

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 23 June 2024 - The Fourth Sunday of Trinity

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Job 38.1-11; Psalm 107.1-3, 23-32; [or 107.23-32]; 2 Corinthians 6. 1-13; Mark 4. 35-41

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Canon Fiona Brampton, Bishop's Advisor for World Mission and Priest in Charge, North Leighton stone

Two weeks ago, we heard that Jesus was working frantically. In fact, he was working so frantically that the disciples, and even his family, wanted him to slow down, to eat properly, to take some rest and to just 'be' with them. Jesus ignored their pleas, and maybe even confused or angered his family when he said, 'whoever does the will of my Father is my brother, my sister, my mother.'

We move on a chapter in Mark's gospel and see that all that work has finally caught up with Jesus. He got into the boat with his disciples and immediately fell asleep, even as a storm arose. His disciples have to wake him up not because they expect him to do anything, but because they wanted him awake and with them as they sank and drowned.

But, contrary to their expectations, as Jesus woke up, he calmed down the wind and the waves. His disciples were even more terrified now. Who is this person who can control the elements? What does this mean?

As we hear this story, we also ask what it offers us today? What does it mean in a world where there are so many natural disasters, and so much violence? The words that come to mind are 'He's got the whole world in his hands'. Many of us groan when we hear that's chosen as one of the hymns at a service, but actually, those words have great depth.

In that moment in the storm, when the wind and waves obeyed the voice of Jesus, Jesus revealed himself as part of the 'creation team,' even if the disciples still didn't understand that Jesus was the Word through which all things were created. Jesus has power over the elements – he was there when they were created, and all things were created through him.

But Jesus also revealed himself as fully human. He might be the pre-existent Word of God, but he had also faced a punishing few days, with enormous emotional demands.

There's another children's chorus that comes to mind. 'With Jesus in the boat, we can smile in the storm...as we go sailing home. With Jesus, there is no need to worry. He's got the whole world in his hands. He was on the disciples' side. He's on our side.

I wonder what would happen if we ended the sermon there?

I wonder where you are in the story?

I wonder what hearing the words 'Peace, be still' mean to you.

(pause for a moment)

One question is, why is it then that there are times when it feels as if Jesus is sleeping, and the boat really is sinking. We are still reeling from stories of people killed in landslides, whether in the UK or Papua New Guinea. We see stories of violence in Ukraine and Gaza, and many places that have fallen from the front pages of the news. We watch as vulnerable people, at the mercy of people smugglers, make dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean, the Channel, the Indian Ocean to find a place where they can sleep with safety. Or maybe we are suffering personal and private difficulties.

There are times when we simply have to trust that God has the whole world in his hands, and us in his hands. That's particularly true in those times when we've watched the news and can't sleep. Or the times when everything is going wrong for us.

Job, in the Book of Job, faced a series of awful disasters. His friends echoed common thinking of the time. Somehow Job must have sinned and brought this on himself. The reader knows that this isn't true. This is a test sent by Satan, to prove that Job was only faithful to God because God had given Job all good things. Throughout the book, Job never lost his faith in God. He questions why God let these things happen, but he never lost his faith. In today's reading, God used pictures of creation to show that there was a much bigger picture, and that Job could only see a small part of it. God was still in control of the bigger picture.

So sometimes, the response is 'with Jesus in the boat, we can smile at the storm.'

But sometimes, we're challenged not to let evil win. Out of the stories of awfulness, there are stories of hope. In many parts of the world, health and safety laws are not as stringent as in the West. The Christian Medical College in Vellore tells the story of one 12-year-old who decided, whilst home alone with her brother, to help the household by burning the rubbish (there are no rubbish collections as we know them in India). A deodorant canister hidden in the rubbish exploded and the young girl was taken to the hospital with burns covering a large part of her body. She eventually made a recovery, but her body and mind were changed forever. CMC Vellore carries out an annual Paediatric Burns Survivor Camp, where children who have suffered such injuries come together. At this year's camp, they write '50 children & 85 parents attended sessions on psychological well-being, post-traumatic stress & coping mechanisms.' The youngsters also find others who were like them, and with their parents, build a supportive community, that also learns to have fun.

We need to look, to see where the hope is. To wonder in each place where the voice of Jesus is saying 'Peace, be still'. And to stand in awe of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, who, in the face of awful danger, tell us that they trust in God for they only have God to trust in.

But also, we need to look, to wonder what it would mean for us to be Jesus' hands, feet, and voice. Some years ago, Pope Francis talked of 'our common home'. We, the people of the world, share a common home with one another. We only have one planet to live on. We only have each other. We are sleeping and need to wake up to the damage that our thoughtlessness and selfishness is doing to the world and to others in our world. We are

connected. We are created in the image of God to hold the world and all the people of the world in our hands. This is part of the task that Jesus left us.

I wonder where we need to be the hands and feet and voice of Jesus in our world? I wonder what we can change - on our own? With other people?

God has got the whole world in his hands. We don't always understand why things are happening. Take time to offer all that we live with into the hands of God, and to hear God say 'Peace, be still'; take time to offer the world in which we live into God's hands, and hear those words; take time to offer to be the hands and feet and voice of God in the world and to say 'Peace, be still.'

Suggested intercessions

Why not use either 'He's got the whole world' or 'Kum ba yah' as an introduction to prayer.

'He's got the whole world' – ask the congregation (young and old) to suggest things that need prayer and incorporate them into the sing of the song. It doesn't have to be sung 'jauntily' – it could be sung slowly and prayerfully.

Ideas might include 'He's got the general election in his hands;' 'He's got xxxxx (whichever country is in the news) in his hands;' 'He's got all the people on our prayer list (or name them) in his hands....'

'Kum ba yah' ask the congregation to suggest things, people and situations that need prayer.

You could group their ideas into themes 'Someone's fighting, Lord, kum ba yah' 'Someone's hurting, Lord....' 'Someone's voting, Lord....' as well as the more common 'Someone's crying, Lord....'

Again, sing slowly and prayerfully between each collection of thoughts from the congregation.

If you know your congregation will refuse to contribute, then prepare some thoughts e.g.

'We pray for our church at this time. We pray for (any particular issues). We pray for Bishop Dagmar, and for those working to find us a new Bishop. Lord, we commit these into your hands.'

Sing 'He's got the whole world in his hands, He's got the whole wide world in his hands etc.

Of course, there are other chants you could use between prayers, such as the Taize chant 'O Lord, hear my prayer.'

Suggested hymns/songs

He's got the whole world in his hands

Father, I place into your hands

O Lord, all the world belongs to you.

Father, hear the prayer we offer.

All creatures of our God and king

Thou, whose almighty word

This world you have made

Ubi caritas

Eternal Father, strong to save

Jesus' hands were kind hands

Activities to accompany the service:

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRE/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.com/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)