

August 09 2020
A Liturgy for use at Home

Notes:

*A liturgy for use at home. Please adapt it as you see fit. Words in italics are instructions. Words in **bold** are said by all.*

PREPARATION

Light a candle as you read these words

I will listen to what God the Lord says;
he promises peace to his people,
his faithful servants (Ps 85:8).

Prayer of Approach¹

Almighty God, it is only in you that our hearts find rest and peace: unveil yourself to me in this time of worship; that being purged and strengthened by your Holy Spirit, I may serve you in quietness and confidence.

Call to Worship

I can't wait to hear what he'll say.
GOD's about to pronounce his people well,
The holy people he loves so much,
See how close his salvation is to those who
fear him

Love and Truth meet in the street,
**Right Living and Whole Living embrace
and kiss!**

Truth sprouts green from the ground,
Right Living pours down from the skies!
Oh yes! GOD gives Goodness and Beauty;
**[the earth] responds with Bounty and
Blessing.**

(adapted from "The Message", Ps
85:8–13).

listen to or sing a song of jubilant praise

Prayer of Adoration²

Too often, O God, we pray, "Listen,

**Lord, for your children are speaking."
Today help us to pray, "Speak, Lord, for
your children are listening."
Help our ears to hear your Word.
Help our hearts to trust what you say.
Help our hands and feet to do what you
call us to do. Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

For your name's sake, O Lord: forgive my sin, though it is great (Ps. 25:10)

*In silence we call to mind our neglect of
God's grace, our selfishness in service, our
reluctance to trust and our reluctance to
share the gifts God has given us.*

In Christ we are set free. Through Christ we are forgiven.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Scripture

Romans.10:5-15
Matthew 14:22-33

Collect

Living God,
you have placed in the hearts of your children
a longing for your word and a hunger for your truth.
Grant that, believing in the One whom you have sent, we may know him to be the true bread of heaven, your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Sermon

- *A written reflection is appended to these notes.*
- *The Sunday Sermon is online*³

THE RESPONSE

- What practises best help you to keep your eyes "fixed" on Jesus?
- Peter cried out "*Lord, save me*". Jesus immediately reached out his

¹ My personal prayer book, Geoff Quinlan

² Worship Sourcebook

³ <https://durbanvillemethodist.co.za/category/sermons/>

hand and caught him. He does the same for us! What is your cry of help (for yourself or someone you care about)?

- The fear of “drowning” in distress & troubles is a frequent theme in the Psalms. Choose one of the following as your prayer guide this week (Ps. 130, 69, 18, 94:18-19).
- Jesus’ rhythm of life made time for prayer and solitude as well as compassionate ministry (c.f. 14:22). How can you develop a similar rhythm?
- If you need help in prayer and meditation, and have a smartphone try the “Lecture365” app. I find it helpful.

Prayers of Supplication and Intercession

These prayers may help as you hold before God the needs of our nation and church. Pray them as written or allow them to lead you into your own prayers of intercession.

A prayer for women

On this “Women’s Day” we give you thanks for our mothers, our sisters, our teachers and friends through whom you have revealed your compassion, courage and wisdom.

We pray for those women who feel battered by the headwinds of poverty, abuse and injustice.

May you hear and quickly answer their cry for help. May we, your church, be a safe-haven, offering refuge, renewal and abundant life in you.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

A prayer for times of darkness

Have mercy on me Lord, in those times when the world seems empty of your presence and no word comes to me from you: that in the darkness I may wait patiently for the light; in the silence, listen for your voice; and in all things trust your promises in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

Absent friends and loved ones

O God our Father, you are present everywhere; look in love upon those dear to us from whom we are separated. Protect them and keep them from harm; prosper and bless them in all good things; and bring them to the knowledge of yourself and of true love.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

Our Father...

Dedication

When I thought, “My foot is slipping,”
your steadfast love, O LORD, held me
up.

When the cares of my heart are many,
your consolations cheer my soul.
(Ps 94:16–19)

Lord, I am willing to be made willing and desire with all my heart that your will should be done in me and through me, as perfectly as it is done in heaven.

Come, take me and break me: I give myself to you in the dark and in the light; in life and in death; in sorrow and in joy, to be only yours, wholly and forever. Make the most of me that can be made for your glory. Amen

Sing or listen to a song/hymn

Benediction

And now 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 forever more. Amen

Jesus, save me!

Rowing against the wind

"Does it feel like you are rowing against the wind?", asked Barry. I've not done much rowing, but I've done enough kayaking to know how energy sapping and demoralizing a headwind is. *"Yes, that's sometimes how it feels!"*, I replied. I was on my first furlough (a 3 month "sabbath" given ministers every 7 years) and had chosen to spend some time in silent retreat, meeting daily with Barry, a retired Anglican priest, who served as my Spiritual Director.

I'd been describing some of the struggles and frustrations of ministry. I knew right away that Barry would read the story of Jesus, effortlessly walking on water as the disciples were battered by the wind. What I didn't realise was how readily Jesus would appear in the mist of my weariness as we prayed through the story.

As you have probable yourself noticed, when Jesus reveals himself to us- in our imagination, or in a "still small voice" we wonder – *"Am I making this all up? Why is there no condemnation in his eyes? Why is he so unbothered by this wind? Does he not see how it threatens to overwhelm us? Surely, he should be telling me put my head down, grit my teeth and paddle harder? Is that really you, Lord?"*

Friends, when you were baptised, or confirmed, you were asked *"Do you turn to God, trusting in Jesus as Lord and Saviour"*. You replied, *"By the grace of God I do"*. Saviour – is not just a "title" – it is who Jesus is, it is what He does. The cry *"Lord, save me"* is always answered. All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved (Ro. 10:13). If you feel, like Peter, *"sinking beneath the waves"*, you need simply cry "save me" and he will reach out his hand and take hold of you.

The forces of chaos.

The Spirit, in this passage, bids us take our eyes off the wind and waves and look at Jesus. Of course, like Peter, we do look at the wind, and like him feel frightened! If we are going to look then let's at least look with understanding:

It's easy to picture. You've seen footage of winter storms flooding Sea Point – monstrous waves, spray, foam – chaos.

But for Peter and the disciples the sea, even an inland one like Galilee, was home to dark, malevolent and chaotic forces that work in opposition to God and God's people. So, in Daniel, four beasts emerge from the sea (a similar vision is seen in Revelation). That's why the disciples wondered if Jesus was a phantom emerging from the deep.

If you think of the destruction wrought by the 2004 tsunami it's not difficult to see why ancient people imagined the sea as home to malevolent powers. The way the bible sees it the *whole* earth is under Satan's domain. That's why in Mt 4 (8-9) the devil takes Jesus to a high place and offers him the kingdoms of the world. Jesus replied, *"away with you, Satan"*. And from the very outset, Jesus ministry sets people free from the power of evil. Jesus walks on water because he has power over all the forces of chaos and darkness.

When we say, *"it is diabolical that the government is in bondage to corruption"*, diabolical is not simply an adjective. Individuals and organisations really are in bondage to the powers of evil. Unlike Jesus they are not able to say "no" to more power and more wealth. Apart from the power of Jesus very few would be able to resist.

In God's Power

It may seem I've dived crazily off the boat and swum off into the distance. What is all this to do with straining against the wind?

When Barry asked me “*does it feel like you are rowing against the wind*” he was helping me to learn the lesson the disciples learned: In the boat, with four seasoned fishermen who spent every day in boats, who knew the lake and understood the weather...they made no headway until Jesus was in the boat. And what had Jesus been doing when they were rowing all night? He'd been in the mountains, praying.

Apart from me, said Jesus, in John's Gospel, you can do nothing (Jn 15.5). We row all night and in morning we are right where we started. Much of what Jesus calls us to is humanly impossible— have you tried, for example, to love your enemies? But when we encounter someone who does love their enemy, we find it is as natural for them as breathing. Why? They've learned to live by God's grace – it's Christ in them doing the loving.

Friends, Jesus calls us to live in God's power. He sets us free from the powers of evil that wreak havoc on earth. Following Jesus is not meant to be like rowing against the wind. Didn't Jesus say, “*my yolk is easy and my burden is light*”? When we are driven by the dark powers of the world we crave more, and life is an uphill struggle. As Richard Beck puts it in his book on Spiritual Warfare^[1], “*On social media we crave more followers, more clicks and bigger platforms. ... [we want] a bigger congregation, better title on the business card, more prestigious college for our kids*” ...

Jesus calls us into the Kingdom of Heaven where a very different power is at work: the power of asking and receiving, the power of sharing - 2 fish and 5 loaves feed a multitude. The power of giving away our mortal lives and receiving eternal life. We see the wind, we see the power of evil at work, but we are not overwhelmed because Jesus has authority over all things and is with us always.

My friend, are you living in God's power? Or are you overwhelmed by chaos? Has the turbulence of this time frightened you? Look to Jesus. Call on him. He will reach out his hand and save you. It's who is. It is what he does. Can you not hear him say, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? Do you not know that I am master over every storm, I have taken hold of you and will not let go!

Amen.

*But me he caught—reached all the way
from sky to sea; he pulled me out
Of that ocean of hate, that enemy chaos,
the void in which I was drowning.
(Ps 18:16–17)*

^[1] Reviving Old Scratch, demons and the devil for doubters and the disenchanted.