

Home Worship Service July 5, 2020



Welcoming the Light

As you light a candle, say:

I will keep still and wait like the night
with starry vigil
and its head bent low with patience....
The morning will surely come,
the darkness will vanish...

- Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Bengali writer, composer, and artist

Gathering Music

Spirit, Open My Heart, *More Voices* #79, performed by Laura Bell Smith
<https://youtu.be/nnU09HqzJvs>

Gathering Prayer

by Joyce Rupp in *Fragments of Your Ancient Name*

**Holy One, you are the great heart of true loves,
woven through the fabric of inner life.
You are the fondness of each genuine hug,
the spark and ardor of marital bliss,
the affection held in the eyes of a friend.
You move through parental tenderness
and those who carefully tend the weak.
You are knit into our unselfish actions,
Spun through each effort to be kind.
You are the great Love of our loves.
And it is this we celebrate. Amen.**

Readings from Our Tradition

Psalm 8 (MSG) “Your Name Echoes Around the World”

GOD, brilliant Lord,

 yours is a household name.

Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you;

 toddlers shout the songs

That drown out enemy talk,

 and silence atheist babble.

I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous,

 your handmade sky-jewelry,

Moon and stars mounted in their settings.

 Then I look at my micro-self and wonder,

Why do you bother with us?

 Why take a second look our way?

Yet we've so narrowly missed being gods,

 bright with Eden's dawn light.

You put us in charge of your handcrafted world,

 repeated to us your Genesis-charge,

Made us lords of sheep and cattle,

 even animals out in the wild,

Birds flying and fish swimming,

 whales singing in the ocean deeps.

GOD, brilliant Lord,

 your name echoes around the world.

John 21:1-14 “Jesus and the Miraculous Catch”

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. “I'm going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We'll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

He called out to them, “Friends, haven't you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Reading from Our World

"Song for Peace" by Allister MacGillivray

Gentle woman, gentle man,
may I speak that you might understand?
I've been thinking we've been rather blind.
Let us leave every difference behind.

*Cast your nets on these waters, your lines on the sea,
your sites on horizons, wherever you please.
For together, we'll weather, the tide that prevails.
With the sun on our shoulders, the wind in our sails.*

Those who suffer, those who cry,
call for brothers and friends, by and by.
For 'tis certain united we stand,
side by side, arm in arm, hand in hand.

Little children know the way.
They spend life dream by dream, day by day.
And by nature, they seem to imply
we must love and never ask why.

Reflection by Ali:

"Getting to the Other Side of the Boat"

Introduction

I knew that I was going to be speaking to you
for a few months now.

It was perhaps Barb who contacted me
in anticipation of Jane's retirement
and the work that would have to be done.

Of course, this was all pre-pandemic
and, back then, I was envisioning
the beautiful drive I would take out to the country
to be with you St. James' folks
and looking forward going into St. Andrews to be with you Wesley folks,
perhaps stopping in at Honeybeans along the way.

But, to say the very least,
things changed
and here we are,
many of us meeting for the first time over Zoom.
But that's ok.

I grew up on the ocean.
I am used to change.
For you cannot even depend on the weather
on the coast.

Childhood

I have been thinking about what I should tell you about myself.
I am 39 years old,
and, although that isn't old,
I am discovering that by the time you are approaching your fifth decade,
you have accumulated a lot of experiences and stories.

When I decided to spend some time talking to you about Jesus at the seashore,
it became apparent that I needed to start my story today at the beginning.
Actually, I'm going to give you the beginning
and then jump ahead a whole bunch to today.

I grew up on Cape Breton Island.
I was born there and lived there in the same house for 18 years.
It was across the street from a beautiful beach
and the wild waves of the Atlantic ocean.
I live in St. Stephen now
where every single day I hear the horn
from the Ganong Factory
as well as the train whistle
as it comes through town.
Back then, it was the fog horn
that provided the background noise
for most every day of my childhood.

My mother was an elementary school teacher.
I swore I would never be one.
Funny that.
I just graduated on Friday from St. Thomas University
with my Bachelor of Education.
I am now an elementary school teacher.

My father was a commercial fisherman
for his entire career.
What he did every day was somewhat of a mystery to me.
All I knew, as a child, was that:
He would get up at 2 in the morning,
get ready, go to the wharf,
get in his boat, and come home sometime in the afternoon,
reeking of fish
and ready for a nap.
I also knew that May 15 to July 15 each year
was a happy time in our world
because that was lobster season
and that's when the real money got made.

Leaving

The place I am from was beautiful.
It was also completely depressing for a teenager in the 1990s.
The industries there,
which were coal mining, the steel plant, and fishing,
had almost completely dried up at that point.
There was a lot of poverty.
A lot of disadvantaged people.
A lot of problems.

By the time I got to high school,
a catch phrase had caught hold
and that phrase was "brain drain".
All the young people who had a chance to be educated
were moving away in droves.
I moved with them.
It's what everybody expected me to do.

My family was considered wealthy.
My father fished but owned businesses on the side.
He was also a carpenter.
As I said, my mother had a good job.
But I saw a lot of people struggling.

I saw a lot of people go out into their boats,
work really hard all night long,
and come home in the morning with nothing to show for it.

I mean, I literally saw that happen.
I spent my life around fisherman.
But beyond that,
I felt that hopelessness happening
to people from all different walks of life.
It seemed like people were having a hard time getting ahead.
As a teenager, when I left,
I didn't quite know what to do about that.

Scripture Story

I gave you that long introduction to myself,
not just because it's nice for us to get to know each other.
I gave you that particular information about myself
because I think it's the only way for you to see
how I look at today's gospel reading.

I can feel with every bone in my body
the weariness of those fisherman
that Jesus watched come into the wharf that day.
I can feel with my whole heart
the hopeless they felt,
knowing that they had to go home to their families
empty-handed.
I feel their hunger.
I feel their despair.

They were out in a boat in the dark.
Who knows what weather they had faced.

They would put down the net,
which was heavy, especially when drenched with water.
They worked together –
hard physical labour –
praying, hoping, crossing their fingers, whatever –
trying to fill that net –
looking for even one small school of fish
to make it all seem worthwhile,
to help them find a shred of hope.

And then when they have given up completely,
Jesus yells to them from the shore.
Can you imagine what it was like to hear him say,
“Just put the net on the other side of the boat!”
I mean....really?
I’m sure they had tried that.
I’m sure they had tried everything.
The miracle of this story is not that Jesus filled their nets with fish.
My goodness, how we have focused on that in the church
for centuries!
The miracle is not a magic trick
that the Great Magician Jesus only pulls out
when his friends are at their lowest,
you know, to lighten the mood.
Are you ready for the miracle?
Even after they had been beaten down by the sea,
by life, by circumstances,
they dared to try again.
They dared to try one more time.
Do you know how incredibly difficult that is?
How incredibly difficult to lift that saturated net
one more time
and drag it from the side of the boat
where you were ready to leave it all behind
to throw it at the mercy of the water
on the other side!

Those of us who are privileged,
who ourselves in a good place in life
might have a hard time relating to that level of desperation
but we can imagine it.

John Howard Society

Lately, I have been helping people
to move the net to the other side of the boat.

I was hired a few weeks ago by the John Howard Society
for my first teaching job.
I am the facilitator of a program in St. Stephen
for young adults in Charlotte County
who have barriers to getting employment.
My job is to teach them basic life and work skills
and prepare them for the workforce.
I will do this over a 3 month course.
I have a wonderful colleague
who will then get each of them a job placement.

When I say these participants have barriers,
I really mean it.
I would never get into the particulars of their stories
because they aren't my stories to share.
But if you can imagine an issue that one might face,
they have faced it.
Most of them have faced multiple issues.
They have struggled and dealt with a lot.
They are like fisherman,
coming in from a night on the sea.
They have tried everything to get their lives on track,
to catch a break.
They have worked harder than I could ever imagine working
just to survive.
And now, we work at helping them to thrive.
And it's a huge piece of work.

Conclusion

I didn't know how to help when I was a teenager at home,
looking around at empty nets.
But I'm doing it now.
And we all can.
We all can help cast the net on the other side.
Like Jesus, we have to look for the opportunity
to do that.

So, join me in the next few weeks,
as we spend time at the seashore,
being inspired by the waters,
figuring out how we are to be People of the Faith
and People of the Sea.

Reflective Music

Peter's Dream by Lennie Gallant
<https://youtu.be/IQQbguVhzHc>

Offertory

Spirit, we open our hands to you, humbly and gently. Enable us to discover a sense of the sacred in our giving. Open our hearts that they may be generous and ready to receive in return your great joy. Use these our gifts to quiet the traffic and turmoil in the lives of those who need such calm. May we continue to work to lift the heavy burdens as our prayerful act of faith. May it be so!

Prayer of Celebration by Ali

Holy One, we know that you are with us.
And it is this that we celebrate.
We have seen signs of your presence
in every time and in every place.
We know that while it is easy to see you
in the beauty of creation
brought about by a summer day,
that it is not your own dwelling place.
Instead, you walk the streets of cities
and stroll the dusty lands of the countryside.
Like us, you wander the aisles of the market
and loiter in coffee shops.
May we hear your songs ringing out in our towns
and see your dance performed on concrete sidewalks.
May we feel your grandeur,
knowing that you are more than we could ever know by name.
But may we also know your quaintness
as you draw in close to us in our cottages
and home sweet homes.

It is you who we celebrate,
you who fill us with joy,
you who sets off sparks in our body, mind and soul.
And we celebrate you in each other,
as we recognize the holiness that lives within.
Bring to us peace that we may rest in you
just as you bring to us restlessness
to act as the hands and feet of Jesus –
the one who inspires us
through stories of fishing villages,
overflowing nets,
weary fisherman,
and campfire breakfasts.

May we seek the justice he showed to us,
reaching out to those in need,
helping to carry burdens,
helping to remove barriers,
loving as he loved.
This is our prayer. Amen.

Announcements, Joys and Concerns

Blessing by Ali

Let us embrace the week before us
with wonder and expectation.

Let us be excited to extend compassion
to those we meet.

Let us prepare to do the heavy lifting,
carrying nets from one side to the other.

And let us eagerly await the time
that we may meet again. Amen.

We Go Forth Singing

VU 567

Will You Come and Follow Me,

recorded at St. Andrews' Metropolitan Church in Glasgow, Scotland

<https://youtu.be/zk6IUaIJ3sk>

Carrying Out the Light

I will carry the morning light,
whose glow has been felt in this space,
into this new day.

I take it with me as I go,
as if pulling a bright star from the sky.

Follow these words with the extinguishing of the candle.