 10 weeks, and that was to go to Christie’s! However, in the last few days, there have been some concessions thrown to those of us who are shielding, we are now allowed to go for some exercise with up to one other person. Elizabeth was very excited for me, when she heard the news, but I was less excited. I was suddenly filled with apprehension at having to cross the threshold and venture out into a very threatening world. I felt very happy and secure in my little bubble and did not want to take any risks. But I realised I had to take that giant step and go out, to get life going again, to do the things I ought to be doing.

It made me think of how similar it can be for our churches as well. At times, we can feel we are doing really well inside our 4 walls; Everything is progressing nicely, ticking over really well, but then the penny drops, and we realise this is not what we are called by Christ to do. His message to his disciples was very clear, “Tend my sheep” (John 21v.7), and to do that we have to look outwards , we have got to be willing to take risks, and possibly fail. But doing nothing is not an option, we have to respond to the call of Jesus, we have got to leave our bubble.

Nobody could accuse Peter of being unwilling to take a risk. When Jesus called Peter to join him as a disciple at the start of his ministry, Peter didn’t think twice, left his nets and followed Jesus. Spontaneity was the name of Peter’s game, he didn’t stop to think what the potential outcomes of his actions might be, he just did it. Spoke first and thought afterwards.

But this at times can lead to incredible insights. In Matthew 16, Jesus asks the disciples , “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”, and the other disciples came out with names like John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. When Jesus aske them who they thought he was, it was Peter who blurted out ,”You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus recognised something in Peter, that other people didn’t. Where others just saw a big, rough, uneducated fisherman with a fiery temper, Jesus saw the rock on which he was going to build his church. Even when Jesus had been arrested and Peter denied that he even knew Jesus, Jesus forgave him and stuck by him, just as he does with you and me, when we let him down and fail him.

Just before our New Testament reading today, two important events had happened. Herod had executed John the Baptist and Jesus had fed the 5,000.Jesus realised that his life was at risk and having accomplished the miracle of feeding the multitude, he had done what so often he did, retired to a solitary place to pray to God, his father. Whenever Jesus needed strengthening or reassurance, he knew there was only one place to get it, and that was from God, and every day he devoted time to talk to and to listen to God. There is a lesson there for all of us, and I feel very hypocritical saying this, for so often I fail to allow God to guide me in the way he wants me to go. I have used the analogy before, but sometimes it is like us dashing into the Doctor’s surgery, pouring out all our problems, and then standing up and rushing out, without waiting for the doctor to tell us what he is recommending us to do.

Here, the disciples have gone out ahead of Jesus, and had got caught by one of those freak storms that can so suddenly spring up on Lake Galilee . The boat is pitching about, and the disciples were struggling. Suddenly they see Jesus walking on the water towards them. They are terrified, they still hadn’t realised just what Jesus could do. But Peter shouts out to Jesus and asks him if he should come to Jesus, and Jesus says, ”Come”. It would be interesting to know the tone that Jesus spoke in. Was it an invitation, or was it a command? However it was phrased Peter as usual made a prompt response and jumped out of the boat. But fear took over and his faith cracked, and as so often in his relationship with Jesus, Peter needed rescuing. Isn’t it reassuring to know that Jesus is still in the rescuing business, and is looking out for each and every one of us every day?

Peter believed he could walk on the water to Jesus, but the sea got rougher, and he started to sink, his faith vanished. Charles Kingsley once wrote “I do not want merely to possess a faith; I want a faith that possesses me.” We all want a faith like that, one that gives certainty, that tells us we are on the right track. Unfortunately, life is not like that, faith is not something you can put under a microscope, and prove its existence, ; it is something you have to take on trust. Augustine of Hippo wrote in the 1st century, “Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of faith is to see what you believe.” We all hope that what we believe is correct, we have our doubts at times, the road gets rocky, ill health or death strikes around us, we seem to be on our own in a whirlpool of emotions. This is where the power of prayer kicks in , this is where regular conversations with God prove their worth, and this is especially where the great gift of the Holy Spirit enters our life and gives us the strength to face every challenge that life can throw at us. And this Holy Spirit is available, the amazing thing is we just have to ask for it, but beware, it can change your life!

As life returns to normality, what difference will this make to our lives as Christians and to our life as a church? Things can’t be exactly the same, too many things have changed. But the message of Jesus is the same, he is still telling us to take his word to the world, to feed his sheep. The message of salvation is for everyone, not just the few. If you give your life to Christ, Paul says you will be saved. This is the message of our reading from Paul’s letter to the Romans. But for people to want to give themselves to Christ, they need to be aware of his saving grace and how will they learn that if no one tells them? “How can the message be proclaimed, if the messengers are not sent out?” We are the modern day messengers, this is what Jesus is calling us to do, to proclaim the good news. This is what are faith is about, but it is not an easy task. As Flannery O’Connor, the American novelist wrote “What people don’t realise is how much religion costs. They think faith is a big electric blanket, when of course it is the cross.” We are challenged to take up our cross and follow wherever Jesus leads us in the future. May we be listening for his call.

**Let us sing our next hymn, “Take my life and let it be”**

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| 1.. Take my life, and let it be  consecrated, Lord, to Thee;  take my moments and my days,  let them flow in ceaseless praise. | 4.. Take my silver and my gold,  not a mite would I withhold;  take my intellect, and use  every power as Thou shalt choose. |
| 2.. Take my hands, and let them move  at the impulse of Thy love;  take my feet, and let them be  swift and beautiful for Thee. | 5.. Take my will, and make it Thine;  it shall be no longer mine;  take my heart, it is Thine own;  it shall be Thy royal throne. |
| 3.. Take my voice, and let me sing  always, only, for my King;  take my lips, and let them be  filled with messages from Thee. | 6.. Take my love; my Lord, I pour  at Thy feet its treasure store:  take myself, and I will be  ever, only, all, for Thee. |
| Frances R. Havergal ccli 169737 Streaming Licence 595811 | |

**Let us come together again in prayer, as we make our prayers of Intercession for others.**

We pray for our world.

Our world has been truly shaken this year with all the disasters that we have been facing. For so many, the biggest challenge was the one posed by Covid 19. We saw our lives being turned upside down, the death toll mounting daily, with no apparent end in sight, but we rejoice that we seem to be coming out of the dark cloud, rejoicing to see family and friends again, rejoicing that in the near future we will be able to worship together again.

We recognise that we have created an unequal world, where some are treated as second class citizens, and this was brought home to us forcibly by the “Black Lives Matter” campaign.

Help us to recognise that all are created as equal in your sight and help us to treat everyone as a brother or sister in God.

We pray for our country

Our prayers are with all those who have lost their jobs, or businesses, after the Corona pandemic. Help all those who are looking for a new direction in their lives, and strengthen their faith, so that they may successfully face the new challenges that life presents. We give thanks again for all the Key workers in recent months, the NHS, police, delivery men, everyone, who played a major role in keeping the country safe. We pray for our Government, and ask you to direct them in the right way forward, so the we can get the country back on its feet. We pray for our schools and universities as they face a difficult re-entry, after the shut down. We give thanks for all people who provided an example of self sacrifice and true love for others in small or big ways, for the Captain Toms and others. Help us to learn from our experiences.

We pray for our Church

We remember all those who felt lonely and isolated during the lockdown, families who were unable to see each other, Grandparents and grandchildren kept apart. We also give thanks for all who kept our churches functioning so successfully, even if it was in a completely unusual way for all of us. As we have said before, we will not be going back to the same style of church, things have changed and we must learn from our experiences. We give thanks to Richard, who with the help of our Elders, has led us through this testing time, and we welcome Daniel , who has recently joined the Ministry team.

We pray for ourselves

We give thanks that we have come through the pandemic, successfully, but our hearts grieve for all those families that lost a dear one to that awful disease. We now face a new challenge to once again face up to what Christ is calling us to do, to feed his sheep, to preach his word, and now in a moment of silence, we open our hearts to you, for us to bring what matters to us to you, and to hear your reassurance.

Lord, hear our prayers,

Amen

**Our closing hymn is that rousing invitation for God to lead us through this troubled life, “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”**

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| 1.. Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  pilgrim through this barren land;  I am weak but Thou art mighty;  hold me with Thy powerful hand:  Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  feed me now and evermore,  feed me now and evermore. | 3.. When I tread the verge of Jordan,  bid my anxious fears subside;  death of death, and hell's destruction,  land me safe on Canaan's side.  songs of praises, songs of praises,  I will ever give to Thee;  I will ever give to Thee. |
| 2.. Open now the crystal fountain,  whence the healing stream doth flow;  let the fiery, cloudy pillar  lead me all my journey through:  strong deliverer, strong deliverer,  be Thou still my strength and shield;  be Thou still my strength and shield. | William Williams  ccli 169737  Streaming Licence 595811 |

**Blessing**

And as our worship comes to a close, I pray that God will accompany you every step of your path this coming week and into the future, and that you will hear his words of encouragement as you carry on your pilgrimage through life.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest and abide with each and every one of us this day and for ever.

Amen