

East Durham Methodist Circuit:
On-line Service for 20th June 2021

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Theme: Big Questions

Call to worship:

God of our ups and downs, we come together in Your name with concerns in our hearts and questions in our minds, with troubles in our lives and fears for our world. We come trusting that You share our concerns and hear our questions, embrace our troubles and know our fears. We come trusting that You never give up on us, that You never abandon us, never dismiss us. For You are a God of love, of peace, of power - You are our God.

Amen

Hymn: **Praise is Rising Paul Baloche / Brenton Brown **StF 64****

Praise is rising, eyes are turning to You, we turn to You
Hope is stirring, hearts are yearning for You, we long for You

'Cause when we see You, we find strength to face the day
In Your Presence all our fears are washed away, washed away
Hosanna, hosanna
You are the God Who saves us, worthy of all our praises
Hosanna, hosanna
Come have Your way among us
We welcome You here, Lord Jesus

Hear the sound of hearts returning to You, we turn to You
In Your Kingdom broken lives are made new, You make us new

'Cause when we see You...

Prayer of adoration, confession and thanksgiving:

Eternal God, we praise and adore You. For being bigger than even our biggest questions; for caring more than we can fully comprehend.

We praise and adore You for Your strength and Your silence; for Your power and Your peace.

We praise and adore You for being in control and yet not controlling; for being in the storms and beyond.

We praise and adore You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we praise You for ever.

God of our questions and our struggles, when we too quickly mistake silence for indifference: forgive and help us.

When the voice of our own need silences the voices of others: forgive and help us.

When we abandon others in their storm and watch safely from the shore: forgive and help us.

When we lose faith because things get tough: forgive and help us.
In Jesus' name we pray.

God of power and peace, when the storm is raging: You are there. When our boats are sinking: You are there. When faith slips through our fingers: You are there. When our hearts sink and our courage fails: You are there. In the roar of the waves, in the sound of the wind, and in the silence: You are there.

So, we praise You. We thank You. We worship You. In Jesus' name. **Amen**

We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus who taught us to say:

**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

Reading: Job 38: 1- 7, 12, 18 and 36 The Lord challenges Job New Living Translation

¹ Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind: ² "Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? ³ Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you and you must answer them.

⁴ "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. ⁵ Who determined its dimensions and stretched out the surveying line?

⁶ What supports its foundations and who laid its cornerstone ⁷ as the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

¹² "Have you ever commanded the morning to appear and caused the dawn to rise in the east?

¹⁸ Do you realize the extent of the earth? Tell me about it if you know!

²⁸ Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew?

³⁶ Who gives intuition to the heart and instinct to the mind?

Hymn: Be Still and know that I am God from Psalm 46 **StF 18**

1. Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.

3. In You, O Lord I put my trust.
In You, O Lord I put my trust.
In You, O Lord I put my trust.

2. I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.

³⁵ As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." ³⁶ So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). ³⁷ But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water.

³⁸ 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?"

³⁹ 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. ⁴⁰ Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹ The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "Even the wind and waves obey him!"

Hymn: As the Deer

Martin J Nystrom

StF 544

1. As the deer pants for the water
So my soul longs after You
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You

2. I want You more than gold or silver
Only You can satisfy
You alone are the real joy-giver
And the apple of my eye. **You alone...**

**You alone are my strength my shield
To You alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You**

3. You're my friend and You are my
brother
Even though You are a King
I love you more than any other
So much more than anything. **You
alone...**

Message: Questions in Challenging times

Or questions as we explore being heard in the storms of our lives.

It must have been difficult at times to be a disciple of Jesus; He was challenging them time and again. Sometimes they found themselves in testing situations. At other times they faced tough questions. But Jesus was steadily building their trust in Him **and** still does with us today. That's what is going on in this familiar story. Mark's account tells of Jesus and his disciples heading across the Sea of Galilee in a boat.

Eight years ago I joined a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The second half of our stay was by the shores of the Lake. I set my alarm for an early start the next morning, but my phone signal picked up Jordan which is an hour ahead. I was awake so early that I saw the local fishermen bring the boat into the nearby jetty. There was a steady breeze from the south moving the branches of the trees, the birds were heading north.

Our group had an excursion booked later in the day after exploring the source of the River Jordan and the hills of Northern Territory. We returned to our accommodation on a local boat. The breeze was steady and from the north this time and after our evening meal, the birds were heading south. The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by hills except for a dip at the end, which can act like a funnel for the wind. This means that the surface can go from calm waters to choppy waves in a short space of time.

As seasoned fishermen on this stretch of water, this wouldn't have been the first time

that the disciples had experienced this phenomenon, but the sudden storm surge was severe, frightening! Their complaint to Jesus is about the apparent mismatch between their peril and his continuing nap! They didn't shout 'HELP!' or 'Do Something!' They questioned whether He cared! A cry from the heart... exasperation... His friends reproach Him feeling abandoned. 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?'

Perhaps all they wanted was another pair of hands to help in bailing out the water from the boat. Instead, as the storm that surges about them, Jesus calms the sea by speaking, "**Peace be still.**" He then has questions for them – "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" The disciples do not yet understand this Jesus. His command of the wind and waves affects them more than their experience of being tossed about in the boat at the height of the storm... the disciples didn't wake Him and yell, "Save us!" but "Do you not care that we are perishing?" And then wondering... Who is this man? Questions... Questions...

If I had been in that boat with the disciples, I might have felt Jesus questions at the end (v 40) were a little unfair. "Sure we were afraid. While You were sleeping, we were almost killed!" If you have ever been out on a boat in rough seas, you know that feeling - when the situation is beyond your control.

Fear is something everyone struggles with at some point. Occasionally we may find ourselves in physical danger. But more often our fears come from pondering the endless number of worst-case scenarios that threaten us. We know that given the way the world is, difficult things will happen to us and to those we love and that sometimes we can't avoid them.

We have been dealing with Covid: for some, this has meant long-term illness, exhaustion, redundancy, business failures and more. Our first instinct might be to say: "Take it away, God!" But we will probably accept that this is not always possible, because that doesn't seem to be how the world works. So, our next urgent question to God might be: "Don't you care that this is unbelievably hard?"

All of us at some point in our spiritual journey will have difficult questions to ask of God. There will be shouts, protests, denial. We may know that God can't rescue us. But if our faith is true, we will want assurance that God cares for us in our troubles, that God has heard us!

Knowing we have been heard can make all the difference. It can give us strength for the challenges... new ways of opening ourselves up to love and joy. It can help us know the really important things in life and how distracted we have been. It can bring us to a new, deeper life. Knowing Jesus - His life, death and resurrection shows us the Way.

Recall a difficult period in your life. What questions did you have of God? Did you keep on asking, even though at first there only seemed to be silence? Did you eventually find any sort of answer?

Today is Father's Day. It's more than 12 years since my Dad died, but memories of him are still fresh after all this time. Just lately, I have been completing A Grandparents Book for the benefit of our three grandchildren. In the book there are questions, such as 'Did you ever argue with your parents? I answered: "More of a debate, usually at the dining table during a family meal." Mum would want us to get on with our meal before it got cold, but Dad enjoyed the 'back and forth'.

Years later, after Mum died, Dad and I had time for my questions about his childhood, his family, his time in the RAF. Great memories, precious as his memory began to fade. And, yes, sometimes I feel I don't have the resources to solve the big questions in my life.

Lord, Please open my heart, my mind...to your perspective on the challenges I face.

Hymn: I the Lord of Sea and Sky

Daniel L Shutte

StF 663

1. I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?

2. I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them,
they turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them
Whom shall I send? **Here I am Lord...**

**Here I am Lord, Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.**

3. I, the Lord of wind and flame
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them,
Whom shall I send? **Here I am Lord...**

Prayers of Intercession:

As residents of God's universe, let us pray now to our loving Creator.

Lord of all truth and goodness, we pray for those in positions of authority in the church all over the world and in each gathered community that in all storms we may be enabled to hear God's calming voice and deepen our trust in him.

Silence

Calm our fears and teach us your peace.

Lord of great power and majesty, we pray for those with political and military power, and all whose decisions affect many lives. Speak truth into motives, honour into actions and your vision of peace into every conflict.

Silence

Calm our fears and teach us your peace.

Heavenly Father, we pray for all single people, couples, communal groups and families, as they weather their storms and learn from them. Lavish on all who have the care of others the capacity to bring peace and calm fears.

Silence

Calm our fears and teach us your peace.

Lord of all healing, we pray for those whose minds and hearts are in turmoil, whose lives lurch from crisis to crisis. For those who find their lives shattered by illness or injury we pray for peace in those threatening storms and a settling of all anxiety.

Silence

Calm our fears and teach us your peace.

Lord of all eternity, we thank you for your reassurance of life beyond physical death; We pray for those who are dying alone, unnoticed or unprepared. We commend those who have died to God's merciful forgiveness and eternal tranquillity.

Silence

Calm our fears and teach us your peace.

Lord of creation, we are full of wonder at the story of your universe, spoken into existence and sustained with such love.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Hymn: In Christ Alone Keith Getty & Stuart Townend StF 351

1. In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

2. In Christ alone, who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
'Til on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

3. There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious day!
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

4. No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

Blessing:

The God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, establish, strengthen and settle you in the faith; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**