

**Fourth Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, 20th June 2021**



Dear Friends in Christ,

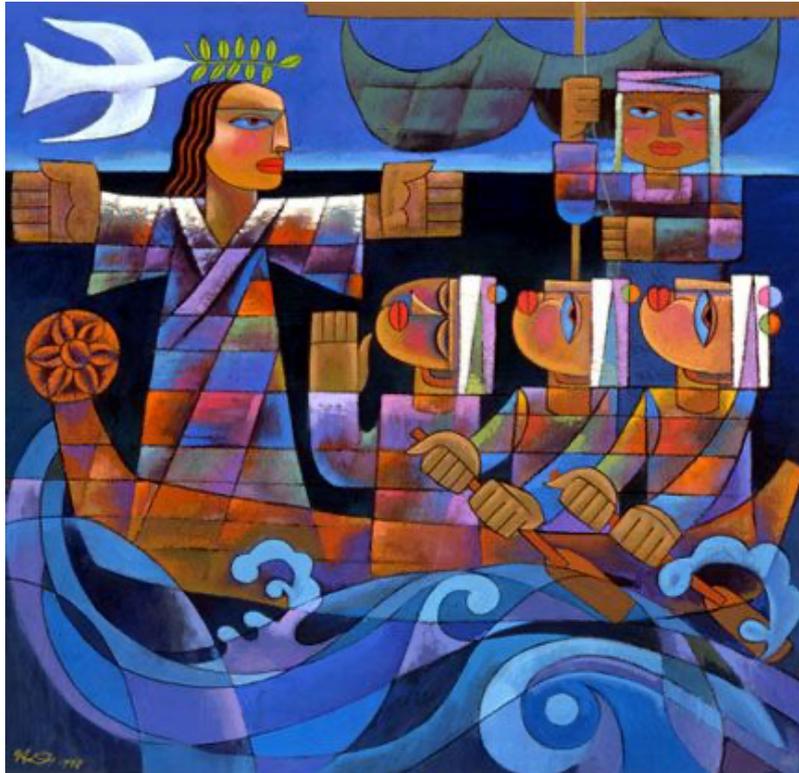
'Then he asked them, 'Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?'
(Mark 4: 40)

I wonder what sort of a week you have had. Did it go to plan? Or were your efforts and energies thwarted by unexpected curve-balls which defied even the most calculated of risk assessments? From my perspective, it's been a humbling sort of a week – a rollercoaster of emotions, in fact. Even though I appreciate the role of sport in the rich tapestry of our lives, I confess it has been hard for me to commiserate with the devastation of football fans whose teams have been knocked out of the Euros in the face of other life events going on around us. There was the news of Otto the Irish terrier, who went missing during a walk with his owners in Crawley on Friday. Many local folk helped search for him, but sadly, his lifeless body was found this Thursday morning. Others have been wrestling with news of life-changing illnesses, testing for Coronavirus, results of key exams, job interviews, moving house; and yet others the sadness of relationship breakdown or the death of a loved one. A police appeal for witnesses and dash-cam footage following a serious collision in Sparsholt between a vehicle and a cyclist further reinforces the precious fragility of our lives.



RIP Otto xxx

News on Monday of the continuation of COVID restrictions in the face of rising Delta Variant cases has come as a blow to many, particularly wedding couples, as they juggle how many socially distanced guests their church and reception venues are realistically able to accommodate, and whether getting married with a small gathering of intimates to support them is preferable to re-arranging their big day yet again, in order that great aunt Maud might safely attend, and in the hope guests might be allowed to sing and dance without face-masks obscuring their joy-filled faces.



'Peace Be Still' by He Qi

So many seemingly insurmountable difficulties on our doorstep, let alone in the wider world. What on earth can Jesus be doing, asking His disciples why they are afraid! Doesn't He realise the fear and anguish we feel when we face life's trials? The sort of situation the disciples found themselves in whilst out on the Sea of Galilee is a case in point, as a treacherous storm threatened to kill all on board. This storm, which came from nowhere had clearly terrified even these seasoned fishermen.

Yet, despite the obvious turbulence, Mark's Gospel describes Jesus being able to sleep like a baby through it all, and even when He is awoken to find the disciples at their wits end, seems almost nonchalant in the face of this looming crisis.

Mark's writing shows us the colossal power of God at work in Jesus Christ! In this extraordinary story, we see the unpredictable forces of nature suddenly responding like obedient children to the voice of Jesus - and the disciples are amazed! Yet before these traumatised men could begin to comprehend how their lives had been spared, a new and equally unexpected situation was unfolding in front of their very eyes. They had been terrified by the fierce storm, yet now they are equally alarmed by the way the waters were calmed at Jesus' command. *'Who is this man?'* they ask.

Sometimes in our lives, even the most competent and organised of us must face turbulent storms – in relationships, health, money worries and so on. Jesus asks us to trust our lives into His own. Yet we are reticent to do so. What do we fear?



'Wind from the Sea' by Andrew Wyeth

Think about those times when we have faced a problem so great that we have been able to do nothing in our own gift to overcome it – don't we then turn to prayer?

'Lord, please help me. I'll do anything, if you would just help me now!'

Jesus speaks to us in these experiences of panic and fear, just as He spoke to the disciples in theirs. Jesus asks us to have faith in His power to overcome the worst experiences we are to face. In the midst of such anxiety, we are confronted by the reality of God: we are brought up sharply by His presence as all-powerful Creator. We are confronted by our own insignificance before Him. Yet in Jesus, we are also confronted by the enormity and power of God's Fatherly compassion and love for us, His flawed and fragile, precious children.

This Father's Day, my prayer is for us to remember that, with faith in Christ, we will not be overcome by the stresses and trials of our lives but will remain resilient in His strength and grace. This Father's Day, let us dwell in the Father's love for us. This Father's Day, may we learn to take one step closer to trusting Him – so when inevitable yet unexpected storms arise in our lives, we instinctively lean into the wind and trust, not in our own strength, but in God's.

Yours, in the peace of Christ,

Jax

Revd Jax Machin, Rector, The Downs Benefice

Reflection by Lesley Kent - God is our Refuge and Strength

It is a delight to bring you Lesley's apposite reflection from this Tuesday's Morning Prayer by Zoom. These weekly prayer gatherings with Charlotte Nash are encouraging our worshipping community to flourish in their spiritual expression, and Lesley's thoughtful response to trusting God in the face of human adversity is a fine example of our contemplative journey together. Do join us by contacting the Benefice Office for more details.



We all know that change is a constant thing in our life, but sometimes the speed or scale of change can appear as a threat. Research has shown that intolerance of uncertainty is a central element in worry and anxiety. None of us knows for sure what the future will bring - especially during these Covid times of Lockdown. Knowing what the changes will or will not be is a cause of anxiety and worry for most people, and how we cope with the stress depends sometimes on whether we are a person who looks at our lives from a negative analogy of the glass being half empty theory or from a positive analogy of the glass being half full theory - not of wine I hasten to add!

When we are anxious or worried we can gather all kinds of evidence to evaluate a risk. Often that evidence is negative, turning into an enormous risk assessment as we think of things that can go wrong if we make a change and what we can do to prevent it – the ‘What happens if ...’ syndrome.

It is sometimes easier to avoid changes because it feels safer to stay with what we know. During the past months we have had to make enforced changes to our lifestyle; some have coped with these changes better than others.

In the reading from 1 Samuel, when King Saul hears there's a man willing to face the wrath of Goliath, he sends for him and says, ‘You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him, you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth.’ Yet David does not see himself *or* Goliath as others do! He chooses to focus on his own attributes and draws on his previous experience to give him hope. He recalls how God gave him strength in the past to fight off the predators who were attacking his sheep. To use the glass analogy, Saul focuses on the negatives and David on the positives!

Whilst Faith cannot rid us of life's problems, it can help us to put things into perspective and hopefully remain calm. A focus on Jesus, reminds us of what we *do* know – God is good, God is just and God is loving. Nothing can separate us from God. When we accept this truth, it frees us to live in hope. It also reminds us that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Sometimes Hope is presented as wishful thinking, something passive and unrealistic. In Hebrews 6: 19 St Paul talks of hope as being a sure and steadfast 'anchor for the Soul.' Hope keeps us focused on what is important in life by keeping us close to God and prevents us from being swept into fear and insecurity.

In essence we have to face the upcoming changes, whatever they may be - whether we like them or not, with hope, positivity and the knowledge that God is always by our side.

Lord, when all around me feels uncertain, keep my focus on you.
Strengthen me with your love,
so that I may face any changes in the future
with an open and fearless heart.
Amen.



Lesley

Lesley Kent
St Mary the Less, Chilbolton

Service Schedule

This schedule is correct at this time but may be subject to future alterations – please check on our website for the most up-to-date information.

All services start at 10am, with the exception of Café Church, which starts at 4pm.

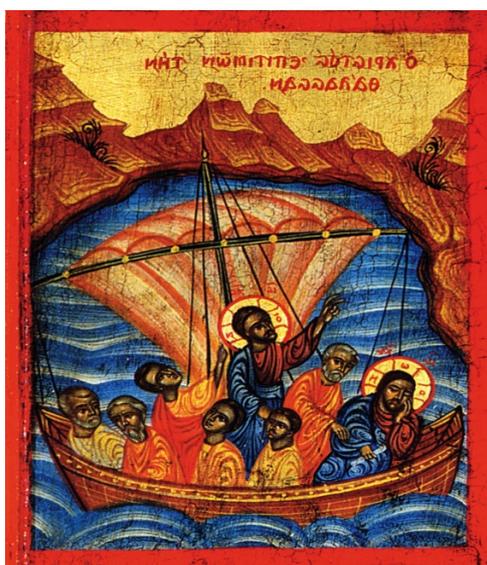
Until we hear further from the Government and the Church of England, please could you continue to book to attend services by contacting the Benefice Office on 01962 880 845 or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

Please would you also continue to wear masks until we are advised otherwise.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>20th June</i>	Holy Communion		Morning Prayer		
<i>23rd June (Wed)</i>			Holy Communion		
<i>27th June</i>		Holy Communion			
<i>4th July</i>	Morning Prayer			Morning Prayer	
<i>11th July</i>		Morning Prayer			Holy Communion
<i>14th July (Wed)</i>			Holy Communion		
<i>18th July</i>				Holy Communion	Morning Prayer
<i>25th July</i>	Morning Prayer		Holy Communion		
<i>1st August</i>		Morning Prayer	Café Church		Holy Communion
<i>8th August</i>	Morning Prayer			Morning Prayer	
<i>15th August</i>		Holy Communion	Morning Prayer		
<i>22nd August</i>	Holy Communion			Morning Prayer	
<i>29th August</i>			Holy Communion		Morning Prayer

Collect Prayer for the Second Sunday after Trinity

Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin
and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts
whereby we call you Father:
give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,
that we and all creation may be brought
to the glorious liberty of the children of God;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



Psalm 46: 1-7 – Be Still and Know that I am God

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble.
- 2 So we will not fear when earthquakes come
and the mountains crumble into the sea.
- 3 Let the oceans roar and foam.
Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!
- 4 A river brings joy to the city of our God,
the sacred home of the Most High.
- 5 God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed.
From the very break of day, God will protect it.
- 6 The nations are in chaos,
and their kingdoms crumble!
God's voice thunders,
and the earth melts!
- 7 The Lord of Heaven's Armies is here among us;
the God of Israel is our fortress.

1 Samuel 17:32-33 & 41- 47 - David Kills Goliath

‘Don’t worry about this Philistine,’ David told Saul. ‘I’ll go fight him!’ ‘Don’t be ridiculous!’ Saul replied. ‘There’s no way you can fight this Philistine and possibly win! You’re only a boy, and he’s been a man of war since his youth.’

.... Goliath walked out toward David with his shield bearer ahead of him, sneering in contempt at this ruddy-faced boy. ‘Am I a dog,’ he roared at David, ‘that you come at me with a stick?’ And he cursed David by the names of his gods. ‘Come over here, and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and wild animals!’ Goliath yelled.

David replied to the Philistine, ‘You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. Today the Lord will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues his people, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord’s battle, and he will give you to us!’



Mark 4: 35-41 - Jesus Calms the Storm

As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Let’s cross to the other side of the lake.’ So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water.

Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, ‘Teacher, don’t you care that we’re going to drown?’

When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Silence! Be still!’ Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, ‘Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?’ The disciples were absolutely terrified. ‘Who is this man?’ they asked each other. ‘Even the wind and waves obey him!’