

Parish of Central Exeter
Trinty 10
14 August 2023

Earth, fire, wind and water

Welcome everyone.



Opening Prayer

Here, in this place,
God welcomes all the dreamers, as well as the doubters:
here, the worriers and wanderers can call on God by name.
Here, in this time, we can remember all the ways God has graced us:
here, in these moments, we are reminded that God is with us, always!
Here are gathered those daring enough to step out of comfort into the unknown:
here, in this faith space, we will find the courage to cry out, 'God, save us!' in every situation.

(Thomas Schuman, Lectionary Liturgies)

Gathering Hymn

Dear Lord and Father of Mankind.
The Choir and congregation of St David's Cathedral are led by Catherine Jenkins, (who gives a short introduction before the music starts)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y47vEE1zbDE>

Prayer of Confession

(based on Matthew 14:22-33)

God, You call us to step out in faith,
to place our lives in Your hands,
and to wholeheartedly commit to following You.

We confess that we find this difficult to do.
It is not always easy to follow where You lead—

to turn away from our own personal wants and desires,
to let go of our safety nets
and trust that You will provide for us in all things.

Forgive us when we doubt You, God.

Increase our faith.

Open our eyes to see past our own interests and concerns,
to Your broader vision for us and for our world.

In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

Silence is kept

Assurance of Pardon

Praise God, who listens when we pray,
and who responds with unfailing love!

Collect

Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples
to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage
never to lose hope,
but always to bring our prayers before you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading

1 Kings 19:9-18

⁹ At that place he came to a cave and spent the night there.
Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here,
Elijah?' ¹⁰ He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of
hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars,
and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking
my life, to take it away.'

¹¹ He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' ¹⁴ He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.' ¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. ¹⁷ Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. ¹⁸ Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.'

Reflection

Elijah had lost hope. He had had a tremendous spiritual experience in the contest on Mt Carmel with the prophets of Baal. God had answered his prayer with fire to consume the wet burnt offering and the people 'fell on their faces and said, "The Lord indeed is God."' (1 Kings 18:39) The prophets were killed. The rains came and the drought of 3 years was over. But Elijah had angered Queen Jezebel who was determined to kill him, so he fled to the wilderness. He lost hope, thought that he was alone, and that God had abandoned him. He had a breakdown. Yet God gently let him rest, fed him, and led him back to the roots of the faith, to Mount Horeb. Here God could teach him and renew him for active service.

First lesson – yes God is sometimes found in powerful action – the fire from heaven – the great spiritual experience but perhaps more often God is found when we slow down, become still and in silence are open to God's word.

Second lesson – Elijah still had work to do. God recommissioned him to anoint successors in the political and religious area of life.

Third lesson – Elijah was not alone. There were faithful followers of Yahweh inside Israel despite what Elijah thought.

Elijah was renewed through his experience on Mt Horeb, returned to Israel and continued in ministry.



We Pray

Help us to hear You speak to us, in our heart of hearts, as that still, small voice amidst the maelstrom of our daily lives, giving us direction, peace, and hope.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Still Small Voice Mark Fisher

Hymn

Come down O love divine.

This is normally associated with Pentecost – and yet it seems relevant to this OT reading.

Sung here by the Cardiff Festival Choir. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnbZFd8C4U0>

Gospel Matthew 14:22-33

²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, ^[a] for the wind was against

them. ²⁵ And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. ²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'

²⁸ Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' ²⁹ He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus.

³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!'

³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' ³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'



Jesus saving Peter from the waves. Armenian manuscript – Daniel of Uranc Gospel 1433

Reflection

Today's gospel passage described events immediately after the miraculous feeding of 5000 men plus women and children. It was late in the day. Everyone was tired and Jesus wanted to be alone to pray. That had been his intention in Matthew 14:13 before he had been interrupted by the crowd. With the disciples sent back to base by boat and the crowd dismissed to their homes he was able to spend the night in prayer. Time to reflect on recent events – the miracles with all the enthusiasm of the crowds, the parables with the stumbling growth in understanding of the disciples, the growing opposition from religious leaders and Herod's potential threat. Perhaps he too needed the lessons that God had given Elijah. Space to be still and listen again for his Father's will, to be renewed in ministry and reassured that he was not alone.

Matthew next recorded a miraculous experience for Jesus and the disciples which emphasised the message of the gospel declaring that Jesus is the Son of God. The divine power over the chaos of the sea is shown through Jesus' walking on the lake and his declaration to the disciples 'it is I' which linked to the divine name 'I AM'. Peter's question to Jesus and his courage to step out of the boat led him and the disciples to a deeper faith in Jesus.

Though not included in the selected passage the final verses 34-36 of chapter 14 depict the constant healing ministry that Jesus undertook. Surely it was his persistence in prayer that enabled and strengthened him in the busyness of his daily life. That is another lesson for us.

The alternative collect for today is a fitting conclusion.

Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage never to lose hope,
but always to bring our prayers before you;
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Creator God –
maker and shaper of all that is, seen and unseen;
You are in the expanse and depth of Creation,
and in the processes that make life possible.
Yet we are distracted by the gods we make ourselves

and our lives become fractured and fragmented.
In our brokenness we disturb the
Earth's capacity to hold us.
Instead we find climate uncertainty and global injustice.
Call us back from the brink.
Help us to choose love not fear,
to change ourselves and not the planet;
to act justly for the sake of the vulnerable;
and to make a difference today for life tomorrow.
In your name - Maker, Son and Spirit. Amen

(Version by Martin Goss)

Intercessions

In a world which often bewilders and threatens to overwhelm us, let us enter a time of stillness. We can come to you as children calling you Our Father, recognising that we are in constant need of comfort and guidance, but also in the knowledge of your wisdom and unfailing love.

August for many is the season for holidays and we live in a region to which many flock for rest and refreshment. We are blessed with an abundance of places where people can enjoy coast and countryside. We pray that safe travels and happy times will provide our visitors with great memories. We also remember the army of those who provide for them, often taken for granted, who make beds, cook meals, giving a cheerful welcome despite feeling exhausted, overworked and underpaid.

Lord in your mercyhear our prayer

Lord we remember that, whilst some board expensive yachts for holidays in exotic locations, others are crammed into small boats taking to the high seas in extreme danger. Many are fleeing from conflict and violence to seek a better life elsewhere. The risks they take do not always end happily. We thank you for all those who work to provide safe homes and good cheer with compassion and thoughtfulness. We pray that the leaders of the world may use their authority to lead to a fairer society. Help us to consider how we too may help in acts of kindness.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

August is the season of harvest when farmers look to bring in the reward of their labours. This year the extreme weather conditions are causing deep uncertainty, with the possibility of a bad or even disastrous harvest. We expect that there will always be produce on display in shops and food on the table, yet often take how it gets there for granted. We pray for all who grow crops, pick fruit, pack and transport it and who work long hours. Remind us to be thankful for all the bounty of your earth.

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

Creator God, we know that the world is suffering the effects of climate change, that we must act more quickly to leave behind a lifestyle to which we have become accustomed. We are aware that the searing heat recently experienced in Southern Europe and torrential rain elsewhere are stark reminders of the droughts and subsequent famine in Africa; and the destructive floods in Pakistan. We also know that these are all connected, that we all live in the same world and are responsible for each other. We pray for all who suffer as a direct result of our own lack of care. Teach us to do whatever we can in supporting charities and urging governments to use political will for the benefit of all people.

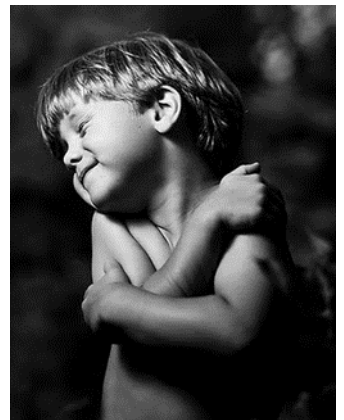
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

Lord, we bring these thoughts and prayers to you as individuals, as part of your family on earth, and in the abiding hope of your redemption.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.



A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

Last Sunday was the Feast of the Transfiguration. As we prepare for communion you might like to listen to Voces 8 singing the anthem for that feast 'O nata lux' by Thomas Tallis, sung in St Bartholomew's church, Pegnitz, Germany.

Words in Latin and English are below

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxjuRYD8N_o&t=18s

O nata lux de lumine,
Jesu redemptor saeculi,
Dignare clemens supplicum
Laudes precesque sumere.

O Light born of Light,
Jesus, redeemer of the world,
with loving-kindness deign to receive
suppliant praise and prayer.

Qui carne quondam contegi
Dignatus es pro perditis,
Nos membra confer effici
Tui beati corporis.

Thou who once deigned to be clothed in flesh
for the sake of the lost,
grant us to be members
of thy blessed body.

*Because there is no Breaking and Sharing
we can have only Spiritual Communion
with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to
use a few minutes of silence or
conversation to enjoy this, and make it a
sacramental moment.*



Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

God of our pilgrimage, you have willed that the gate of mercy should stand open for those who trust in you: look upon us with your favour that we who follow the path of your will may never wander from the way of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Commission and Benediction

God calls us to step out in faith,
to follow where He leads
even if what He calls us to do seems impossible.

So let's go from here with courage,
trusting in God's presence and power,
and eager to do God's will.

And may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be among you and within you
wherever you find yourself this week.

Closing Music

'O the deep, deep love of Jesus', sung here by the Choir of Hereford Cathedral.
Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TliCy09D3v0>



*A typical fishing
boat such as the
disciples may
well have used.*