**Morning Praise @ Home 13th August 2023**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Matthew 14: 22 – 33

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**Reflection from Ruth**

In John Ortberg’s book ‘If you want to walk on water, you need to get out of the boat’, our reading this morning is used as an example of how fear can prevent us from carrying out God’s plan for our lives

Peter walking on water is a powerful example of overcoming fear. Ortberg highlights Peter's initial boldness as he steps out of the boat, only to be consumed by fear when he takes his eyes off Jesus and focuses on the stormy waters. This is a useful portrayal of how fear can paralyse us when we lose sight of God’s plan and rely solely on our own strength.

Just as Peter initially stepped out of the boat with faith, we may feel a divine prompting to take bold steps in our lives. We know God wants us to change, He wants us to embrace change in our church - however - fear often intervenes, causing us to doubt our abilities, lose focus on God's guidance, and ultimately retreat back to our comfort zones. Ortberg talks about the concept of the "safe boat" as a representation of the familiar and comfortable aspects of life. We may well feel that prompt from God, but as soon as things become uncomfortable we jump back into our safe boat.

So what are the various manifestations of fear that hinder us from following God's path? According to John Ortberg, these can include the fear of failure, the fear of criticism, and the fear of the unknown. We become afraid that the changes will be negative for us, that we may ‘lose our place’.

These fears limit our willingness to trust God's guidance and provision, leading us to settle for a life that falls short of our true potential.

Because at the heart of it, if this is truly *God’s* plan, although there will be changes, they would never harm us.

We read in the Book of Jeremiah “*For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

So what can we do? Ortberg says that confronting fear is pivotal to aligning with God's will.

By acknowledging fear’s presence and choosing to move forward regardless, we can dismantle its power over our choices. So we must be prepared to admit we are afraid. When we do, as when Peter cried out to Jesus, and he reached out his hand, God can reach out to us. If we don’t admit to that fear, we are preventing God from reaching out to us.

‘Keeping our eyes on Jesus’ can be helped by cultivating a deep relationship with God.

Seeking support from our faith community can empower us to overcome fear, and help enable us to embrace the unique paths God lays before us, and to feel that hope for the future. **Amen**

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Ron**

Sisters and brothers in Christ, God invites us to hold the needs of friends and loved ones before Him. And so, loving our neighbours as ourselves, we offer our thanksgivings. Loving God, we pray today for your blessing to be upon this congregation, upon this church and upon our Diocese and for your presence to be seen vividly in what we do and say each day.

We pray that your joy and your love will flow freely in and through us.

**Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer**

Creator God, we pray for all in authority that they may never be tempted to abuse or misuse their power. We continue to pray for persecuted Christian believers and for minority Christian communities where they are under pressure and for all who suffer for their faith. We pray for the times when our blinkered vision prevents us from taking care of our immediate family and household or when through our busyness, we take no part in the life of our neighbourhood or wider community.

**Lord in your mercy**: **Hear our prayer**

Loving God, friend of those in need, your Son Jesus can free us from our burdens and heal our bodies and spirits. We pray for those still burdened, those seeking healing, those in need within the church and the world. We pray too for those suffering from addiction of any kind and ask that you help them to put such temptation behind them.

**Lord in your mercy**: **Hear our prayer**

Gracious God, as we go out into the world we pray that we may reflect your love in our families, our church and our community; so that the world can witness that we are followers of Christ and draw others into his loving care.

And a final prayer for ourselves: - As you so freely gave of yourself help us to use our God-given gifts freely in the service of others and to do so with joy in our hearts.

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

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

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