

Order of service for Park Road Baptist Church, April 26th 2020

Ideas for preparation and celebration

Being at home all the time means we all need to be a little more creative about how we make worship meaningful. So here are some ideas:

For children, you could place a bowl of water in the garden or fill the bath; save a net bag like the ones that fruit comes in, tie it to a stick, cut lots of small fish shapes cut out of a plastic carrier bag and get them to go fishing! They could understand how frustrating it is when you don't catch any fish and that could be the start for telling them the story in this week's reading. You could also offer paper and crayons for drawing a picture of the breakfast on the beach.

For families, if the weather is good you might like to think about having barbecued fish for a breakfast brunch or lunch.

For those on their own, how about drawing or making a collage of pictures of barbecues/beaches/fish from magazines or photos, adding the words that Jesus used in our New Testament reading, or having fish and bread for lunch, while slowly reading through the story again.

Call to worship:

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want

He makes me lie down in green pasture, He leads me beside quiet waters

He restores my soul.

Pray: Risen Lord Jesus, be known among us as we worship you this day. Walk with me/us, speak to me/us, forgive me/us for all I/we have not done that you wanted me/us to do, and all those thoughts that have not honoured you. Restore me/us and commission me/us for whatever you have for me/us in this coming week.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, Your kingdom come

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses

As we forgive those who trespass against us

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

For thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory for ever and ever Amen

Sing or say:

I will worship, I will worship

With all of my heart, all of my heart

I will praise you, I will praise you

with all of my strength, all of my strength

I will give you all my worship, I will give you all my praise

You alone I long to worship, you alone are worthy of my praise.

Old Testament reading: Isaiah 55 6-13

Intercessory prayers: *Please use the weekly update to pray for those known to us and for the world.*

New Testament reading: John 21 1-19

Sing or say

*Thine be the glory, risen conquering son
Endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away
Kept the folded graveclothes where thy body lay
Lo Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb
Lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom
Let the church with gladness hymns of triumph sing
For her Lord now liveth, death has lost its sting.*

Sermon: Just imagine for a moment that you were in a little boat alongside Peter's boat on Lake Galilee and you could hear all the conversation that was going on through that night.

Seven of the disciples, now back home in Galilee after a turbulent and tragic time in lockdown in Jerusalem. No-one could have imagined how it would all turn out. They'd travelled south with Jesus for the Passover festival, expecting that there would be a triumphant coup and Jesus would become recognised by all Jerusalem as their new King and leader, the Romans would retreat and a new era of Jewish life and worship would begin. As they travelled down, each of his disciples would be wondering what kind of new life they would have. And yes, on that Palm Sunday parade it seemed as though this really was about to happen.

But the events of the following week saw them gradually retreating into hiding and then finally, running away. Except for Peter, hanging around by the charcoal fire and the "disciple whom Jesus loved", probably young John, who came back to be with Mary Jesus' mother at the foot of the Cross. If you've seen the film "Risen" you'll have some idea of how afraid the disciples must have been behind those locked doors, as both the Roman soldiers and the Jewish Authorities tried to seek them out in order to disprove the rumour that Jesus was in fact alive, risen from the dead.

Everything had changed for them and yet tonight it seemed that nothing had changed. Here they were back in Galilee, out fishing on the lake in order to put some food on the table at home. All they had to remind them of the last few weeks were the memories of life with Jesus, their own shame and sense of guilt at running away in the face of pain and suffering, denial by the charcoal fire, the fact that their friend Judas had let them down so badly, the overwhelming grief they had felt as they heard of Jesus's death, and then all that suddenly transformed by unspeakable amazement as they met the Risen Jesus.

If you've ever worked through the night, or not been able to sleep, you'll know that feeling of all-pervading tiredness at around 4 am in the morning when the night seems endless and all sorts of doubts and fears come and go.

Can you imagine the conversation? Perhaps there wasn't much. Perhaps they didn't want to talk about it, like some of those who came back from World wars and wouldn't ever talk about the horrors they had seen. Today we'd call it post-traumatic stress disorder. When seemingly minor triggers send people back to a scene of pain and anguish. But if there were a few comments, perhaps they'd have been something like this...

"We can't even catch fish now."

"Wish Jesus was here...remember that time He came to our rescue?"

"But He said he would be here"

"Are you sure He said he would be here?"

"Well that's what the women said. They told us He said He would go before us to Galilee and meet us here".

"Yes but has anyone seen Him here?"

"Perhaps it was a bit of a dream after all".

"It can't be, we saw Him in Jerusalem"

"He spoke to us. We all heard Him. He even invited Thomas to touch His hands and side, didn't He Thom

Eventually it gets towards dawn and the thin grey mist begins to lift over the mountains to the East of Galilee. Slowly, imperceptibly, as the sun begins to rise, the outline of a man appears on the shore. He calls out to them.

"Friends, haven't you any fish?" Throw your net on the right side of the boat"

...and as they watch a large shoal of fish swim straight into the net someone remembers that this happened before, and realises who it is. Who else could it be?... Peter jumps into the water, wades to the shore and dripping wet stands before his Lord and Master...charcoal fire...flashback...charcoal fire, cock crowing...no, surely not...charcoal fire, shame. Peter turns back to the boat and helps the others bring in the catch, takes more fish to Jesus.

Jesus comes with the bread and the barbecued fish and serves them all... questions, answers, doubts resolved, fears gone, peace shared, joy returned, this is definitely Jesus, risen from the dead, come back to Galilee. Present with them.

But for Peter, the smell of that charcoal fire was the trigger, reminding him of that night in the courtyard in Jerusalem. Why oh why did He deny knowing Jesus at His hour of greatest need. Would he ever regain that relationship, so special, so close? Would Jesus ever trust him with anything again?

Breakfast was finished and while the others were perhaps dealing with the rest of the fish, Jesus takes Peter aside and walks along the beach a little way. He wants to restore Him, to heal him of the guilt and pain, to assure him of forgiveness and commission him for the task ahead. Three times he had denied Jesus. And three times Jesus asks the question...do you truly love me. Three times Jesus gives him a job to do, a role to play, a responsibility to carry out, and then a command to follow, even to the point of death.

I don't think Peter would ever forget that conversation. In fact we know he didn't. For a few years later he would write to Jewish and Gentile Christians, scattered throughout much of Asia Minor, suffering various trials and temptations. "The God of all grace, who called you to

His eternal glory in Christ after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.” (I Peter 5, 10)

Peter knew what that meant. As he wrote that he was no doubt thinking back to that breakfast on the beach.

And for us, today, stuck in lockdown, unable to do the things we want to do right now, hearing of tragedy in many families, perhaps even more aware of some of the past hurts and failures in our lives, is there a “breakfast on the beach” moment that we can look back to and know the restoring and healing and commissioning power of Jesus?

If there isn't, why not take some time this week to read through this story again and invite God's Holy Spirit to remind us of the time when the risen Jesus first became real to us, or to walk with Him once more. To receive again, or maybe for the first time, that sense of complete forgiveness, healing of memories, reconciliation, hope and missional purpose that Jesus wants for each of us, our family and friends, and the communities in which we live.

Can you hear Him calling as He stands upon the shore
“Throw your nets the other side and you will find some more”
“Then come and eat with me for I've prepared a meal for you;
I want to give you life and love to share with others too.”

Can you hear Him calling as you walk through Galilee
Calling you by name just as he did beside this sea
To feed his flock, and know His voice through suffering and pain
Calling you to follow Him, and learn to sing again

(written by the side of Lake Galilee, March 2018)

Sing or say:

Plenteous grace with thee is found

Grace to cover all my sin

Let the healing streams abound

Make and keep me pure within

Thou of life the fountain art

Freely let me take of thee

Spring Thou up within my heart

Rise to all eternity.

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip me/us with everything good for doing his will and may He work in me/us, what is pleasing to Him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever, amen.