

Haverhill Methodist Church – Worship at Home
Sunday 6th September 2020

Welcome Message – Revd. Peter Goodhall

Wherever you are worshipping today, whether at home or back in church, a very warm welcome. God meets us where we are and we are united as one church family by the Holy Spirit. Come; together let us worship the God of our salvation.

Read Psalm 122

Hymn/Song

Prayer

God of our endings and our beginnings, we praise you for your unchanging love: God of our time

Help us to let go

As we look back at our experiences of this year so far:

God of our time

Help us to let go

When we remember past hurts and chosen wrong:

God of our time

Help us to let go

When we remember our disappointments and regrets:

God of our time

Help us to let go

When we remember our failure to love:

God of our time

Help us to let go

Help us to let go that we may be free to take hold of all that you have for us. Help us to let go and start again with you. **Amen.**

Bible Readings

Ecclesiastes chapter 3 verses 1-8

Mark chapter 6 verses 30-34 and verses 53-56

Hymn/Song

Sermon

In my sermon I want us to explore Mark chapter 6 verses 30-34 and verses 53-56. We begin in verse 30: *'The apostles gathered round Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.'* Earlier in his gospel, Mark has stated how Jesus appointed the twelve that they might be partners with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.:

They went out and preached that people should repent.

They drove out many demons and anointed with oil many people who were ill and healed them. We see how the 12 were mirroring the actions of Jesus. Now they return and have much to report.

Can you imagine their feedback?

"Lord – your name is so powerful!" "Lord – we saw lives turned around!" "Lord – we saw sick people made well." "But Lord – we are so tired and hungry. We are spent." And the needs of the crowd were ever present. We read in verse 31 and 32: *'Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'* So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

Here is the first gift of the Lord, for the disciples and for you from his Word today.

In place of busyness, rest.

Here we see the tenderness and compassion of Jesus.

Jesus also said:

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and over-burdened, and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke and learn from me.

For I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Today, if you are tired and hungry – spiritually hungry or emotionally hungry, Jesus invites you to give him your busyness and your burdens and allow him to lead you to a quiet place to rest.

Being in church may give you that breathing space today, and we can find that same breathing space in our homes too. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (Matthew chapter 18verse 20) Wherever you are at worship today, what matters is that over the noise, over the busyness, over clamouring voices for your attention, listen for the gracious invitation of your Lord: *'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'*

The disciples and Jesus boarded their boat on the peaceful lake – and pulled away from it all. They were now crossing the lake. They were between points. Perhaps you are with them. Are you at a crossing point today? Are you in a time of transition and change? Between departure and arrival? Not on the lake – but an inward voyage. Many of us are crossing from lockdown towards a new normal, some of us from isolation to community. Some will be crossing from school to college, some crossing from home to university, others from education to work. Some will be crossing over to a new job or to new responsibilities. Some are crossing from dependence to independence; others from independence to dependence. Some of you will be at a crossing point in your relationships. Some are crossing from health to sickness or from sickness to health. Some have crossed from death to eternal life. In all these changes, and crossing points what remains important is that we are one with Christ and one with each other. We are in the same boat, connected to one another and connected to Jesus our leader and our Lord. Best of all, Jesus is with us. That's good news. So as you cross over – be at rest. Find rest in him, and with these disciples try to find rest in the journey, in the waiting. Rest in the Lord. In place of busyness, he offers you rest.

Moving on, we read in verses 33 and 34 of Mark chapter 6

'But many who saw them leaving recognised them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.'

Here is the second gift of the Lord, for the crowd and for you.

In place of aimlessness, direction.

The disciples sailed towards the shore. But a crowd had gone on ahead and were waiting for them. I wonder how would you feel as one of those tired and hungry disciples to see that needy crowd looming larger and larger as you neared the far shore? "Are those sheep on the distant hills? No – wait – it's not sheep – it's....people – crowds of people". Yes, the crowds were like sheep, gone astray, aimlessly going to and fro without direction, scattered, exposed to danger, without a leader, without a good shepherd.

And I they were all expectantly waiting for Jesus to arrive.

A little of me would selfishly say – “I don’t want this peaceful boat trip to end – do we have to land the boat - can’t we turn back – can’t we change direction? Hide?” Not Jesus. Even though he was being hunted down, Jesus had compassion on the crowd. He fed them. He showed his power to save. That’s good news. The Good Shepherd was at hand. The same Good Shepherd is at hand today. The living Son of God is here for his flock now. He knows your deepest longing, your greatest need. He has compassion on you. He will lead you beside quiet waters, he will guide you in right paths, he will bring you reassurance and comfort, as no other can, he will feed you bread that lasts, he cares for you, he protects you, he will lead you safely home. Will you stand on the shore and welcome him? Will you look to him? Will you listen to his voice? We cannot hear unless we listen. We cannot follow unless we stay close to our Good Shepherd. He will lead you – moreover he will lead you to those who **need** you. He will direct you to the crowd. The crowd looms large today. People need the Lord. Covid 10 has scattered the people and caused great pain and loss. There are many lost sheep, lost souls. They need you and me. As an ambassador for Christ, your life can point others to the Shepherd King. We look at the crowd, but we also see the individual and we show the Saviour’s love.

Finally, we read in verses 53 and 56 of Mark chapter 6:

‘When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognised Jesus. They ran throughout that whole region and carried those who were ill on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went – into villages, towns or countryside – they placed those who were ill in the market places. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.’

Here is the third gift of the Lord from his word, for the crowd and for you: **In place of sickness, healing.**

They placed the sick in his path. There were so many men women and children waiting for healing. Many today are waiting, hoping, praying for a healing touch. Not all receive physical healing. There is ‘a time to be born and a time to die’. I remember a young boy at a summer holiday club in Braintree. We were looking at the Bible story of the healing of the paralysed man who was carried to Jesus by his friends.

The young lad said that the paralysed man was 'dying to get better'. Sometimes, in God's mysterious plan, dying can be healing. Our resurrection body will last forever.

Jesus' aim was not just to make people better, but to make better people. He wants us to be whole – in body, but also in mind and in spirit also. He is the great physician. The demand for healing was great – but our Saviour attended to each individual need.

The demand for healing was great – but our Saviour was equal to it! I am reminded of these words by Annie Johnson Flint:

*He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labours increase;
To added affliction He addeth His mercy;
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.
When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.
His love has no limit; His grace has no measure.
His pow'r has no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again!*

So we don't shrink from the crowd, or from the sick, rather one by one we carry them to the Lord, in prayer, and offer practical help.

Who has the Lord placed in your path?

May they be lifted, raised up, from being by the side of the way to being by the side of the Shepherd.

In closing, from Jesus let the church receive today:

In place of busyness, rest

In place of aimlessness, direction

In place of sickness, healing

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Hymn/Song

Prayer of Intercession

Holy God of Israel, ever present and moving among your people, draw us near to you, that in place of hostility there may be peace; in place of loneliness, compassion; in place of aimlessness, direction; and in place of sickness, healing;

Name and lift up to the Lord those on your heart today...

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Through Christ Jesus, in whom you draw near to us. **Amen.**

Shepherd God, you call us into a rhythm of work and rest that our lives may be the better for it.

Name and lift up to the Lord your own needs today...

Help us to trust you in every season of our soul.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

So shape our leisure and our labour, that the world will recognize us as Jesus' disciples and our ministry as what you would have us do.

Through Christ Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep. **Amen.**

Unite your prayers with the whole church as you pray

The Lord's Prayer. 'Our Father...'

Hymn/song

The Blessing

We offer our lives and our gifts to the Lord.

Bless to us all O God the doors we open, the thresholds we cross, and the roads that lie before us. **Amen.**

Coffee Time Conversation

- Name any 'crossing points' in your life today or in the past.
- How has the Lord brought direction to your life?
- Give thanks for our Lord's healing touch.

Suggested Hymns and Songs

More Traditional Music:

Thine be the glory
One more step along the world I go
The King of love my Shepherd is
When we walk with the Lord - Trust and obey

More Contemporary Music:

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord
Father I place into your hands the things I cannot do
There is a Redeemer

Keep social distancing.
Keep safe.
Keep communicating.
Keep trusting in God and standing on his great and precious promises.
God bless you and keep you until we meet again.
My prayers are with you.

With love,

Peter