

The Benefice of Stoke-by-Nayland, with Leavenheath and Polstead and Nayland with Wissington (Wiston)

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“If you want to walk on water you have to get out of the boat” - 9th Sunday after Trinity

If we think about the many storms which have blown through our own lives, it is perhaps not difficult to picture what it was like for the disciples that dark night as they crossed the Sea of Galilee. Just remember a time when your life was drenched in darkness, that dark night of the soul that finds you waking and worrying at three or four in the morning. It is so dark you cannot even see your own hand in front of your face. You do not know what is ahead or when you will arrive at the new shore. Think of a time when it felt as if you were drowning in fear. Recall those days when the winds of change were blowing against you and no matter what you did, how hard you rowed, you got nowhere. Maybe there was a time when the events of life battered you over and over like ocean waves.

Storms come in all sorts of different ways striking individuals, families, churches, nations, and the world. Cancer, divorce, famine, war. We can all tell stories about how life was blown off course, when what we thought of as solid foundations of life were washed away, when our plans and hopes have been damaged or destroyed. Whenever the storms of life arise so does the question of faith. Do we have faith? Do we have the right kind of faith? Do we have enough faith?

Jesus' question to Peter is one that often haunts us as we cross the sea of life. "You of little faith; why did you doubt?" There is something about that question that makes quick, trite answers and assumptions much too easy. "You just need faith. If you had more faith you would get what you prayed for. A different kind of faith and your life would be better, easy. If your faith were stronger you would not doubt, struggle, or question."

So, I wonder what would have happened if Peter had more faith, enough faith, a different kind of faith. The usual answer is that Peter's fear would have disappeared, the wind and waves would have been of no consequence. He would have continued walking on water.

There is however a real danger in this kind of understanding of faith. It says that if we have enough faith, we will overcome the storms of life in some spectacular way. Somehow, we will go beyond the laws of nature, physics, biology. We will defy gravity. In extreme cases some individuals will choose to forego life saving operations or medical care and instead rely on faith alone. But that is not the kind of faith to which we are called. That is not what faith is about. That is more about magic than faith. It seeks proof or evidence to support belief. That kind of faith will not carry us through the storms of life. We will eventually and inevitably sink like a rock in water. That is what happened to Peter. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Peter's name in Greek (Petros Πέτρος) means stone or rock.

Regardless of how much faith we have diseases still can take a toll on our bodies, accidents can happen, loved ones die. Despite our faith, life is sometimes difficult, relationships do break up, we don't always get what we want. No matter how strong our faith is the sea of life does get rough and stormy.

In a twist on the usual response that "well at least Peter had faith enough to get out of the boat!", perhaps it may be useful to look at it from a different angle, perhaps faith is not about walking on water through the storms of life but instead simply about staying in the boat? With a different kind of faith Peter would have stayed in the boat. "You of little faith; why did you doubt?" Maybe Jesus is asking why Peter got out of the boat. After all Jesus is the one who "made the disciples get into the boat." Jesus is the one who told them to "go on ahead to the other side." Jesus is the one who prayed during their night voyage. Jesus is the one who came to them in the midst of the storm. Jesus is the one who reassured them saying, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

It was Peter's idea to get out of the boat. Peter is the one who wanted to defy gravity, the one who sought some spectacular proof of Jesus' identity, presence, and power. "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Peter's words are reminiscent of an earlier time and place. Satan. The wilderness. "If you are the Son of God..." Peter's faith has taken him out of the boat and put God to the test.

I don't say this in judgment or criticism of Peter. I say this as one who recognises himself in Peter, as one who sometimes wants to walk on water and escape the storms of my own life. I say this as one who has seen and heard others express that same desire. At some level we have probably all lived with Peter's faith.

The disciples' voyage across the sea is a passage from one kind of faith to another. It is the journey from faith used to escape life's storms to a faith that carries us through them; from an external faith of physical presence and proof to an interior faith of spiritual presence; from a faith dependent on the circumstance of our life to one that experiences Christ presence regardless of what is going on around us.

Jesus physically separated himself from the disciples and sent them on ahead, but he never left them. Their faith and our faith should be experienced as larger than Jesus' physical presence; not limited by the boundaries of what can be seen, heard, touched, or understood; independent of miracles that overcome the laws of nature. Jesus is taking us from a get-out-of-the-boat kind of faith to a stay-in-the-boat kind of faith. This transition of faith happens in the dark night of our life, in the midst of life's storms. In every storm of life, we must decide whether to get out or stay in. Faith is not a way to escape the winds and waves of life. It is the way through the storms of life. Sometimes faithfulness means staying in the boat and simply keeping rowing.

A stay-in-the-boat-faith knows that Christ is always coming to us. We are never abandoned. There is no storm we go through in which Christ is not with us. A stay-in-the-boat-faith never gives up because Christ never gives up on us. With every storm through which we sail Jesus comes to us saying "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." He gets in the boat with us and the winds cease. Our walking on water is not the miracle. The miracle is that Christ is stronger than any storm that comes our way. The miracle is that with Christ in the boat we are always able to pass through any storms of life and onto a new shore and a new life.

God Bless and stay safe.

Revd Mark

Today's Holy Communion Service is available to watch online from 10am

via our Benefice Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/pg/naylandchurches/videos/

Or via our Benefice YouTube Page www.youtube.com/channel/UckmXP6dR1kjKb5I3A7hxnTA/videos

this service, together with all those broadcasts during lockdown, continue to be available for you to watch at any time from your own home.

Of your kindness and charity, please pray for all those who have recently died, including from our own community

- Mary Bradshaw (*Polstead – 14th August 2020*)
- Clare Partridge (*Nayland*)
- Michael Connellan (*Polstead*)

Please also pray for yourself! Give thanks that God loves you and that you are precious to him. Pray for your family, friends and neighbours, and for the community in which you live. Pray that you are able to hear God calling you to serve him and for your words and actions that will draw others to know him better. We pray for artists and musicians, actors both amateur and professional and for all who make our lives richer through the creative arts. We pray for our Theatres and Concert Halls and all who work to keep them open especially in the current situation. We pray for our countryside and for the clean air and open spaces that we can enjoy.



Face coverings are now mandatory.

Since we first began to hold services in church, we have advised that face coverings were strongly recommended whilst in church and we are grateful to everyone who have worn one as we endeavour to help keep each other safe.

However, please be aware that the rules have now changed, and so in accordance with the Government's latest requirements, **the wearing of face coverings in church does now become mandatory from this weekend for most people.**

A few people within our community may have a legitimate reason not to wear one for example:

- young children under the age of 11 (Public Health England do not recommend face coverings for children under the age of 3 for health and safety reasons)
- not being able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress
- if you are travelling with or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading to communicate
- the face covering may be temporarily removed in order to receive communion, but should be put back as soon as practical.



"JUST ASK!" - Continuing to Support all those in our community

Our FREE Community Pantry currently needs

- Toilet Rolls
- Toilet Bleach & Kitchen Cleaners
- Men's Deodorant & Shaving Gel
- Lady's Body Spay
- Washing Machine Pods/Gel
- Jars of Pasta Sauces
- Packets of Pasta
- Bags of Sugar
- Tins of Tuna
- Tins of Meat Stews / Tinned Ham
- Tins of Curry and Chili con Carne
- Fresh Fruit & Vegetables and Eggs are always a bonus!

We are OK at the moment for Tins of Soup, Baked Beans, Porridge Oats and Rice.

Thank you to everyone who have continues to donate financially so that I am able to help those most in need when appropriate. You can make a donation online using the following link: www.gf.me/u/xsivr9 Alternatively you can post an envelope with your donation through the letterbox at the Vicarage.

Please do continue to let friends and neighbours know that the Church is here ready and willing to support anyone from our parishes who finds themselves in need of financial, practical or spiritual support then "Just Ask" – and I will do all that I can to help.



"Virtual Coffee Morning" – Wednesday 12th August at 10am

This week's link is: <https://tinyurl.com/CoffeeMorning120820>

If you are prompted for a Meeting ID and Password, use the following:
Meeting ID: **729 1780 9488** Password: **Coffee1234**

Extending Church Opening Times

Currently both Nayland and Stoke by Nayland Churches are open 2 afternoons a week from 2pm-4pm to allow individuals and family groups the opportunity to come to church to pray quietly or to simply find space to be with God. Revd Mark has also been available during these times to offer prayer and support.

I am pleased to advise that from next week, **St James' Nayland** will be extending its opening time on **Tuesdays and Saturdays to 10am until 4pm. St Mary's, Stoke by Nayland** will be open on **Wednesdays 10am until 4pm and Sundays from after Morning Prayer until 4pm.** These extended time mean that it is no longer practical for Revd Mark to always be present, but if you would like to talk with him or for him to pray with you in church, do telephone or email him and he will arrange to meet you.

In respect of Polstead and Leavenheath, Churchwardens and Revd Mark have recently reviewed the situation and have agreed that for the time being they will remain closed for services. It is hoped that it may be possible to reopen Wiston Church for occasional services from September. In all cases we continue to monitor the most up to date guidelines and advice and will adapt accordingly.



This coming Saturday (15th August 2020) marks the 75th Anniversary of VJ Day.

Given that many from the Suffolk Regiment as well as many other combat units played their part in Singapore, Thailand, Burma and the Far East it is right that we can gather to remember their legacy and give thanks for their sacrifice.

To this end you are invited to gather at the **War Memorial in St Mary's Church, Stoke by Nayland for 10.45am** where an appropriate Act of Remembrance will be led including a 2 minutes silence at 11am.

Please do wear a face covering if possible and observe social distancing of 2m (6ft) between household groups. As with all acts of worship at the moment, those who are at higher risk of complications from Coronavirus are asked to consider carefully their own health before attending. No one should attend if they have or suspect that they might have Coronavirus.

COLLECT

Almighty God,
who sent your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of your Church:
open our hearts to the riches of your
grace,
that we may bring forth the fruit of the
Spirit
in love and joy and peace;
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.

FIRST READING 1 Kings 19:9-18

A reading from the first book of Kings.

When Elijah reached Horeb, the mountain of God, he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill;

and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

PSALM Psalm 85:8-13

R Show us your mercy, O Lord.

I will listen to what the Lord God will say,
for he shall speak peace to his people and
to the faithful, that they turn not again
to folly.

Truly, his salvation is near to those who
fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land. **R**

Mercy and truth are met together,
righteousness and peace have kissed each
other;

Truth shall spring up from the earth
and righteousness look down from
heaven. **R**

The Lord will indeed give all that is good,
and our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness shall go before him
and direct his steps in the way. **R**

SECOND READING

Romans 10:5-15

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that "the person who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that comes from faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But how are they to call on one in whom they have not

believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

GOSPEL Matthew 14:22-33

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

Immediately after feeding the crowd with the five loaves and two fish, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

POST COMMUNION

Holy Father,
who gathered us here around the table of
your Son
to share this meal with the whole
household of God:
in that new world where you reveal the
fullness of your peace,
gather people of every race and language
to share in the eternal banquet of Jesus
Christ our Lord.



Show us your mer-cy, O Lord.