

## The Ninth Sunday after Trinity – Proper 14

### Collect

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,  
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern both our hearts and bodies  
in the ways of your laws and the works of your commandments;  
that through your most holy protection both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### Readings

#### A reading from the first book of Kings.

( 19. 9-18 )

At Horeb, Elijah came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'

He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.'

He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Then there came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'

He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.'

Then the LORD said to him, 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.'

#### A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

( 10. 5-15 )

Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that 'the person who does these things will live by them.' But the righteousness that comes from faith says,

'Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" ' (that is, to bring Christ down)' or "Who will descend into the abyss?" ' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)

.But what does it say? 'The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart'

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, 'No one who believes in him will be put to shame.'

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him.

For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?

As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'

### **Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew. ( 14. 22-33 )**

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'

Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

### **Reflection**

Many of us have been shielding or at least isolating and staying at home as much as possible. Now we are told to go out and mix with others again although taking precautions. But even wearing masks and keeping distance, it can feel uncomfortable and even frightening being among strangers after so long. We have to discover new ways of being together.

In today's gospel reading, Peter responds to the call of Jesus and steps out of his boat and begins to walk towards Jesus across the water. Walking on water is not something that any of us would try to do but we do use it as a picture of some of the experiences that we have in our lives. There are times when the ground under our feet does not feel solid. When we are confused we can say, 'I am not sure of my ground'. When we have had a difficult conversation or meeting we may liken it to 'walking on eggshells'. We can speak of feeling as if the rug has been pulled from under our feet. At these times when we feel vulnerable we long for solid ground and want to stay there at all costs.

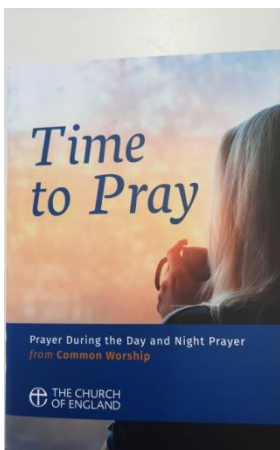
Yet there may be times when we need to step off our solid ground on to something that appears less secure. Peter steps out of his boat to answer the call of Jesus and go to him across the water. It would have been far safer for Peter to stay in his boat. So why is Jesus calling him in this way? Perhaps, we are being reminded through this story that responding to the call of Jesus will sometimes mean stepping out of our boat, the place where we feel safe.

We are invited to think about the ways in which we are called to take new steps in our relationship with God both personally and as a church. It can be tempting to want to stay put to return to the familiar. Yet the Lord is always calling us to offer ourselves to him in new ways. As a church a return to a weekly eucharist is not going to be possible, at least, in the foreseeable future. From October we are planning just one service in the benefice each Sunday with the parishes taking it in turn to host. We will need to consider whether we are prepared to travel for worship or keep to watching services on line. As individuals the call to 'come' will take different forms for different people. It may be an invitation to grow in our understanding of the faith through reading or to become more prayerful, more attuned to the gentle breeze of God's voice like Isaiah in our first reading. The Church of England has just published a small booklet 'Time to pray' with simple outlines for daily prayer, which you might find helpful. Please don't hesitate to contact any of the ministry team if you would like guidance.

When we respond to the call of Jesus, when we step out from our safe place, our experience can be a little like that of Peter. We may feel that we are now out of our depth, we can begin to feel that we are sinking. We wonder why we ever left our boat in the first place, why did we not stay put. Today's gospel reading assures us that whenever we respond to God's call to 'come', he will be there to support us, even when we begin to doubt him. When we call 'Lord, save me' he will reach out to hold us and prevent us from sinking.

The one who calls us to come towards him does not leave us on our own when we respond to him, but journeys with us. If we keep turning towards him, we too, like Peter and the disciples, will be able to say 'Truly, you are the Son of God'.

*Do not be afraid for I have redeemed you.  
I have called you by your name; and you are mine.  
When you walk through the waters, I'll be with you.  
You will never sink beneath the waves.  
Do not be afraid for I have redeemed you.  
I have called you by your name; and you are mine.  
When the fear of loneliness is looming,  
Then remember I am at your side.  
Do not be afraid for I have redeemed you.  
I have called you by your name; and you are mine.*



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*Veronica*