



Sunday 20th September

PREPARATION

Welcome

God is good

All All the time.

All the time

All God is good.

The Lord is with us

All Let us praise his name together.

Hymn 122 Eternal father, strong to save

Eternal Father, strong to save,
whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
who bade the mighty ocean deep
its own appointed limits keep:
oh hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.

O Christ, whose voice the waters heard
and hushed their raging at thy word,
who walked upon the foaming deep
and calm amid the storm did sleep:
oh hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.

O Holy Spirit, who did brood
upon the waters dark and rude,
and bade their angry tumult cease,
and gave, for wild confusion, peace:
oh hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.

O Trinity of love and power,
our kindred shield in danger's hour;
from rock and tempest, fire and foe,
protect them wheresoe'er they go;
then evermore shall rise to thee
glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

Opening activity ~ 'The perils of Penelope Pit Stop'

Confession

God shows his love for us
in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Let us then show our love for him
by confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

Against you, you only have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight.
Christ, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

Absolution

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

Collect (15th Sunday after Trinity)

Leader God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit
 upon your Church in the burning fire of your love: grant that
 your people may be fervent in the fellowship of the gospel that,
 always abiding in you, they may be found steadfast in faith and
 active in service; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is
 alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one
 God, now and for ever.

Testimony @Sea *Eric Rice, St Peter's*

Hymn My Lighthouse

In my wrestling and in my doubts
In my failures You won't walk out
Your great love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
You are the peace in my troubled sea

In the silence You won't let go
In the questions Your truth will hold
Your great love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
You are the peace in my troubled sea

My lighthouse

My lighthouse

Shining in the darkness I will follow You

My lighthouse

My lighthouse

I will trust the promise

You will carry me safe to shore

Safe to shore

I won't fear what tomorrow brings
With each morning I'll rise and sing
My God's love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
You are the peace in my troubled sea

Fire before us You're the brightest
You will lead us through the storm

Bible readings

Acts 27 **Acted out** –*Paul Sails for Rome*

27 When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment. 2 We boarded a ship from Adramyttium about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.

3 The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs. 4 From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. 5 When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. 6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. 7 We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Cnidus. When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. 8 We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.

9 Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Day of Atonement.[a] So Paul warned them, 10 “Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also.” 11 But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship. 12 Since the harbour was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there. This was a harbour in Crete, facing both southwest and northwest.

13 When a gentle south wind began to blow, they saw their opportunity; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. 14 Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island. 15 The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. 16 As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure, 17 so the men hoisted it aboard. Then they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Because they were afraid they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor[b] and let the ship be driven along. 18 We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. 19 On the third day, they threw the ship’s tackle overboard with their own hands. 20 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

21 After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: “Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. 22 But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. 23 Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me 24 and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ 25 So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. 26 Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.”

27 On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic[c] Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. 28 They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet[d] deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet[e] deep. 29 Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. 30 In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. 31 Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved.” 32 So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away.

33 Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. “For the last fourteen days,” he said, “you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven’t eaten anything. 34 Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.” 35 After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. 36 They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. 37 Altogether there were 276 of us on board. 38 When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

39 When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. 40 Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. 41 But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.

42 The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. 43 But the centurion wanted to spare Paul’s life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. 44 The rest were to get there on planks or on other pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land safely.

Philippians 4.4-13 ~ **Paul's Final Exhortations**

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

10 I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Sermon Rachel Johnson

What's it like for Paul on that boat, day after day locked away with his fellow prisoners, night after night tossing and turning on piles of grain? Does his trial in Rome fill his vision, or does he keep his mind on the things around him – the tang of salty air and sweaty bodies, the screeching of the sea birds, the prisoners in need of good news, the loyalty of his friends, the kindness of the centurion, the presence of God glowing in the darkness of the hold.

What's it like for the sailors, manning the boat, jostling for authority with the soldiers, keeping a wary eye on the prisoners? The boat represents the hard work and boredom and anxieties and small pleasures we all experience everyday.

The boat is heading to Rome and for Paul that means a trial before Caesar but for the sailors it means wine and women and profits. Is that why they overlook the dangers of the weather, dangers that are apparent even to a tentmaker like Paul?

Many centuries earlier a psalmist wrote about the dangers of the sea:

Some sailed over the ocean in ships, earning their living on the seas.

They saw what the LORD can do, his wonderful acts on the seas.

He commanded, and a mighty wind began to blow and stirred up the waves.

*The ships were lifted high in the air and plunged down into the depths.
In such danger the sailors lost their courage; they stumbled and staggered
like drunks—all their skill was useless.*

The ancient Israelites weren't a seafaring people so for most of them this psalm would have spoken into a land-based time of chaos and crisis. For us it might speak into the chaos of covid or Brexit or climate change, or the storms of health and financial and relationship problems. But for this group of sailors the words are prophetic:

In such danger the sailors lost their courage; all their skill was useless.

All their skill is useless – they have no choice but to let the storm take them where it will.

The soldiers are used to the danger of the battlefield but they're powerless to fight the dangers of the sea. The sailors busy themselves with ropes and sails and ballast, striving desperately to stay alive. The prisoners are tossed about in the hold, bruised and hungry and seasick. And us? How do we react when metaphorical waves threaten to drown us? Do we rush about trying to save ourselves or do try our best to endure it or do we sink into apathy?

I imagine Paul is on his knees crying out to the Lord. But as the storm rages day after day, blotting out the sun and battering the ship, does even he begin to regret leaving the safety of his home for the sake of the kingdom of God? Does he start to feel fear or doubt? Does he call out 'where are you, Lord?' He's only human after all. Prayer doesn't seem much of a weapon against the power of the storm.

But Paul can think back to the three times he's already been shipwrecked and rescued. And he can remember the story of Jonah, another prophet called to preach to the gentiles and caught in a storm. Or Peter's story of the night the disciples sailed into a storm on lake Galilee. As he calls out to the Lord, does Paul see, in his mind's eye, Jesus sleeping next to him, his head on a cushion? Jesus, the Lord who called him to preach Christ crucified. The Lord who has power over the wind and waves. The Lord who promised Paul an eternal home. Does the darkness of the storm allow the presence of God to shine even brighter? Bright enough to appear to Paul as an angel who reassures him that God will rescue Paul as he has rescued so many in the past, and not just Paul but everyone on board the ship. In the words of the psalm

'Then in [his] trouble [he] called to the LORD, and [the Lord] saved [him] from [his] distress'.

As the storm rages day after day it's not the sailors who take charge, or the soldiers, but Paul, because Paul is empowered by God. He knows the plans God has for him. So it's Paul who has the vision and authority to lead his 275 shipmates to safety. Have courage, he tells them. Stick together. Eat some food. And God will save us all. But just when they finally see land there's another crisis – the ship runs aground and starts to break up. Will the soldiers kill the prisoners rather than let them escape? No – Paul has an unexpected saviour in the centurion – and so they all swim or float to the safety of the land just as God had promised. I'm sure that Paul responds by offering public praise and thanksgiving to God. As the psalm says:

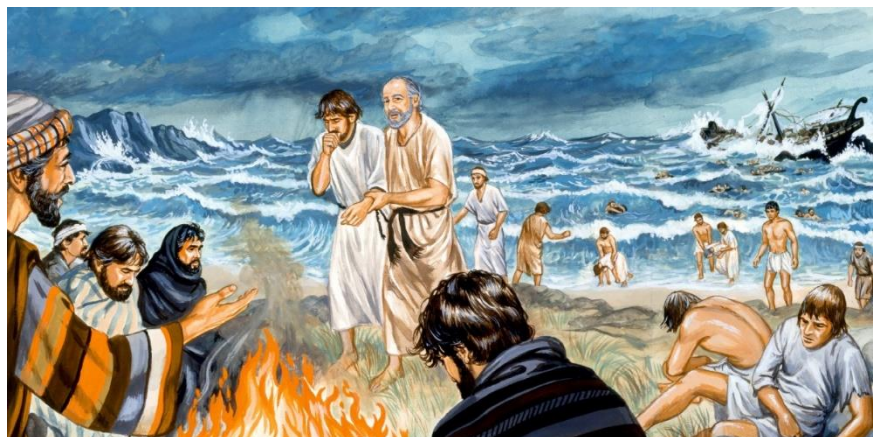
*Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind.*

After he eventually reached Rome Paul wrote to the Philippians:

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand.

That seems like a good deal to me – we can have the peace so many of us crave if we just pray. Perhaps when Paul wrote those words he was thinking back to this voyage and the way he discovered God's peace in the midst of the panic and despair on board that ship. Perhaps that time of danger helped to teach Paul that 'the secret of being content in any and every situation' is simply to bring everything to the Lord in prayer. To trust that our eternal Father will save us, whether by calming the storm or by guiding us to a safe haven, or by sending a big fish or even a Roman centurion.

This story shows us people who are powerless and people who are praying, people who've lost hope and people who bring hope, people who need help and people who are able to offer help in big ways and small ways. I don't know which of those people you are most like today. I don't know what storms you're facing. But I do know the God who rescued Paul from this shipwreck is just as ready to rescue us today and he's only a prayer away.



Hymn Oceans

You call me out upon the waters
The great unknown where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery
In oceans deep my faith will stand

*I will call upon Your Name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine*

Your grace abounds in deepest waters
Your sovereign hand will be my guide
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me
You've never failed and You won't start now
Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders
Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Saviour

*I will call upon Your Name
Keep my eyes above the waves
My soul will rest in Your embrace
I am Yours and You are mine*

The Creed

**All: I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth,
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was
buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

Prayers *Brenda Cox, St Peter's*

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth, you have set your glory in the heavens, we worship and adore you.

Christ the Light, the Love, the Peace, the Way and the Vine

Lord, you are the Light that darkness can never conquer,
Pour your light into the darkness of this world where there is war and greed and hatred, shine on The Yemen and Lebanon who are suffering badly at this time, so that people can see better ways of solving their problems. Pour your light into the confusion of our national difficulties, so that all involved can see new strategies and possibilities.

Lord, you are the Love that casts out fear.

Pour your love into the hearts of us all, because we need feel that love to guide us through each and every day.

Pour your love into the hearts of all who feel abandoned or let down and feel they will never love again.

Pour your love into the troubled minds of those suffering mental instability and do not know which voice to obey.

Lord you are the Peace that the world cannot give. Pour your peace into the United Nations and its Security Councils and to all who govern and rule the countries of your world, that peace may be the goal of their work, and peace the method of getting there.

Pour peace into the soul of this community in which we live, so that we may live in harmony whatever race, creed or colour so that people may come to believe that you and only you are the peace making Saviour of the world. Pour your peace into our own hearts as we try to live out our lives in loving all those around us.

Lord, you are the Way that leads to the Father.

Show us your way through the problems that face the nation at the moment the two main ones being the pandemic and how to rid ourselves of Covid-19 so that we may get back to normal, praying especially for those who have been on furlough, those who have been made redundant, those who have lost their businesses and for those who have suffered mentally because of stress, and for the financial problems ahead of us. The other problem that is causing much heated discussion and disagreement once more and that is Brexit. Show us the way through these we pray. Show your way to those who are seeking a life of meaning and integrity, but who have not yet looked to you.

Show your way to us here, that we in this church may know the next steps in our pilgrimage of faith together.

Lord, you are the Vine, whose branches we are.

We pray for those who belong to this part of the vine but are at present having a difficult time, for whatever reason. Praying especially for the family and friends of Robert (Bob) Ilsley who passed away last week, brother of Margaret Doyle and for Graham Daborn (Francis Daborn's son) who passed away this week. We also pray for those who are unwell - Eileen and Peter Bliss, Olive Park and Joy Storkey and I will give you a few moments to bring any others that you may wish before the Lord.....

Take these our prayers and answer them in your own good way in the power that flows from your risen presence.

In your name we pray AMEN.

Gathering our praise and prayers together let us finish with the prayer that Jesus himself taught us

The Lord's Prayer

**All 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**

Notices *(See Notes & News)*

Hymn 746 What a friend we have in Jesus

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge—
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.

The Blessing

God grant you grace to be good servants
of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith
and on the sound teaching that you have followed;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

Worshipping ▶ Loving ▶ Sharing ▶ Growing

