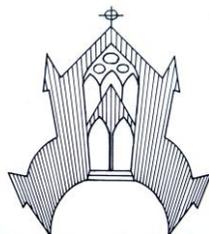


Stokesley Methodist Church



Sunday 1st May 2022



A Gathering Prayer from the Roots resources

Creator God, you made us in your image, part of your wonderfully diverse creation, fragile and yet fantastic in your eyes.
Be present with us today, and in all we think and say and do.
Meet us and remake us, shape our hearts and minds that the pattern of our lives may better reflect your life.
Come, let us enter the presence of the One who sits on the heavenly throne.
Let us join with every creature in heaven and earth,
and add our voices to the choir of angels, worshipping and praising our Creator,
the One Most Holy.

Amen

Lectionary Readings:

Acts 9 v1-6, (7-20) (p1102) Saul's Conversion

Psalm 30 (p558) I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths ...

John 21 v1-19 (p1090) Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish / Jesus Reinstates Peter

Revelation 5 v11-14 (p1237) The Scroll and the Lamb

Catching On

This week our focus explores opportunities for a new pattern of living. After a night of fishing, the disciples meet the risen Jesus on the seashore and eat breakfast with him. They don't recognise him and it's only after the miraculous haul of fish that they catch on. This leads to a moment of healing and a new start for Peter, who had denied Jesus before the crucifixion.

Jesus repeats his question to Peter three times: 'Do you love me?' (v15-17), mending the past and giving Peter renewed hope on the other side of failure. Do we see ourselves as Jesus sees us? Or do our failures and mistakes cloud our understanding?

Paul was persecuting the church because he was 'extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers' than others (Galatians 1.14).

But it was when violently preserving the status quo that his priorities were radically reordered. In Acts 9 we read how, as he saw the glory of God, he heard the voice of Jesus inviting him to learn a new way of living. The high priest's posse, which was accompanying him, lead him away, and 'For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything' (v9). This has echoes of Jesus' arrest, crucifixion, death and burial, and might be what Paul had in mind in Romans 6 v1-4. By Ananias' touch and teaching the scales fall from his eyes and, filled with the Spirit, he participates in Jesus' risen life, greeted as 'brother' by the courageous man whose life he had threatened.

The psalmist in Psalm 30 gives thanks to God for deliverance from the clutches of death, sharing this experience with all God's 'saints' (v4),

perhaps with a thanksgiving offering in the Temple (Leviticus 7 v11-12). The one who was confident in prosperity has come to realise that real security is in the presence of God, whose brief anger is sometimes necessary. But our vocation is to praise our Lord, whose faithfulness and favour are endless.

Revelation 5 v11-14

When John was told (see Revelation 1), 'Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later', he was then to send it to the seven churches. The author's interest in writing is suggested by the Greek letters Alpha and Omega, used to affirm God's sovereignty as first and last. But 'the Lord's day', and reading aloud, set Revelation within the drama of worship. Just as the psalmist, raised from the slimy pit to the rock, was given 'a new song' (Psalm 40 v1-3), so here, in Revelation 5, another new song celebrates the slaughtered Lamb alive on God's throne, worshipped by those who approach the throne of grace. The song concludes, 'Amen', and perhaps the seven churches joined the elders in adoration & worship. Seeing and hearing interact, 'I looked, and I heard', enriching this unfolding drama. John the prophet has heard that the Lion of Judah has conquered and can open the scroll, but what he actually sees is a Lamb who alone is 'worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals' (5 v9). This paradox echoes John's Gospel, where Jesus' is 'lifted up' (John 12 v32) at the very time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed (John 19 v14) – it is both his crucifixion and his exaltation.

We now turn to John 21 v1-19

Seeing the empty tomb, Peter and the beloved disciple 'went back to their homes' (20 v10). Offered peace and forgiveness by the risen Jesus (20 v19-23), they again return home to their fishing. Commissioned to share Jesus' risen life with the world (20 v21; 17 v18), they are taking their time to recognise who he really is. In Jerusalem he showed them his hands and his side. Now he meets them back in Galilee, where they first 'believed in him' (2 v1-11). Remembering their past, particularly their wounding and being wounded, must become part of their new

way of living. The familiar Jesus they previously followed is now a stranger on the shore. By following his instructions, they find life-giving food. He is the source of living water (4 v7-15; 7 v37-38), as in Ezekiel's vision of the life-giving river flowing from the Temple: 'and there will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there' (Ezekiel 47 v9). First the beloved disciple and then the others recognise that the crucified Jesus is the stranger inviting them to breakfast. They are afraid to ask, 'Who are you?', perhaps fearing the answer, 'Jesus whom you abandoned and denied.' But they know who he is, accepting the breakfast he was cooking for them and being allowed to contribute what they had caught. They begin to understand his forgiveness and accept his renewed call, 'Follow me.' This charcoal fire recalls the charcoal fire at which Peter denied three times that he knew Jesus (18 v18) and, although uncomfortable for Peter, Jesus must ask three times, 'Do you love me?', before appointing him to his particular ministry. Peter is still seeking to be first, ridiculously and respectably dressing himself to jump into the sea. So, the first of Jesus' three questions is, 'Do you truly love me more than these [other disciples love me]?' Becoming wiser, Peter simply answers, 'You know that I love you.'

Sending Out Prayer:

Send us out, Lord,
not perfect creations but always work in progress.
Keep before us the vision of heaven on earth.
Show us the way of life that is the pattern of Christ.
Fill our hearts with the hope and promise
of your ongoing work of transformation in our lives.
now and every day.

Amen