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|  | **Morning Worship**  **August 2020**  **“Walking”** |

*We will share the readings and prayers together on Facebook Livestream at 10am on Sunday but we also invite you to use the readings, reflections and prayers as part of a time of contemplation. Find a quiet place to sit inside or outside to do this. Why not go for a walk and reflect on the readings from the Gospel of Matthew.*

*We look forward to the time when we will all be back together in person.*

*Ruth, Margaret, Mike and Nigel.*

PRAYER OF APPROACH

**God of our journeys.**

**Help us this morning to relax into your presence,  
to clearly hear your word and be prepared to act on it.  
In Jesus’ name.  
Amen.**

OPENING PRAYER

**God of all our journeys, be with us as we walk.**

**Open our eyes to your presence.**

**Open our ears to your call.**

**Open our mind to your wisdom.**

**Open our heart to your Spirit.**

**Amen.**

CONFESSION PRAYER

**Lord, forgive us for the times  
we doubt your presence.  
Lord, forgive our doubts and hesitations.  
Help us to trust you at all times.  
Forgive us Lord, and make us whole.**

**Amen.**

READING – Matthew 14:22-33 New International Version (NIV)

22Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, 24and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

25Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.

27But 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. 30But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

31Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

32And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

READING – Psalm 85:8-13 New International Version (NIV)

8I will listen to what God the Lord says;  
    he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—  
    but let them not turn to folly.  
9Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,  
    that his glory may dwell in our land.

10Love and faithfulness meet together;  
    righteousness and peace kiss each other.  
11Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,  
    and righteousness looks down from heaven.  
12The Lord will indeed give what is good,  
    and our land will yield its harvest.  
13Righteousness goes before him  
    and prepares the way for his steps.

HOMILY –

The reading from Matthew gives the account of Peter in a boat that was being buffeted by the wind. Peter sees Jesus walking on the water. He is confused and calls out to Jesus who beckons him. But once out of the boat, as Peter starts to walk towards Jesus, he becomes afraid and starts to sink. Jesus catches Peter and there is a slight sense of rebuke from Jesus – “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”.

The reading speaks to our current situation. We are starting to take steps out of lockdown – our boat so to speak. But there is uncertainty and our direction is unsure - perhaps we have a sense of sinking like Peter. It is a time when doubts must be put to one side - we rely on our faith. Our steps taken in confidence of God’s promise of salvation.

Anyone who has walked up mountains will know that whilst we may start in good conditions and be confident of completing the climb, the weather may change and conditions deteriorate. The itinerary, the time needed to complete the walk and perhaps the route may have to change but our focus remains on reaching the end – which we undoubtedly do. Then we reflect on how different the walk and climb turned out to how we thought it would at the start. We have reached the end but differently and had a few challenges along the way.

When Moses and the Israelites stepped out of Egypt their path was uncertain and it was a long time before they reached their ultimate destination. But God guided them. When Peter stepped out of the boat he was uncertain but Jesus caught him.

One of the pleasures of walking I find – even when the weather has deteriorated – is being aware of the surroundings. Spending time to focus on the present sights, sounds, smells and feelings. We are confident of reaching the end and the urgency of reaching the destination is secondary to the experience of the present. We discover, we take photographs and collect memories onward with us.

As we take our small steps out of lockdown we can be confident of God’s presence with us. We will reach the end and in the meantime we can focus on our present – what are we “seeing” and “hearing”? What are the things we are discovering that we want to take forward with us and still have when we reach our destination?

PRAYER

**All along our journey, we remember God is with us,**

**In the tranquillity of a field or wood,**

**And in the busyness and noise of the litter-ridden street.**

**We listen and feel God’s presence with us.**

**In all the places we are.**

**Amen**

THE LORD’S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

**Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.**

**Now and for ever. Amen**

CLOSING PRAYER

**God of our journeys, help us to hear your voice.  
In the week ahead, let your presence increase in our lives.  
Keep us focused on your way, looking ahead and trusting you.   
Amen.**

THE GRACE

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

**And the love of God,**

**And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore.**

**Amen.**