

Third Sunday after Trinity

Sunday 20 June 2021

Introduction and Call to Worship

Jesus entered history as a servant, to give his life as a ransom for many. Let us humble ourselves before him as we come together in worship, and strengthen our resolve to listen for God's call in our lives amid all the distractions, fears and temptations that beset us.

Invitation to Confession

Mindful of all the times we have fallen on our journey, let us bring before the Lord everything that troubles our heart and impairs our communion with God.

We do not always prioritise your call on our lives.
Lord, have mercy.

We are fearful when we forget to put our trust in you.
Christ, have mercy.

We are proud of our achievements and knocked sideways by our failures.
Lord, have mercy.

Today's Readings

First Reading Job 38:1-11

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:
'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?
Gird up your loins like a man,
I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone
when the morning stars sang together
and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

'Or who shut in the sea with doors
when it burst out from the womb?—
when I made the clouds its garment,
and thick darkness its swaddling band,
and prescribed bounds for it,
and set bars and doors,
and said, "Thus far shall you come, and no farther,

and here shall your proud waves be stopped”?

Second Reading 2 Corinthians 6:1-13

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says,

‘At an acceptable time I have listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.’

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. In return—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also.

Gospel Mark 4:35-end

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, ‘Let us go across to the other side.’ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, ‘Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?’ And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’

HOMILY

“Peace! Be still!”

Mark 4:39

Illustration

In his work on the human psyche, Carl Jung promoted the idea of archetypes, that is, patterns of behaviour or symbolic narratives that characterise the world in which we live. These characters may wear different clothing from one place or time to the next, but they exist empirically, and reside in what Jung called the “collective unconscious”. Each conveys a truth which helps us navigate everyday life.

One of the archetypes is the “ruler”, or “king”, which is not to say that the archetype is masculine, but is rather a description of that instinct within each of us to pursue order rather than chaos, to provide structure within our sphere of influence. It is the

authority figure, the one we respect and turn to in trouble, the one on whom we fall back to sort things out when life goes wrong.

The American Franciscan priest Richard Rohr, who has applied much of Jung's work to a Christian understanding of the world, talks about the king on his throne always having his feet firmly on the ground, planted in the earth. In so doing, he is rooted and stable, able to withstand attack from every side. Even if everything is taken away from him, the king is still a king inside. He has an inner stillness and resolve that cannot be plundered, understands his value, and can therefore cope with changing fortunes.

Gospel Teaching

The sea, as it is described in the Gospels, is often interpreted by Biblical scholars as a place of trial and challenge. Like the desert, it is unsafe, showing us that the elements of the natural world can rise up with power and might, moving us aside in a second. In such circumstances we can easily be convinced of our own insignificance.

Jesus is travelling in the boat along with his disciples as they journey from one place to another. One simple interpretation of this passage is that, having calmed the storms of the sea, Jesus will likewise calm the storms of our own lives if we only put our faith in him. Yet our own experience is that the storms often fail to subside however much we believe or pray. Today's Gospel teaches us, rather, that we will suffer, but the suggestion is that the Lord is never apart from us, even in what may seem the most desperate of circumstances.

The reading from Job offers encouragement that the storms will come only as close as we can handle. The Lord says he has "prescribed bounds" for the sea: "Thus far shall you come, and no farther". But it is the deep belief in the presence of Jesus, and being in communion with him that gives us confidence to withstand the storms. "Why are you afraid?" asks Jesus, "Have you still no faith?"

Application

The storms may not abate, but neither ought they to define us; there is a larger narrative at play. Despite all our trials, we are here to be of some "definite service", as John Henry Newman said, and to remain focused on our life's work and mission, whatever external forces might distract us. We travel from one side of the lake to the other and needn't be directed off course.

In his famous poem, "If", Rudyard Kipling described Triumph and Disaster as: "two impostors" to be treated "just the same". Perhaps, when he wrote it, Kipling had in mind the words of St Paul in today's reading from 2 Corinthians: "We are treated as impostors, and yet are true". We are to stay rooted in good times and bad, with our feet on the ground, secure in the knowledge that, whatever happens around us, our destination is fixed, as is our identity in God.

Job, again, has this revealed to him: God laid the foundation of the world, sunk its bases and laid its cornerstone. Job's example is of one who loses everything but

whose life was founded on God, and onto whom he held when all was taken from him. It is to his humble trust in God that we are to aspire. This is the attitude of the ruler or king archetype, perfectly embodied by Jesus, who was anointed as a servant king.

Summary

1. Carl Jung identified various “archetypes”, among them the king, who always has his feet firmly on the ground, able to withstand changes in his fortunes.
2. The sea is used throughout the Bible as a metaphor for a place of trial and challenge. Are we buffeted about by the waves, or can we remain calm and focused when times are tough?
3. The inner resolve to withstand the vagaries of the elements is found in communion with Jesus and an assurance of our identity in him, who was anointed as a servant king.

INTERCESSION

President

We grow in deeper communion with Christ as we spend time with him in prayer. Jesus travels with us on our journey in life, never leaving our side, and never letting anything affect our identity as his children. We come before him now in humility to name the concerns closest to our hearts.

Biddings

We pray for people throughout the world who live in dangerous situations, whether at the mercy of the elements, or in turbulent political situations; that they will know the Lord will abide with them throughout their trials and reward them at the last.

We pray for all students who are facing exam season once again; may they know that the Lord is with them amid all the pressures and stress that surround them at this time.

We pray for new Christians everywhere; that their zeal for faith in Jesus will be set within a wide narrative of his salvation for the whole world, and directed towards a life of service in his name.

We pray for those who have never experienced prayer or communion with God and for those who struggle to find direction and purpose; that the Lord will open their ears and expand their hearts to be receptive to his call.

We pray for ourselves, when following Jesus is difficult; that we will remember to call on the Lord to help us in our faith.

President

Joining our prayers with the whole company of heaven, we bring all our intentions before you, Lord God our heavenly father, conscious that you journey with us through life in good times and bad.

Introduction to the Peace

Jesus calls us to follow him in a life of humble service, to keep faith through all our trials and to share with others the peace he offers to the world. The peace of the Lord...

Blessing

May God the Father keep you rooted in place.
May God the Son inspire you to live in service.
May God the Holy Spirit abide with you through all things.
And may the blessing...