

1st May 2022 – Morning Service

Go to Galilee

Rev Josephine Soon

Opening prayer

Master of miracle and mystery, you come walking to us on the beach of morning. We come before you at first light, to worship. The One who made heaven and earth and all that in them. You lift us up when life seems too pressing in its demands, when nets are empty and spirits low. You point us in the right direction when we walk on the wrong roads. As we worship, make the scales fall from our eyes, to see you as you are:

O lord our God, we give you thanks forever.

Forgiving God, there are times when we have cast our nets and felt so discouraged by what we have caught. We have despaired and stop trying.

Forgiving God, where we have gone wrong, show your healing mercy.

There are times when you have shown us where there will be rich rewards for our labours, and we have felt so inadequate that we have gone our own way, ignoring your call, your gentle, persistent questioning.

Forgiving God, where we have gone wrong, show your healing mercy.

[Silence]

We thank you, God of encounter, that you care for us so much that when we run the other way or get things hopelessly wrong, still you stay near to us, letting us recognise you.

Jesus gently questioning you as He did to Peter: Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?

[Silence]

Thank you that our partial answers do not make you turn away. But that you still go on, pressing as far as we bear, no further. Thank you for the opportunity of meeting you, wherever we may be, whoever we are. Amen.

StF 293 – All heaven declares

All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord.
Who can compare with the beauty of the Lord?
Forever He will be the Lamb upon the throne.
I gladly bow the knee and worship Him alone.

I will proclaim the glory of the risen Lord.
Who once was slain to reconcile us to God.
Forever You will be the Lamb upon the throne.
I gladly bow the knee and worship You alone.

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Reading: Acts 9:1-20

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from

Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”

“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.” But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, our Lord. On the road, you came to Paul. When he was still breathing murder against your people, You came in a flash that he could not ignore. **Come to us, Lord, in ways we cannot ignore. Amen**

Reading: Psalm 30

I will exalt you, O Lord, because you have raised me up **and have not let my foes triumph over me.**

O Lord my God, I cried out to you **and you have healed me.**

You brought me up, O Lord, from the dead;

you restored me to life from among those that go down to the pit.

Sing to the Lord, you servants of his; **give thanks to his holy name.**

For his wrath endures but the twinkling of an eye, his favour for a lifetime.

Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

In my prosperity I said, 'I shall never be moved.

You, Lord, of your goodness, have made my hill so strong.'

Then you hid your face from me **and I was utterly dismayed.**

To you, O Lord, I cried; **to the Lord I made my supplication:**

'What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the Pit?

Will the dust praise you or declare your faithfulness?

'Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me; **O Lord, be my helper.'**

You have turned my mourning into dancing;

you have put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness;

Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing;

O Lord my God, I will give you thanks for ever.

StF 451 – Open the eyes of my heart

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,

Open the eyes of my heart.

I want to see you

I want to see you.

To see You high and lifted up,

Shining in the light of Your glory.

Pour out Your power and love,

As we sing holy, holy, holy,

Holy, holy, holy,

Holy, holy, holy,

Holy, holy, holy,

I want to see You.

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Reading: John 21:1-19

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." 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. 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.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Sermon

When there are times we cannot see Jesus in person or feel God is near us, what will/ should we do? God through the Bible has offered us the way forward for those who desire to meet Him again: 'Go to Galilee'.

After the discovery of the empty tomb, the disciples had only one instruction to follow in the midst of their fear and uncertainty: go to Galilee. Don't you think that is still an instruction to us today? Because we are in the same place as the disciples: 'This is where we live: after the resurrection but before the return, entrusted with a message that is wonderful, but the import of which we do not quite understand.' But, where is our Galilee, and how do we get there?

Before that, let us explore why were these disciples (the church) to go and gather together in Galilee? What made them think that they may meet Jesus there? First, because God has sent the messengers (angels) who gave them the information that, 'And now,... He (Jesus) is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see Him there.' Please turn to your Bible and look to Mark 16: 5-7 and Matthew 28:5-7. Even Jesus Himself also said (in Mark 16: 7 and Mark 14: 27-28), 'Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee and they will see me there.' You see, the disciples had the full information when this happened (after His resurrection) ...'even if everyone else has deserted you, I never will. I (Jesus) will meet you there.'

Why did the disciples go to gather together in Galilee? Because they remembered Jesus' words and because they believed God's message from the angel. They trusted even though Jesus' guidance for them sounded crazy and did not seem to be suitable in their context at all! Yes, they sought to look for Jesus and they are obedient to Jesus' words for them. There, they fulfilled Jesus' words by gathering together in Galilee. The point was that they were to gather together, even in the most discouraging time in life. They stayed together. In addition, they followed their leader, Peter. Many may consider that Peter did not have great leadership skills, oh well... just not long before he betrayed the Lord three times. But, when the leader, Peter, said, 'I am going fishing.' The other disciples almost straight away responded, 'We'll come too..' (John 21:4-5). Peter, the leader, led and people followed him.

Christian leadership is never about the person's status but it is about the anointing. It is not about the leader – but is about the group of 'professional' believers who had the personal relationship with the Lord and trusting that Lord Jesus has chosen for them the best leader to lead them. So, Peter organised a day trip – a fishing trip. The rest immediately followed. So, they stayed together.

Look at our church leaders whom God has chosen and given to us. Do we know our Lord our God? Will we trust Him to give us the best leaders for us for this season of time and present circumstances? When our leader is organising a 'day trip' - a journey, will we follow?

Let's continue look at today's passage. You see the disciples were faithful to Jesus, followed the information and gathered together (a church) but ... still fruitless. Sometime, trusting God and following the word of God can still not bear fruit. Why? The disciples were continuing working hard the whole night, together...but this was not enough. Because there was no Jesus in their hard work? Where was Jesus? Not until Jesus be part of their life and their work, this church on the boat: discouraged, tired, confused...empty net...empty heart...FRUITLESS! But, Jesus was very near to them and He was calling out to them 'children...have you caught no fish?' and He gave them instruction to put their net on the right side of their boat. You know the story told us that the disciple (the church on the boat) caught 153 BIG fish!

What God wants us to learn and wants us to receive from Him today: God still wants to use us and our church. We might be part of the today's 'church on the boat'. Jesus is still calling out to us to do the things He wants us to do. Jesus is calling out to us to stick together. Jesus is calling out to the church and He wants to us to use our energy, our time, our premises, our resources and talents on this side of church life – to bring people to Galilee and meet Him there.

God is calling out so that you may be like Peter. When Jesus called, Peter jumped into water toward Jesus. All Peter wanted was to be with Jesus and be closer to Jesus. For Peter, BIG fish and Jesus - always Jesus first. What about us, 'the church on the boat' of today? Have we lost sight and forget about our first love? Turn back now, Jesus is calling. All that Lord Jesus wants from us today is that we may be like 'the church in the boat' who know Jesus and recognise His voice when He speaks. They shouted, 'It's the Lord!' Have we heard Jesus calling out to us and our church saying, 'Children, have you caught no fish?' Will we be willing to let go of all the BIG fish (things you are holding to) from our hands and minds and go closer to Jesus now? When we do this...we are in Galilee!

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You came to the disciples on the lake. Among all the familiar things of their experiences, the nets, the fish, the morning sun on the water... and You broke the bread and fish to feed them.

Come to us, Lord, in familiar ways.

Lord Jesus, You came to Peter after breakfast, with questions and commissions of love: You touched the deep places of commitment and prepared Peter for the journey.

Come to us, Lord, in ways of love and challenge. We will go and follow your guide. Amen.

StF 465 – Guide me, O thou great Jehovah

- 1) Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
Feed me now and evermore.
Feed me now and evermore.
- 2) Open thou the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream shall flow;
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:
Strong Deliverer, Strong Deliverer,
Be thou still my strength and shield.
Be thou still my strength and shield.
- 3) When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises, Songs of praises
I will ever give to thee.
I will ever give to thee.

William Williams CCL No. 515642

Prayers of Intercession

Mighty God, in whom we know the power of redemption, you stand among us in the shadows of our time. As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life, uphold us with knowledge of the final morning when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son, we will share in his resurrection, redeemed and restored to the fullness of life and forever freed to be your people. **Amen.**

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his resurrection, teaching them to love all people as neighbours. As his disciples in this age, we offer our prayers on behalf of the world in which we are privileged to live and our neighbours with whom we share it.

Father, we ask for the courage of your Son, who lay down His life for His sheep.
We pray for those who prepared to suffer and even die for what they believe in You...

[*Silence*]

We pray for the compassion and peace of your Son, who leads His sheep to safe pasture.
We pray for those who work to feed and shelter and educate Your people in our world...

[*Silence*].

We pray for reconciliation and healing in all places of war, particularly for Ukraine and Russia. We pray that the nations of this world may be united and subject to the rule of the Risen Christ, through whom and for whom all things were created. We ask for the love of Jesus, your Son, who knows His sheep by name.

We pray for our church: for its ministers and stewards, preachers and teachers, all who engaged in pastoral care...

[*Silence*]

Father, we pray for ourselves that we might hear the call from our Master Lord Jesus Christ and follow His way of love...

[*Silence*]

We make all our prayers in Christ's name. **Amen.**

Open our hearts to your power moving around us and between us and within us, until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy, in communities transformed by justice and compassion, and in the healing of all that is broken. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 313 – Thine be the glory

1) Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
Endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won;
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
Kept the folded grave-clothes where
thy body lay:

*Ch) Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
Endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

2) Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
Lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
Let the church with gladness hymns of
triumph sing,
For her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its sting:

3) No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life;
Life is nought without thee: aid us in our strife;
Make us more than conquerors through
thy deathless love;
Bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above:

Edmond Budry CCL No. 515642

Blessing

Go in the strength of your Risen Lord, to meet Him in familiarity as well as in unexpected places, to see Him in both the familiar and unexpected faces and to let Him deepen in you that love which embraces all the world. **Amen.**