

7th August 2020

Dear Friends,

Wow, I am sitting here looking at the date I have just typed and wondering how on earth it is that we are a week into August, isn't it still May, or at the very latest June, and why is my diary so full of meetings? In the upside-downness (yes, I made that word up) of everything, I guess nothing should surprise me! Things do continue to surprise me however, I hear many times of great kindnesses being done by people to help out neighbours or others, of people raising money to help those working among people in refugee camps where Covid-19 is difficult to deal with, of many, many people doing small things day by day which when added up make a huge difference to the lives of many. I wonder what you might have seen that encourages you at this time.

Of course along side the good and the encouraging there is also the dark and sometimes shocking, like the explosion in Beirut that injured and killed many and all of the questions that are arising from that, as to why it happened etc, etc. We are also reminded that this week is 75 years since the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, two explosions that have devastated many, and certainly the latter that has made many say, "never again". Yet, we live in a world where again and again we are reminded that people are capable of extreme good and extreme evil and often the two exist together, and we are called to walk through this world and our lives with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, who will remind us of the ways and life of Christ.

We are also called to be present in the world, and that can be really difficult at this time, especially with restrictions being eased and lifted in different places, the different physical and mental vulnerabilities that we all deal with, and all deal with in different ways. The world needs prayer and the world needs action, perhaps it is in the holding of those two things together that we work together with God to be the blessing to the world that we are called to be. We live with the ever present reality of not just Covid-19, but also climate change, growing poverty, the disparity of wealth with the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer, sometimes it is hard to watch the news and take it all in! Yet Jesus calls us to him and then sends us out. Meditate on this reading:

Immediately he 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.'

(Matthew 14: 22-43)

This happens just after Jesus has fed the crowd who had followed him, we are told he had compassion on them, he fed them with wisdom words as well as food, a miracle shared, then they were dismissed, as were the disciples, the latter into a boat to set out across the lake. The fact that he sent them by boat is not

surprising, it was probably the shorter route, but we also need to take on board that the deeps of the lake were symbols of chaos and danger, Jesus had sent them into a world where nothing safe and calm could be guaranteed and where storms could blow up at anytime and of course a storm did blow up and the boat and the disciples were battered by it. It was then, in the midst of the storm that Jesus came walking towards them across the water, and Peter takes the bold step to step out of the boat, but then the storm seemed to big for him and he sank. He is challenged for his doubts, but also lifted from the waters and taken back to the safety of the boat.

Do you feel at sea?

Do you feel battered by the storm?

This story reminds us that just as Jesus did not abandon the disciples neither are we abandoned, but we are at sea in a difficult and challenging world and we are called here by the God who loves, knows and created us. So, let us dare to look to him both for our good, but also for the good of the other, may we live lives that bless others, that seek the good for the other and for the sake of the planet and all that dwells on it. Let us also remember that we are not in this alone.

I leave you with a hymn:

**1. *Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,
for by his power each tree and flower
was planned and made.***

***Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it –
sun, moon, and stars in heaven cry: `***
Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord!
Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord.

**2. *Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal
in flesh he came to die in pain on Calvary's
tree.***

***Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding –
yet gave his life a ransom thus setting us
free.***

Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord!
Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord.

**3. *Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,
from death he rose
and all his foes shall own his name.***

***Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit
to show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.***
Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord!
Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord.

I also leave you with good wishes and deep prayers, again if I can help in any way or you simply would like a chat please let me know. Finally, a picture, or 3 in one:



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