



Risk-Takers - 30th August 2020

John Brocklehurst

Welcome to worship. Let's just have a few moments of quiet where we can relax in the presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

[Silence]

Come and hear the words of Jesus:
some are hard,
some are for us as individuals,
some are for us as a community;
some are challenging, some are reassuring,
some are difficult to understand,
and some we would rather not hear.
But come as you are and be bold,
for Jesus wants to speak to you today words of truth,
words of direction and words of love.

Hymn - Be Still

*Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found -
we stand on holy ground.
Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here.*

*Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour he is crowned:
how awesome is the sight -
our radiant King of light!
Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.*

*Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place;*

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*he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace:
no work too hard for him -
in faith receive from him.
Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.*

Let us pray

We thank you, gracious God, for Jesus:
for his confidence that beyond his suffering would be glory
and beyond his death would be new life.
Keep us firm in our hope that he is both Saviour and Redeemer,
and that your kingdom is both here among us and yet to come.

Dear Lord,
How easy it is for a rock to become a stumbling block,
for encouragement to become criticism,
for friends to become strangers.
Forgive us, gracious God, when we hinder instead of help,
when we put down instead of lifting people up,
and when we turn away instead of finding ways to solve problems.
Help us Lord, to become risk-takers for Jesus Christ.
Help us to let go of our fear and follow the path you have chosen for us
to show other's your love through every day actions,
to have courage to take risks in your name,
and to trust that although, like Peter, we may get some things wrong
you will not give up on us.
We pray in the name of Jesus, who took the ultimate risk
and took up the cross to show us new life.
Amen

Let us join in together with 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.

Bible reading: Matthew 16 : 21 - 28

Jesus Speaks about His Suffering and Death

Jesus began to say plainly to his disciples, "I must go to Jerusalem and suffer much from the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. I will be put to death, but three days later I will be raised to life." Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "God forbid it, Lord!" he said. "That must never happen to you!"

Jesus turned around and said to Peter, "Get away from me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my way, because these thoughts of yours don't come from God, but from human nature."

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you want to come with me, you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me. For if you want to save your own life, you will lose it; but if you lose your life for my sake, you will find it. Will you gain anything if you win the whole world but lose your life? Of course not! There is nothing you can give to regain your life. For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will reward each one according to his deeds. I assure you that there are some here who will not die until they have seen the Son of Man come as King."

Just for a moment, think of the world when it was created. Now think of the world as God and man have created, what the world is like today. Now think of some of the great innovations in the world; exploration of space, land and sea; innovations of medication. Now think to yourself what would the world be like if no risks were taken. Think of people like the Wright Brothers, Christopher Columbus, Alexander Fleming, Captain Scott, Yuri Gagarin, Madam Marie Curie, Katherine Johnson, the Pilgrim Fathers. And ask yourself what have they in common?

They all took risks. They could have said "I cannot be bothered to do this. I cannot do it. I won't attempt it." But they didn't, they took risks. They may have had failures, but they kept on taking risks until they reached the end of their quest.

Do we take risks? Are we indeed risk-takers for the Lord? Where would Christianity be if Jesus took no risks? What would have happened if Paul did not take a risk in preaching the Gospel? Where would the early church have been if that took no risks? Indeed, where would we be in the life of our church if we took no risks?

To take a risk means not staying as we are; the status quo. It means being bold and moving forward. In our reading that we had earlier, Peter declared Jesus the Messiah. Now he wants to attempt to lead Jesus to take things safely, because

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Peter is offering Jesus safety instead of boldness. But Jesus has a mission and he knows that that mission will end on the cross.

As many of you know I'm mad about the sea and the ships. Adrian and Emma will tell you of times I dragged them to see ships when on holiday. I love seeing ships sailing in the sea of the world, or to sit on the rocks and see and hear the sea. If I had my life again I would have taken the risk of going to sea - anyway that's another story. Think of a ship, a ship is safe in harbour, moored to the quayside. But if that ship never casts off the ropes, and ventures out into the risky open seas then it will not fulfil its journey. There are times when Jesus needs safety, but ultimately, like a ship on a journey, without facing risks he can never become what he needs to be. The life of a Christian is characterised by a tension between risks and security. For each one of us, as followers of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the church can be a safe place, a place of healing and restoration, a place to recharge our batteries; but also a place where it stifles, unable to fulfil our calling to be part of the body of Christ because we indeed fulfil our destiny but taking risks on our journey.

If Jesus was able to take his journey to the cross, then so should we as a church. We may lose something that may seem very precious, but in reality, through this we can reach the life of resurrection. The life of the church often has a reputation for finding change difficult. Each of us as we grow and age change daily. We do not have the same thoughts today as when we were a teenager. Yet there is something healthy about the willingness to face risk in the name of the Gospel. We're in that position at this moment. How do our churches reopen? When, indeed, will we reopen? What is church going to be for us? And most of all how do we evangelise God's love to all in a safe way in these Covid times. Are we making sure that God's Gospel and love is in the centre of what we do in the risks that we take in his name.

When we look back at our Gospel reading, maybe that is what Jesus is talking about when he says "Those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." In our willingness to take risks as Christians and as a church we will face change in order to reach resurrection, and find new life in our Lord, Jesus Christ. But this needs the recognition that at the heart of all things, change needs to be the call of the life of the Spirit, otherwise, whatever we do, we will focus on ourselves and not on God. So let us therefore be Christians, and as a church be risk-takers in following our Lord into the unknown future, knowing he journeys with us and let us dwell in his love divine, and be changed from glory into his glory and be servants for his Kingdom.

Amen

Hymn - Love Divine

*Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,*

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*fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.*

*Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.
Growth in Grace and Holiness*

*Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise!*

And now our prayers of intercession, let us pray.

Faithful God, we bring to you those facing persecution...
we bring to you those facing illness...
we bring to you those facing financial hardship,
we bring to you all those who know that the way ahead
is going to be difficult and painful.

We pray for those who have been wounded:
wounded by their families,
wounded by their friends,
wounded by their church fellowships.

We stand with those who have been misunderstood,
we stand with those who have been wrongly judged,
we stand with those who have been betrayed.

We remember those who have carried their cross
in the name of Christ,
and have been imprisoned, ostracised, betrayed, killed...

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All these prayers we bring in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Hymn - Brother Sister, Let Me Serve You

*Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.*

*We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.*

*I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.*

*I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.*

*When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.*

*Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.*

May God the Father remove all the stumbling blocks from your path.
May God the Son give you the courage to take up your cross.
And may God the Holy Spirit empower you to walk with confidence,
day by day.

Amen.

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Be Still

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Love Divine - Charles Wesley

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Music: William Penfro Rowlands (1860-1937) last verse arrangement by Paul Leddington Wright (b.1951)

Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You - Richard A. M. Gillard

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