

Collect, Readings and Sermon
Sunday 9th August 2026
The Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Collect

Let your merciful ears, O Lord,
be open to the prayers of your humble servants;
and that they may obtain their petitions
make them to ask such things as shall please you;
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.

1 Kings 19:9-18

At Horeb, the mount of God, 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.'

Psalm 85

The response to the Psalm is:

The Lord will speak peace to his people.

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!'

Matthew 14:22-33

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.'

Post Communion

God of our pilgrimage,
you have willed that the gate of mercy
should stand open for those who trust in you:
look upon us with your favour
that we who follow the path of your will
may never wander from the way of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sermon

Many years ago, when I was training as a History teacher, I found myself at something of a crossroads. My training involved two placements in local schools. The first school was a Roman Catholic secondary school in Woking with an excellent reputation. I was extremely well supported by the History department and although there were plenty of challenges, it felt like a positive experience. It probably helped that my mentor had done the same training as me a few years previously and was therefore very understanding of all that I was experiencing.

And then I moved on to my second placement. While the school was a good one – in fact, I ended up teaching there permanently – my mentor was a very different character. He was at least 6 foot 4, with a booming voice that immediately commanded a classroom. When I struggled with classroom discipline, he simply didn't appear to understand that the children responded differently to me. You can probably understand that as my confidence began to drain away, the behaviour of the children became worse, and in turn I began to feel as though I was failing.

It was at this stage that I took a few days off work, recognising that I was in a bad place. On my return, my mentor took me into the department office and said very forcefully that if I was back at work, I needed to be one hundred percent well, and he was not going to treat me with kid gloves. And if I wasn't well, I should stay off work.

I can still remember the moment, all these years later, and can feel what was going on inside me. Initially I could feel myself wilting and feeling that I should simply walk out at that moment. And then something else took over. Amidst the internal storm, I had a moment of clarity. Somewhere deep down I could understand that I was being bullied. And once this realisation had appeared, I became completely determined that this man was not going to stop me from becoming a teacher.

This morning's readings help us to reflect on the ways in which God is active in our lives and the ways in which we might identify God's presence. The gospel reading speaks of the

stormy times – like the experience that I have just described. You will remember from last week that Jesus has just performed the miracle of feeding over 5000 people – assisted by his disciples. He did this just after hearing about John the Baptist's death, and at the beginning of this morning's reading we find him in need of a bit of time and space with God. So, he sends his disciples away, telling them to take a boat across the lake, and he goes up the mountain to pray.

For Jesus, then, connection with the Father sometimes takes place on his own, in a special place like the top of a mountain. Perhaps you might identify with that. I certainly know that the top of a mountain can feel like a place of connection.

For the disciples, the situation is different. The feeding of the five thousand must have been an extraordinary experience for them, showing them more of the nature of God, and their role in the kingdom. I expect that will be something they were talking about as they climbed aboard the boat. I do wonder whether they had some sense that there was a storm ahead. Afterall, there were fishermen among the disciples, who may well have been able to see the signs of inclement weather.

We hear in the reading that the boat is far out from the land being battered by the waves, with the wind against them. It must have been quite frightening. And that is when Jesus appeared, walking on the water.

When I think of my own example that I shared, there is something about the moment that I decided not to allow my mentor to prevent me from becoming a teacher that feels a little like seeing Jesus walking towards me on the water in the middle of the storm. There really was something about the way a steely determination took hold of me that did not feel like it was to do with myself alone.

I wonder whether you have had a similar kind of experience at a challenging time in your own life. It might have been a sense of calm in the middle of turmoil; or perhaps a feeling of greater strength when you had previously felt quite weak and powerless. I think that the

gospel reading is inviting us to ask ourselves how it is that we encounter God in the different circumstances of our lives.

Of course Peter cannot leave it there. He sees Jesus walking towards them and decides that he, too, needs to walk on water. Peter is one of my favourite characters in the scriptures. He always seems a little headstrong. And there is something about his character that shows moments of profound faith set alongside moments of extraordinary weakness. Here, he is initially caught up in the moment of seeing Jesus. He recognises the miracle of walking on water as a sign that Jesus is God, and he believes that Jesus will have the power to help him to walk on water, too. And so it proves, for a moment at least. And then the doubts set in and he begins to sink.

I find it so reassuring that faith and doubt sit alongside each other in Peter's life. It is an extraordinary act of faith to step out onto the water. And yet almost immediately the doubts set in. And rather beautifully it is at that moment that he simply cries: "Lord, save me." In fact Peter's doubts are not a failure at all, but rather a moment in which he more fully understands his dependence on God.

It will not surprise you to hear that once I had returned to my teaching practice things were not always straightforward. There were still moments when I felt like I might be drowning. But somehow I had a greater resilience – I knew that I could take my anxieties and fears to God in prayer and somehow that gave me a little more strength.

This morning's readings do not only point to God being present in the stormy times of our lives, though, and I do think that's important to recognise, too. The first reading which comes from the first book of Kings tells us about Elijah's experience. We meet Elijah at a time when he is feeling very alone and longing for God's presence. And God promises to meet with him. And what we hear is that where Elijah finds God on this occasion is not in the wind; neither is it in the earthquake; nor in the fire. Elijah finds God in the sheer silence.

Which connects, I think, with Jesus going up the mountain to pray. While the stormy times in our lives may well shape us and help us to see God more clearly – and indeed recognise our

need for God – they are not the only times when God is present. We might encounter God up a mountain; or indeed in the sheer silence.

I wonder whether this week we are being invited to go a little deeper with God. To ask ourselves about those moments of encounter. And to remember that we might recognise God in the most unexpected places.

Amen