

Stokesley Methodist Church



Sunday 5th May 2019

Food Bank Sunday

10.30am Morning Worship led by Rev Andrew Robinson, including the Sacrament of Holy Communion

3.00pm Circuit Easter Offering Dedication Service

6.00pm Evening Worship at Town Close
led by Revd Lisa Quarmby
including the Sacrament of Holy Communion

A Gathering Prayer from the Roots Resources

Jesus calls us to walk with him, to eat with him, and to work with him. As his friends, his guests and his disciples, let us together praise him with all our heart, and serve him with all our strength.

We have all come 'ashore' from different places.

We have all come with differing needs.

We have all come with a longing to meet with Jesus.

And Jesus longs to meet with all of us:

to challenge, to call, to equip, to forgive, and to strengthen.

Let us thank him for his amazing love.

Thank you, Jesus.

Amen

Lectionary Readings:

Acts 9 v1-6, (7-20) Saul's Conversion

Psalm 30 I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths

Revelation 5 v11-14 The Scroll and the Lamb

John 21 v1-19 Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish

Fish and Forgiveness

As we read the passages from Acts and John's Gospel, we are reminded that Peter and Paul/Saul are both giants of the church. Both had to come to terms with their past. Both had their lives transformed. Peter's fear led to a denial of Jesus. Paul's hostility led to persecution of Christians. Peter had known Jesus, and yet he had denied him. Paul had been so sure he was right to persecute those who followed 'the Way', until the dramatic moment on the Damascus road.

How do we come to terms with our past, individually and as a church?

The Revd Les Isaac is the founder of Street Pastors. His conversion to faith led to a night-time ministry on our city streets. Young partygoers often find themselves in danger or distress in the middle of the night. So, like Peter, Les Isaac followed the command to tend Christ's sheep.

How might we do the same?

Saul's journey is from hostility to receptivity, from disbelief to belief. Ananias' journey is from fear and hidden faith to risk and trust. The journey of faith is always a risky one. Ananias risks his safety. Saul risks his reputation – he will be seen as a turncoat by the high priest and other religious authorities.

What risks are we taking for our faith?

In her book, 'Take this Bread', Sara Miles recounts her experience of conversion at a San Francisco altar, and her food pantries for the poor set up around the altar. Communion was consciously and deliberately linked with feeding the hungry.

What practical steps can we take to feed the hungry with abundance?

Cast your nets onto the other side of the boat. How often is the Church stuck in its ways of doing things? When things become static or stale – or simply are no longer working – might Jesus be asking us to cast our nets on the other side? What might that mean in practice? When we want something to happen, are we prepared to risk trying something completely different?

How many different sorts of bread can you think of? Jesus gave his disciples breakfast when they were hungry; he gave them bread to eat with their fish.

How many charities help to feed the hungry? These charities work hard to make sure that people have enough food to eat. Some of them do this because Jesus gives abundantly. In today's reading Jesus shared bread with his disciples. On another occasion he shared bread with 5,000 people – and had some left over. If we all shared bread, there should be enough for the whole world. How can we be more like Jesus and share the good things we have? But it's not just bread or food – what else could we share?

The timing of Jesus' appearance to Peter is uncertain, though its location is clear enough. Seven disciples, including the sons of Zebedee, mentioned for the first time in this Gospel, are fishing on the Sea of Tiberias (John's name for the Sea of Galilee). Have they returned to making their living, as the other Gospels (but not John) tell us they once did? Their fruitless night on the lake recalls Luke 5.1-11, which also highlights Peter's sense of unworthiness alongside his call to discipleship. In both accounts, following Jesus'

advice leads to a catch so large that even these experienced fishermen struggle to land it. John adds some colour. When he recognises Jesus, Peter gets dressed before jumping into the sea. And there are 153 fish, one of each known species at the time. The large catch, landed without breaking the net, reminds us of Jesus' one flock, the one unbroken people for whom he prays, and so symbolises the universal mission – what the other Gospels call 'fishing for people' – that flows from Jesus' resurrection.

Whatever the connections with Luke 5, the meeting by the lake is a typical resurrection appearance in which Jesus is recognised over a meal. The note of abundance is characteristically Johannine – think water into wine (John 2 v1-11), or loaves and fish feeding 5,000 with 12 baskets to spare (John 6 v1-14). Jesus' charcoal fire recalls the one in the high priest's courtyard (John 18 v18), where Peter denied any association with Jesus three times. The grace of the good shepherd's hospitality draws from Peter a threefold declaration of loyalty, as the Lamb of God's love takes away his sense of unworthiness and guilt. Jesus' 'Simon, son of John' recalls Peter to the life of discipleship. His commissioning to extend the work of the good shepherd is also his cleansing. Those who falter like Peter when faced by the synagogue's hostility can only be heartened by Jesus' care for this wayward member of his flock.

A Sending Out Prayer:

May Jesus bring abundance where there is scarcity,
confidence where there is fear,
purpose where there is staleness;
and may each of us know his forgiveness,
his love and his blessing,
in the days ahead and always.

Amen.