

SUNDAY 13th Sept 20

Welcome & Announcements

Call to Worship Exodus 15; 1-2

Praise Song

Prayer

OT Reading Exodus 14:10-21

Video- Young people interviews

NT Reading Mark 4:35-41

Sermon

Video- Psalm 46 'Be still'

Prayers

Hymn 'Will your anchor hold' Hp 689

Call to worship

"I will sing to the LORD,

for he is highly exalted.

Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.

² "***The LORD is my strength and my defence ;
he has become my salvation.***

He is my God, and I will praise him,

my father's God, and I will exalt him.

Praise Song- Our Lord reigns

Prayer- Lord You are our saving grace, Amazing love in every breath.. We praise Your name, for our Lord reigns...

God of creation who brought forth all we know from nothing & gave life to this world...and to us... we worship You this morning for You are Almighty & wondrous in all Your deeds. From the magnificence of the skies...to the vastness of the oceans You formed shaped & created what was beautiful and good.. Lord God You are supreme in power & majesty.

God of salvation... when humanity walked away from You in rebellion ...You sought us out in love... sending Your Son Jesus who gave His all that we might be forgiven & restored ; Lord God You are supreme in mercy & love.

So we still our hearts now in the presence of this God who is supreme in power, majesty, mercy & love. And we confess again our failings & sins...asking for a fresh touch of amazing grace & His assurance of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We hear the good news of the gospel that in Christ our sins are forgiven. Amen

Old Testament Reading Exodus 14:10-21 ¹⁰ As

Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, & there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified & cried out to the LORD. ¹¹ They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

¹³ Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm & you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” ¹⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on.” ¹⁶ Raise your staff & stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.....

¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who had been travelling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew & went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front & stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the armies of Egypt & Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side & light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long. ²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, & all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind & turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, ²² & the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right & on their left.

Video- Young people interviews

New Testament Reading Mark 4:35-41 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Sermon I have to admit to loving driving... especially if it’s a good long road trip... like travelling on holiday & so I have enjoyed our journeys down through France...except for the odd moment of family tension...& of course the odd imposing bridge... **SLIDE 1** Yes as someone who doesn’t like heights, this sight of the road as it curves upwards over the mouth of the Loire here at Saint Nazaire is almost enough for me to look for a slip road to turn around & head back the way I just come...

To a much stronger degree that’s how the Israelites must have felt when they arrived at the Red sea & then suddenly saw the Egyptian army advancing on them.... Yes the scriptures tell us the people were terrified (vs 11) & so they turned on Moses saying.. “Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren’t there enough graves for us in Egypt? What have you done to us? Why did you make us leave Egypt?” ¹² Didn’t we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? **SLIDE2**

Yes faced with fear so often our natural human reactions are to look for someone to blame....why did you do this to us... didn’t we tell you this would happen... or as is the case in our New Testament passage with Jesus & his disciples in the storm... “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” Mk 4:38 **SLIDE3** Yes fear can bring out the worst in us... it can lead us to doubt & blame and criticise...oh it’s the government they have made a mess of this or it’s this group they are so irresponsible & we sink back & think about

ourselves... our health...our job...our interests.. Yes Fear can lead people to turn inward & turn on others...

That's what we see in our Exodus passage as the people are terrified... for they are apparently trapped between a powerful Egyptian army & the sea..& although they may have initially begun by crying out to the Lord. vs 10 that didn't last long because it's only a moment later that we hear of them complaining & criticising Moses...& in criticising Moses the people were also criticising God ..pointing the finger at Him saying *what did you do to us.. you brought us out here, all alone, to die...* Yes as fear spills over into blame.. they forget how God saved them from slavery in Egypt... Yes their focus is on the advancing enemy or the immovable sea... and they feel trapped...

Perhaps we have felt like that in the past months... or perhaps some of us will feel like that in the months to come..maybe we need to hear the words that God gave Moses to say to the people at that time...

"Do not be afraid. Stand firm & you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today.... The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still. **SLIDE4**

'Don't be afraid'... It's actually one of the most common commands in scripture ...occurring around 70 times in situations when actually you can completely understand why the people were afraid... like today's...caught between an army & a sea! Why would you not be afraid? it's natural to feel fear... whether it's as we look down from a tall height...or we are threatened with an army ...or we face the

real uncertainty of what these next month's might bring. It is natural & ok to feel fear... but that doesn't mean that we should let fear govern how we live or respond....

Yes I don't like heights & so you can understand how I felt when many years ago I faced an outdoor pursuit's course as part of a team building exercise in S Africa. Some of the tasks were fine but I was really quite frightened about those that involved me be high up... At one point I decided that i just wasn't going to do a particular rope swing...**SLIDE 5** & then felt very small as all the rest of the team did it..

So when we came to the final task a huge zip line **SLIDE 6** I pushed myself to go first & as I climbed up what felt like the side of a mountain I tried to just fix my gaze ahead & focus on the rope... I had focussed on the height last time & I hadn't jumped... now I was going to fix my gaze on the rope & forget everything else... I was going to jump... And I did... even though the person at the bottom wasn't ready & my instructor had been telling me to wait a minute... I jumped & as I zoomed down the line I watched as he quickly tried to get his gloves on so that he could grab the rope that would slow me down & stop me flying on to far... in the end he got 1 glove on & burnt his other hand as he saved me from a potentially nasty accident..

Yes I was focussed on the rope & my fear & so I forgot my instructor... Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm & you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today.... you need only to be still.

Stand firm... be still ... take your eyes off the danger & put it on the instructor.. As the people of Israel fell into complaining & criticising Moses so they had forgotten the physical sign of God's presence with them... the luminous cloud which would shortly move from its position in front of them to their back shielding them from the Egyptians

SLIDE 7 Just like the disciples in the boat in the midst of the storm... God's people were not alone & neither are we...the letter of Hebrews was written to a group of Christians who were facing abuse & persecution, so much so that some of them felt turning their back on their Christian faith. Following Jesus just seemed too costly too hard...they felt small & alone ..so the writer reminds them... that God will never leave them nor forsake them.. Heb13:5 **SLIDE 8**

As the Israelites concentrated on the danger & forgot God's presence with them...can't we watch the news...or scroll through Facebook or even listen to so & so tell us how awful things are & we can forget to take time to STAND FIRM & BE STILL...we can forget to look for signs of God's presence with us...But He is there..even if we don't see a huge glowing cloud.. or something as dramatic as that...He has promised & He is faithful... And in His own time He will act..

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, & all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind & turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, ²² & the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground...

How amazing it would have been to have seen those waters begin to roll back as God made a way for His people... How awesome would it have been to have been in that boat as

Jesus got up & rebuked the wind & told the storm to be still... yes how amazing ...and how frightening! Just look at the reaction of the disciples in the boat after Jesus stilled the storm... *They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"* Yes they were terrified!

We must not just think of God as our own personal comfort blanket... or just someone whose job it is to make us feel good... Yes scripture tells us again and again that God loves us all... But that in itself won't help us conquer our fears... No we can overcome our fears because God not only loves us but He is so majestically powerful that He makes the power of the storm... the power of the enemy army.. the power of the sea ...or even the power of a pandemic seem like nothing... compared to the awesome power of the One who spoke & brought life into being... the one who can & will make a way where there seems to be no way.. **SLIDE 9**

We take a moment now to listen for God's voice as we watch our video Be still

Video- Psalm 46 'Be still'

Prayers- Lord come humbly now before You in prayer knowing that You alone are God... the One who makes wars to cease..the One who will break the bow & shatter the spear.. So we pray now for those nations, those people in our world who even in this time of pandemic still face the horror of war & violence... for the people of Yemen... South Sudan, Syria , Afghanistan & others... Lord have mercy we pray & bring peace & justice in these regions & to these people.

Lord we also pray for our world as it continues to struggle against the effects of this terrible virus... we pray for the USA, India, Brazil, S Africa & all countries & regions where the virus is spreading quickest & people are losing their lives... And we pray indeed for our own nation, asking that you would give our leaders, scientists & health care workers your guidance & protection.

Lord we also bring to You our Young people & children... Lord in these uncertain & fast changing time we ask that You would continue to hold & guide our young people... Lord grant them your amazing grace each day...

God who is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble ... we bring to You now those who have requested our prayers... For Tina Donaldson... Daniel Kidson Paul McDowell Percy Foster..... Jean Woods ... Jerry McHaffee... George McKee... Anna CooperTrevor... Susanne.. 10 year old Leo following his surgery... baby Jenny & for all those connected to our Church family & those we know who are in need of God's power & peace in their situation...

Now let us say the Lord 's Prayer together...

Hymn

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?

*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!*

Will your anchor hold in the straits 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 bark o'erflow? (Chorus)

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. [Chorus]

Will your eyes behold through the morning light
the city of gold and the harbour bright?
Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore,
when life's storms are past for evermore? [Chorus]

Blessing

Lord hold us steadfast and sure through the storms of life & the straits of fear...and Ground us firm and deep in the saviour's love, that trusting Christ we will in the end behold the city of gold and the harbour bright...

So let us finish by sharing the grace together.... The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God & the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us forever and ever. Amen