**COVENANT COMMUNITY ONLINE WORSHIP**

*Presenter: Revd Dr Calvin T Samuel*

**6th SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**Sunday, 17th May 2020**

*Rochford Methodist & Barkingside Methodist Church Anniversaries*

**~ Journeying to Pentecost 2 ~**

**Welcome & Introduction**:

Good Morning. Welcome to this covenant community online service for the 6th Sunday of Easter. My name is Calvin Samuel and I’m Methodist minister for the towns of Rochford and Rayleigh in the County of Essex. We are internationally dispersed because of the global pandemic but we come together in worship as a covenant community.

Today we celebrate two church anniversaries. We celebrate 198 years of Methodist work and witness in the town of Rochford. Before lockdown I was invited to preach at Barkingside Methodist to mark their anniversary. So I’m delighted that our service will be joined today by friends from Barkingside. Whether this is your first time worshipping with us in this way, or you are now a regular, you are most welcome.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

**Hymn : See, what a morning, gloriously bright,***(StF 309)*

See, what a morning, gloriously bright,

With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;  
Folded the grave-clothes, tomb filled with light,  
As the angels announce, "Christ is risen!"  
See God's salvation plan,  
Wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,  
Fulfilled in Christ, the Man,  
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

See Mary weeping, "Where is He laid?"  
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;  
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name;  
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!  
The voice that spans the years,  
Speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us,  
Will sound till He appears,  
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

One with the Father, Ancient of Days,  
Through the Spirit who clothes faith with certainty.  
Honour and blessing, glory and praise  
To the King crowned with power and authority!  
And we are raised with Him,  
Death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered;  
And we shall reign with Him,  
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

*Stuart Townend b. 1963 & Keith Getty b. 1974*

**PRAYERS** Let us pray.

**Prayers of Adoration**

Glorious Father we worship you,

and tell your story in every generation.

You are the God who has gone before us,

the God who has sustained and blessed us

the God who has demonstrated everlasting love.

**Blessèd be God for ever.**

Lord Jesus Christ we praise you,

for you are our Saviour. Though you were rich,

yet for our sake you became poor,

and you were obedient to the point of death,

even death on a cross.

**Blessèd be God for ever.**

Gracious Holy Spirit we adore you,

you are the Lord, the giver of life.

You energise our lives, and transform our being

and make us truly members of the family of God.

**Blessèd be God for ever.**

To the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

be praise and glory for ever. **Amen**.

**Prayers of Confession**

Let us confess our sins to God:

**Most merciful God, we confess to you before the whole company of heaven that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, and in what we have failed to do. Forgive us our sins, heal us by your Spirit and raise us to new life in Christ. Amen.**

*Silence*

If we confess our sins God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

# Hymn: And can it be that I should gain (StF 345)

And can it be that I should gain

An int’rest in the Saviour’s blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain?  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! how can it be  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

’Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!  
Who can explore His strange design?  
In vain the firstborn seraph tries  
To sound the depths of love Divine!  
’Tis mercy all! let earth adore,  
Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father’s throne above,  
So free, so infinite His grace;  
Emptied Himself of all but love,  
And bled for Adam’s helpless race:  
’Tis mercy all, immense and free;  
For, O my God, it found out me.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night;  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee*.*

No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness Divine,  
Bold I approach the eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

*Charles Wesley, 1707-1788*

**SCRIPTURE**

Last week we looked at the first of three passages on the journey from Easter to Pentecost, exploring the appearance of Jesus to his disciples in Luke 24. This week we look at another post resurrection appearance, in John 21. Both appearances involve eating fish, and you might know that the fish is an early symbol of Christianity. One of the Greek words for fish, ichthus, was also a 5 letter acronym or acrostic for the early faith of the church, Ίησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ, Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. The next time you see a fish on a bumper sticker or in jewellery you know its history in Christian tradition.

Let us now listen to the Word of the Lord from Ezekiel 47 and John 21.

**Ezekiel 47.6b–12**

*Then he led me back along the bank of the river. As I came back, I saw on the bank of the river a great many trees on the one side and on the other. He said to me, “This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh. Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes. People will stand fishing beside the sea from En-gedi to En-eglaim; it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”*

**John 21.1–14**

*After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.*

*Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.*

*When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.*

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**Song: Lord of all creation**

Lord of all creationOf the water, earth and sky  
The Heavens are Your Tabernacle  
Glory to the Lord on high

*God of wonders, beyond our galaxy  
You are holy, holy  
The universe declares Your majesty  
You are holy, holy*

*Lord of Heaven and Earth  
Lord of Heaven and Earth*

Early in the morning  
I will celebrate the light  
And when I stumble into darkness  
I will call Your name by night

*God of wonders, beyond our galaxy…*

Hallelujah to the Lord of Heaven and earth  
Hallelujah to the Lord of Heaven and earth  
Hallelujah to the Lord of Heaven and earth

*God of wonders, beyond our galaxy…*

Hallelujah to the Lord of Heaven and earth…

*Marc Byrd & Steve Hindalong*

**The Sermon**

After the resurrection Peter said, I’m going fishing and 6 disciples went with him, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John and two others who were unnamed. They fished all night but caught nothing. Some of you who like fishing, especially night fishing, might know what that’s like.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach and called out to them. They were only about 100 yards from the shore. It’s an early form of social distancing. They did not recognise him.

‘Children,’ the stranger called, ‘you have no fish, have you?’ They answered, ‘No!’ In that single syllable response you feel something of their frustration. ‘Cast the net to the right side of the boat and you’ll find some.’ So they cast and they were unable to haul it in because there were so many fish.

A number of things capture my attention here. First, is their obedience, to this stranger. These are seasoned fishermen. It’s not their first rodeo. What qualifies this armchair fisherman on the beach to offer them advice? He offers no arguments why his advice should be heeded and they raise no questions. Instead, they obeyed, gave it a try, and netted so large a catch of fish they couldn’t haul it in. What a wonderful problem to have!

Second, is the over the top nature of this miracle, for it is indeed a miracle. They’d been fishing all night. At some point they’d have put the net on the right side of the boat. How many times have we said ‘We’ve tried that before, but it didn’t work? However, this time it was full of fish. This is Jesus’ final miracle in John’s Gospel and it’s reminiscent of his first, turning water into wine at a wedding. Jesus made way too much wine, the equivalent of 800 bottles. No wedding party could consume that much wine. It was over the top. Jesus offers us not only life, but life in abundance.

The third thing to capture my attention is that it is in the performance of this miracle that Jesus’ is made known. These fishermen aren’t stupid. They know it’s not that they’d failed to find fish that had been there on the right side of the boat all along. No, something supernatural had shifted the narrative and they only knew one person in the miracle business. So, the beloved disciple said to Peter, it is the Lord!

The beloved disciple may have been first to perceive the identity of the stranger on the beach. But Peter was the one to do something about it. He put on some clothes, jumped into the sea, and swam to shore.

What kind of kinky fishing trip were they on in which Peter was fishing naked? Peter is unlikely to have been fully naked. More likely he was either down to his underwear or just that his robes were unfastened so that he had to gird them together so he could more easily swim to shore.

The fourth thing that stands out for me is a question. Whose fish did Jesus cook for breakfast? The most natural way of reading the passage is to read vv 9-12 as if they occur chronologically. By the time the disciples got to shore (v9) Jesus was already cooking fish. In which case it’s not their fish for breakfast. However, v10 doesn’t make much sense if you read it this way. If Jesus has already got fish on a fire in v9 why then does he ask them in v10 to bring some of the fish they’d caught?

It might be more logical, then, to read v9 as happening after v12, in other words, vv10-12 are a sort of flashback to what happened earlier. In which case Jesus makes them breakfast from the fish they’d caught.

What difference does it make whose fish they were eating you might wonder? It makes a difference because I think this passage is not simply about fishing and a beach barbeque breakfast. These disciples had been called to follow Jesus with the promise that they would no longer simply be fishermen, but fishers of men, i.e., they would draw other men, women, girls and boys to God through their testimony and quality of life.

This story is therefore highly symbolic. The miraculously large haul of fish points to the large number of those who would come to faith in the risen Jesus, which they began see at Pentecost. The shared meal of bread and fish reminds them of the one who declared, ‘I am the bread of life’ as he fed 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish, the only previous mention of a meal of bread and fish in John’s gospel.

However, Jesus doesn’t fish for the disciples. Instead, they do it. I believe that this was a beach breakfast of fish they’d caught with Jesus’ help.

On this Church Anniversary Sunday this story is a reminder that the Church needs to be attentive to the voice of Jesus. Sometimes we fail. We fish all night, do all the things we know to do, all the correct actions are performed but we have nothing to show for it, apart from blisters.

Then, more than ever, we need to listen to that voice from the shore saying cast your nets on the right side. It doesn’t matter that you’ve tried it before. Cast the net there, now. If we act in obedience, we might just find our nets so full that we don’t know what to do. All we know is this, we can’t do what we’d normally do, haul the net into the boat. We’ve got to try something different. The disciples went to shore and hauled the nets from there.

In this time of global pandemic, some of our churches feel like they’re failing. We’re fishing all night, doing all we know to do but nothing is in the net. I wonder if this might be God’s word for us today. Try the right side of the boat. May God teach us to try something different, even if it’s something we’ve tried before. Cast your nets on the right side of the boat. Amen.

**Prayers of Intercession** Let us pray.

Faithful God we thank you for the witness of your church in Rochford and in Barkingside, for nearly two centuries. We thank you for those who have gone before us, who have planted seeds which are still being harvested for your kingdom. We pray for the continuing witness of your church in this community as we explore your calling to be a community of faith.

Your kingdom come: **Your will be done.**

Generous God, out of your goodness you gave the vision to build this place of prayer. Bless our church family. Here has the Gospel of Christ been proclaimed and made known in service and fellowship. Here have sacraments been celebrated with joy and reverence, and your people nurtured and strengthened in faith, hope and love.

Here has the seeker found faith, the weak, courage, and the grieving, comfort. Lord you have heard us as we prayed to you in this place. May we continue to be a beacon to our community and all who seek your presence; a fortress against all hatred, envy and pride.

Your kingdom come: **Your will be done.**

Everlasting God, thank you for your works of grace among us. We pray for the communities of which our church has been part for generations. Though worship in our buildings is disrupted may our witness to your love go on.

May the people of our communities come to know you, may our covenant community be a haven where neighbours live in love and harmony and may that renewal begin with us, the household of faith.

Your kingdom come: **Your will be done.**

Lord, you promise that when two or three agree in Christ’s name you will grant what they ask; in this world grant that we may truly know you, and in the world to come graciously give us eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen**.

We draw all our prayers together in the prayer that Jesus gave us in its modern form. The words will appear on your screen:

**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 forever. Amen.**

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Our final song is a reminder that Jesus is here and made known by his miraculous works. We’ve learnt it recently and it’s well worth revisiting. Way Maker.

**Song: You are here, moving in our midst**

You are here, moving in our midst

I worship you; I worship you  
You are here, working in this place

I worship you; I worship you

*Way maker, Miracle worker  
Promise keeper, Light in the darkness  
My God, that is who you are*

You are here, touching every heart  
I worship you; I worship you  
You are here, healing every heart  
I worship you; I worship you

You are here, turning lives around  
I worship you; I worship you

You are here, mending every heart  
I worship you; I worship you

*Way maker…*

Even when I don’t see it you’re workin’

Even when I don’t feel it you’re workin’

You never stop, you never stop workin’

*Way maker…*

*Osinachi Joseph (Sinach)*

**THE BLESSING**

The love of God enfold you,

the wisdom of the Son enlighten you,

the fire of the Spirit enflame you;

and the blessing of God, the Three in One,

be upon you and abide with you now and forever. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

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