

SUNDAY 21 July 2024

Hymn 457 -The Church's One Foundation

The Church's one foundation Is Jesus Christ her Lord
She is His new creation By water and the Word
From heav'n He came and sought her To be His holy bride
With His own blood He bought her And for her life He died

Elect from every nation Yet one o'er all the earth
Her charter of salvation One Lord one faith one birth
One holy name she blesses Partakes one holy food
And to one hope she presses With every grace endued

'Mid toil and tribulation And tumult of her war
She waits the consummation Of peace forevermore
Till with the vision glorious Her longing eyes are blest
And the great Church victorious Shall be the Church at rest

Yet she on earth hath union With God the Three in One
And mystic sweet communion With those whose rest is won
O happy ones and holy Lord give us grace that we
Like them the meek and lowly On high may dwell with Thee

Though with a scornful wonder Men see her sore oppressed
By schisms rent asunder By heresies distressed
Yet saints their watch are keeping Their cry goes up how long
And soon the night of weeping Shall be the morn of song

Greeting

Blessed be God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.**
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all. **And also with you.**

Sentence of the day

He said: "In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry. Jonah 2:2

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Eterna God, you draw near to us in Christ and make yourself our guest: amid the cares of our daily lives, make us attentive to your voice and alert to your presence, that we may treasure your word above all else. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Ministry of the Word

Old Testament Reading - Jonah 2

¹From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God. ² He said: "In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry. ³ You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. ⁴ I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.' ⁵ The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. ⁶ To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, LORD my God, brought my life up from the pit. ⁷ "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. ⁸ "Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. ⁹ But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the LORD.'"

¹⁰ And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Psalm 90.1-6, 13-17

1 As the deer pants for streams of water, **so my soul pants for you, my God.**

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. **When can I go and meet with God?**

3 My tears have been my food day and night, **while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"**

4 These things I remember as I pour out my soul: **how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng.**

5 Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? **Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.**

6 My soul is downcast within me; **therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.**

7 Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; **all your waves and breakers have swept over me.**

8 By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me— **a prayer to the God of my life.**

9 I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? **Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?"**

10 My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, **saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?"**

11 Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? **Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.**

New Testament Reading - Hebrews 13:11-16

¹¹The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. ¹² And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. ¹³ Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. ¹⁴ For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. ¹⁵ Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a

sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. ¹⁶ And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Gospel Reading - Mark 15:33-39

³³ At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). ³⁵ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.” ³⁶ Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said. ³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. ³⁸ The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

Sermon Jonah 2 - Jonah’s Prayer

Question Time

The Apostle’s Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers

Let us pray for the world and the church.

Response: Jesus, friend of the helpless, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

The Lord’s Prayer

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

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.

Sentences of Scripture

Jesus said, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:35

Prayer of Approach

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies, we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always

to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

The Confession

God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy, welcoming sinners and inviting them to the Lord's table. Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn 653 This Is A Day Of New Beginnings

**This Is A Day Of New Beginnings,
Time To Remember And Move On,
Time To Believe What Love Is Bringing,
Laying To Rest The Pain That's Gone.**

**For By The Life And Death Of Jesus,
Love's Mighty Spirit, Now As Then,
Can Make For Us A World Of Difference,
As Faith And Hope Are Born Again.**

**Then Let Us, With The Spirit's Daring,
Step From The Past And Leave Behind
Our Disappointment, Guilt, And Grieving,
Seeking New Paths, And Sure To Find.**

**Christ Is Alive, And Goes Before Us
To Show And Share What Love Can Do.
This Is A Day Of New Beginnings;
Our God Is Making All Things New.**

Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.
Blessed be God for ever.

The Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, it is our duty, our joy and our salvation, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ your only Son our Lord.

For he is the true high priest, who has freed us from our sins and made us a royal priesthood to serve you, our God and Father. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy and gracious God, all creation rightly gives you praise. All life, all holiness, comes from you through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, whom you sent to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

Hear us, merciful Lord; through Christ accept our sacrifice of praise; and, by the power of your Word and Holy Spirit, sanctify this bread and wine, that we who share in this holy sacrament may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

Who, when his hour had come, on the night before he went up to the cross to make full atonement for the sins of the whole world, offering once for all his one sacrifice of himself, took bread and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Therefore, in obedience to his command, we commemorate and celebrate his saving passion and death, his mighty resurrection and ascension into heaven and we eagerly await his coming again in glory. We thank you that by your grace alone you have accepted us in Christ; and here we offer you a spiritual sacrifice, holy and acceptable in your sight.

Through Christ, receive this our duty and service, and grant that we who eat and drink these holy gifts may we, by your Holy Spirit, be one body in Christ, and serve you in unity and peace.

In your grace and mercy, bring us to the joy of your eternal kingdom with all the company of the redeemed. May we praise you in union with them, and give you glory through your Son, Jesus Christ. Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father eternal, in songs of never-ending praise:

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

We who are many are one body, **for we all share in the one bread.**

The gifts of God for the people of God.

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

The Lord's Supper is open to all who love the Lord.

Grape juice is available. Please come to the table maintaining social distancing

Living God, in this holy meal you fill us with new hope. May the power of your love, which we have known in word and sacrament, continue your saving work among us, give us courage for our pilgrimage, and bring us to the joys you promise.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

Hymn 598 Dear Father, Lord of humankind

Dear Father, Lord of humankind Forgive our foolish ways

Reclothe us in our rightful mind In purer lives Thy service find

In deeper reverence praise, In deeper reverence praise

In simple trust like theirs who heard Beside the Syrian sea

The gracious calling of the Lord Let us like them without a word

Rise up and follow Thee, Rise up and follow Thee

O Sabbath rest by Galilee O calm of hills above

Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee The silence of eternity

Interpreted by love, Interpreted by love

Drop Thy still dews of quietness Till all our strivings cease

Take from our souls the strain and stress And let our ordered lives confess

The beauty of Thy peace, The beauty of Thy peace

Breathe through the heats of our desire Thy coolness and Thy balm

Let sense be dumb let flesh retire Speak through the earthquake wind and fire

O still small voice of calm, O still small voice of calm

Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Sermon Jonah 2 - Jonah's Prayer

This week as we look at the book of Jonah, Jonah has hit rock bottom. They say the best thing about hitting rock bottom is that the only way is up. However, I suspect that for Jonah, in the belly of the great fish, there was a worse place he expected to go if he continued through the fish's digestive system.

As I was writing this sermon, I googled "hitting rock bottom" and it said that typically rock bottom occurs when you feel like you've reached the lowest point in your life with no way out. You may feel like your life can't get any worse. According to the Website there are five general signs that indicate one has hit rock bottom. It was interesting how directly they applied to Jonah's situation They are:

Lack of personal hygiene: I reckon this was an issue for Jonah, tick!

Feelings of despair and hopelessness: reading his prayer this morning, this was definitely the case. Tick!

Social Isolation: well there certainly weren't any friends in the belly of the fish. Tick!

Sleeping issues, Tick! and

Poor Coping Mechanisms.

I want to think more about this last one, but first, let's remind ourselves what got Jonah into this situation. You'll recall from last week that God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach against it. Jonah wasn't very keen on this, and went in the completely opposite direction by ship. God sent a storm, the sailors found out he was responsible and threw him overboard, and God sent a fish to swallow him. Consequently, Jonah finds himself in the belly of a great fish with no apparent way out.

Under those circumstances, Jonah does the only thing he can do, he prays to God. That's right, he prays to the God who gave him the commandment he disobeyed, who sent the storm, and who sent the fish to swallow him. To be honest, there wasn't anyone else who could help.

With this background, let's look at Jonah's prayer.

The first thing I noticed was Jonah's complete honesty about his situation. He doesn't hold back in describing his concerns to God, in very picturesque language.

He describes his situation as being deep in the realm of the dead. He said he'd sunk down to the roots of the mountains, was barred in by the earth forever, and in the pit (probably meaning a grave) with his life ebbing away. The engulfing

waters threatened him, the deep surrounded him; seaweed was wrapped around his head. He was certainly desperate, and he made sure that God knew it.

Also he doesn't mince words when he blames God for putting him there. He said God hurled him into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, with the currents swirling around him. All God's waves and breakers swept over him. God had banished him from his sight.

Mind you, It is not that he didn't take some personal responsibility for his plight, as he also prayed that he had sunk down to the roots of the mountain, suggesting he was at least partly to blame, and he needed to look to God and his temple, so he he had obviously been neglecting those things in the past.

That's how Jonah responded, and when you find yourself in distress, and when you hit rock bottom, you need to be like Jonah and tell God your situation. Of course he knows it without you telling him, but there is something about telling God of your troubles that helps you get it into perspective. God loves you and loves to hear from you, even if it is your complaints about the situation you find yourself in.

Also, like Jonah, if you feel it is God's fault you are in the situation, let him know. On the one hand, listening to yourself blame God may highlight to you how responsible you actually are, or it may just help you get your concerns off your chest. In any case, God has very broad shoulders, and can take any criticisms you launch at him, and he can let you know if you are barking up the wrong tree by blaming him.

So you shouldn't be slow to confess your culpability, your guilt in getting yourself into your situation. You most likely have some responsibility, and the Bible is quite clear we need to confess our sins and to repent in order to gain God's forgiveness.

You see, God cares for you, and he wants to hear how you feel, your concerns. He also wants to hear your humility, your absolute need for His help. I know whenever friends ask how we are going, we always reply "all good," but this is not the flippant response God wants - He wants honesty, and we must give it. Don't be like the rich and the temple scribes who Jesus condemned for not wanting his help because they thought they were rich and righteous, but be like the centurion who said "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed" or the two blind men who called out to Jesus "Have mercy on us, Son of David." They knew their sin and their need, and had the faith to ask Jesus.

Jonah is also clear about what he needs from God, although in his faith he prays as if God has already done it. He tells God he wants his help in verse 2, in verse 3 he needs God to listen to his cry, and in verse 6 he knows he needs God to bring him up from the pit.

In your distress, bring your needs to God in faith. Maybe you don't see what needs to happen to bring you out of your situation, or even how God can bring you out of your situation, but take your cue from Jonah. Pray in faith that God will listen, help and rescue you. Also, don't be shy in getting your Christian friends to pray for and with you. Jonah did not have this opportunity, but the prayers of our friends really help in these situations, when we find it hard to pray for ourselves.

Jonah understood that it was God who could bring him up from the pit, and had brought him to the realisation that he needed to remember that God brings salvation, and that had to be accessed through prayer. He had spent too long running away from God's love like those who cling to worthless idols. Look again in verses 7 through 9 to see what changes these prompted in Jonah:

7 "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. 9 But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the LORD.'"

Jonah's prayer rose to God, the only source of salvation. Life looked like rock bottom, but this prompted Jonah to pray, to bring his sacrifice, his offering of shouts of grateful praise, and a promise to make good the vows that he had made.

How often have you heard of worthless vows made in the midst of distress - God, if only you get me out of this situation I'll go back to church, or I'll stop this particular sin that I've been indulging in for so long. How often have you made these sort of vows and have God come through to rescue you from the situation, and no sooner forget the promise, go straight back to your old life and sins without a second thought to your God. At least Jonah kept his vow for a while, he turned around and went to Nineveh.

And God came through for Jonah, in verse 10, he commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

So this was Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish, from rock bottom. It reminds me of another prayer from rock bottom, the prayer Jesus prayed from

the cross in our gospel reading this morning. You remember I read: *darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 34 And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")*.

Jesus was absolutely at rock bottom, the unity he had with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit was just about to be broken for the first and only time in eternity, and it would hurt. He was about to take the punishment we all deserve for our sin, for our disobedience to God's commandments that he had always perfectly obeyed. As he was hanging on the cross, about to die, the entire universe itself was at rock bottom, even though it didn't realise it, and he prays "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me." Like Jonah, he is completely honest about his situation - he is being forsaken, rejected by God, and he is suffering. He is suffering from the scourging and nails, but most of all he is suffering from the the only perfect relationship that ever was being broken.

Jesus' prayer on the cross was partly answered, like the answer to Jonah's prayer, three days later when he rose from the grave. Just like Jonah came up from the world of the dead by being vomited up from the belly of the fish on the third day, so was Jesus raised from death to life on the third day.

But for Jesus, there was also another response before he breathed his last. The centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, and said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" This, and the confession of millions of people since, was the ultimate answer to Jesus's prayer. That was why God had forsaken him.

The Centurion, a sinful human being whose sin ultimately sent Jesus to the cross, recognised him as the Son of God and received the salvation made possible with his death. This was the answer to Jesus's prayer, *my God, why have you forsaken me?* This prayer was answered in the salvation of this centurion, and countless others through the centuries, including those here this morning who have put their trust in Jesus's death and resurrection and received the salvation that only he offers.

And so, when we hit rock bottom, our prayer should reflect the prayer of Jonah, and of Jesus. When you hit rock bottom, and even before, will you pray as Jonah finished his prayer. Will you pray with Jonah 'Salvation comes from the LORD.'