

Church at home

East Leake Methodist Church 2021

Sit comfortably in a quiet place and prepare, start with a brief period of silence, turning your mind and spirit towards God. You may want to have a cross or candle in view as a focus.

Opening prayer

God of our ups and downs,
we come together in your name
with concerns in our hearts and questions in our minds,
with troubles in our lives and fears for our world.
We come trusting that you
share our concerns and hear our questions,
embrace our troubles and know our fears.
We come trusting that you never give up on us,
That you never abandon us, never dismiss us.
For you are a God of love, of peace, of power –
You are our God. **Amen**

STF 30: Jesus, Stand Among Us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mC16hj3RoXo>

Psalm 107: 1-3, 23-32

This psalm celebrates God's steadfast love, shown as the redeemer and rescuer of God's people.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is gracious,
for his steadfast love endures for ever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say this,
those he redeemed from the hand of the enemy,

**And gathered out of the lands from the east
and from the west,
from the north and from the south.**

Let them give thanks to the Lord for his

**Goodness
and the wonders he does for his children.**

**Let them offer him sacrifices of thanksgiving
and tell of his acts with shouts of joy.**

Those who go down to the sea in ships
and ply their trade in great waters,

**These have seen the works of the Lord
and his wonders in the deep.**

For at his word the stormy wind arose
and lifted up the waves of the sea.

**They were carried up to the heavens and
down again to the deep;
their soul melted away in their peril.**

They reeled and staggered like a drunkard
and were at their wits' end.

**Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out of their distress.**

He made the storm be still
and the waves of the sea were calmed.

**Then were they glad because they were at
rest,
and he brought them to the haven they
desired.**

Let them give thanks to the Lord for his
goodness
and the wonders he does for his children.

**Let them exalt him in the congregation of the
people
and praise him in the council of the elders.**

StF 645: Will Your Anchor Hold in the Storms of Life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e66LrJWaUnU>

Readings: Job: 1-11
Mark 4: 35-41

Address

Bible month has become an annual highlight in the Methodist Church calendar. Each year, we are invited to join the rest of the Connexion in digging deep into a particular book of the Bible. This year we are looking at Mark's Gospel.

Who is Jesus? is the question that lies at the heart of Mark's gospel.

Who is this man that we have chosen to put our faith in?

What difference, might who he is – and is not – make to the world, to religion, to me, to you?

Today our lectionary reading is Mark 4: 35-41, this week we explore being heard in the storms of our lives.

Sometimes, particularly this past year, on a Sunday morning I watch the 'Big Questions' on TV, Nicky Campbell hosts a series of moral, ethical and religious debates, where an invited audience from many different world religions and some of no faith have the opportunity not only to listen to another person's prospective, but to challenge and learn from each other's views. If I dare say, I do sometimes find the debates more useful than a sermon.

Jesus left the crowds after a full day of teaching to get some rest. He sleeps in the boat while the boat becomes engulfed in a storm. Because of the location of the Sea of Galilee, storms occur quickly and violently. This means that the water can go from glassy calm to choppy white horses very quickly, as the wind whips up the water. As seasoned fishermen on this large freshwater lake, this will not have been the first time that the disciples have experienced this, but this time it was particularly severe.

The disciples are astonished that Jesus is not alert to the circumstances and their fear. When they eventually wake him, he calms the storm and questions their lack of trust in God.

Their complaint to Jesus is about the apparent mismatch between their peril and his continuing nap; they do not cry, 'Help!' or 'Do something!', they question whether he cares. This is not a theoretical argument about whether he could or should intervene miraculously. It is a cry from the heart, an exasperated rebuke from friends who feel abandoned: 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' Perhaps all they expect in another pair of hands to join in bailing out water from the boat.

Instead, Jesus changes the vast space of the inland sea simply by speaking. Jesus' questions to them – 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?'

Perhaps this is the biggest faith question is the one that the disciples ask Jesus when he is asleep: 'do you not care that we are perishing?' Our big questions may be different, but it is important to feel heard as we wrestle with challenges of life in general and in following Jesus.

As I wonder around campus wearing my collar, I have lost count (particularly this year) of the times I have been asked 'doesn't your God care?'

It reminds me of a greetings card I once received. As the flood waters rose, a man was on the porch of his house and prayed that God would save him from drowning in the flood. As he prayed a man came along in a boat. The man in the boat shouted; "get in, get in". He shouted back: "I'm waiting for God to rescue me". The waters carried on rising, he went to the second floor and finally he was forced to climb on the roof. A motorboat went by, he shouted: "I'm waiting for God". A helicopter lowered a rope "I'm waiting for God!".

When he reached heaven, he said: "God, I have perfect faith, why didn't you rescue me?" You can guess what is coming! "What more do you want from me?" asked God. "I sent you two boats and a helicopter."

My grandma would say this is a perfect example of someone being too heavenly minded to be of any earthly use!

In the storms, God can seem to be asleep for us, and we can seem to be asleep for each other. How do we find a sense of being heard by God and others in these storms?

Perhaps the biggest question any of us ask of God and each other is: 'Do you not care?'

Maybe we equate faith with politeness? Our ideal picture of a person with great faith can be someone who murmurs, 'These things happen for a reason'. But that is disturbingly close to a portrait of one of Job's comforters. It does not resemble Job or the disciples. Nor does it resemble questions I am asked by students and staff on campus. They ask questions, they protest and complain. They speak when they feel abandoned, they express depression and frustration. If we ask questions, our relationship with God and with each other moves forward with integrity through voicing our thoughts of do you not care, rather than grinding to a halt in a silent pious politeness.

Our communities need a faith that takes suffering seriously and does not silence people's pain.

I will now share with you the words of hymn number 687 Singing the Faith.

The disciples lived with Jesus, but they underestimated him. They did not see that his power applied to their very own situation. Jesus has been with his people for over 2000 years, and yet we, like the disciples, underestimate his power to handle crises in our lives. The disciples didn't then know enough about Jesus. We cannot make the same excuse. **Amen**

Hymn STF: 350 I Cannot Tell Why He, Whom Angels Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-K9rlyhg-LQ>

Prayer of intercession

Help us, loving God,

To put the gospel into action and preach it with our lives.

Help us to welcome strangers and newcomers, and make people feel wanted and cared for.

Help us to listen to the ideas of other people, and take their opinions seriously.

Help us to notice when people are sad, and be sensitive to their needs.

Help us to be alert to the lonely, the grieving and offer Christian friendship.

Help us to hear the cry of anguish or pain, and stand alongside those who need us.

Help us to be the community of Christ to all who we meet on our journey.

We dare to ask that we may grow more like Christ himself, and so help others to know his love. **Amen**

Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name;
Thy kingdom come;
They 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,
For ever and ever. AMEN**

STF 544: As the Deer Pants for the Water

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mo8Gvv4q7pU>

Blessing

As you continue on your way,
May you know that God goes before you.
By the strength of his Spirit,
Share your faith with the uncertain;
Share your love with the unlovely;
Share your presence with the lonely;
And share God with everyone,
Just as God has shared himself with you,
In the unfading blessing
Of Jesus Christ,
Our Lord and Saviour. **Amen**