

Materials for Virtual Worship - Sunday, 14 February 2021

The Sunday next before Lent – Quinquagesima

Theme for the service: I Will Never Leave You

**Please use this material with the order of Virtual Service for
the Linton Team of Churches Ordinary Time**

Collects

Almighty Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
give us grace to perceive his glory,
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

(or)

Holy God,
you know the disorder of our sinful lives:
set straight our crooked hearts,
and bend our wills to love your goodness
and your glory
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Readings

2 Kings 2:1-12

Elijah Ascends to Heaven

Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they went down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in

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Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?' And he said, 'Yes, I know; keep silent.'

Elijah said to him, 'Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho.' But he said, 'As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they came to Jericho. The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?' And he answered, 'Yes, I know; be silent.'

Then Elijah said to him, 'Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.' But he said, 'As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.' Elisha said, 'Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.' He responded, 'You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.' As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, 'Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!' But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

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Mark 9:2-9

The Transfiguration

Six days later, three of them did see it. Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain. His appearance changed from the inside out, right before their eyes. His clothes shimmered, glistening white, whiter than any bleach could make them. Elijah, along with Moses, came into view, in deep conversation with Jesus. Peter interrupted, “Rabbi, this is a great moment! Let’s build three memorials—one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah.” He blurted this out without thinking, stunned as they all were by what they were seeing. Just then a light-radiant cloud enveloped them, and from deep in the cloud, a voice: “This is my Son, marked by my love. Listen to him.” The next minute the disciples were looking around, rubbing their eyes, seeing nothing but Jesus, only Jesus.

The Coming of Elijah

Coming down the mountain, Jesus swore them to secrecy. “Don’t tell a soul what you saw. After the Son of Man rises from the dead, you’re free to talk.”

(from The Message translation)

Reflection

2 Kings 2:1-12

Mark 9:2-9

I will not leave you

There have been many times in my life when I have needed somebody. Somebody to understand me, to support me, to say it’s going to be ok or simply just to being in the presence of somebody else can be enough to instil calm and reassurance. I’m sure you can think of times when you have needed somebody too.

When I did the Emotional First Aid training run by TLG, (Transforming Lives for Good), it was stressed that one of the three most crucial things you can do for someone who is showing high level stress, is to get alongside that person...to say, “I see you, I hear you, I am with you”.

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Emmanuel – God with us.

The incredible power of the being present, whether that is physical or spiritual, cannot be underestimated. We see this exemplified in our two passages from the bible this morning. I want to draw on the link I see between the two, which is just as I have mentioned...I see you, I hear you, I am with you. Elisha shows his support to Elijah and Jesus has the support of his disciples, the affirmation of those who have gone before him, in Moses and Elijah, and the approval and anointing from God.

In the 2 Kings passage Elisha says to Elijah THREE times, not once, not twice, but three times...

“I will not leave you”, “I will not leave you”, “I will not leave you”.

The power of three! In my assemblies I sometimes repeat a sentence or a line three times – it somehow underlines the point, albeit, in an embarrassing pause kind of way. (As a mother I am very used to saying something three times until I feel I am feeling ‘heard’!) But I digress!..

I wonder how Elijah felt? Did he feel frightened/apprehensive, despite the fact that he knew what was in store for him? Did Elisha sense this? Did Elisha simply feel he simply couldn’t bear to see him go? What we do know is that Elisha stood alongside Elijah from Gilead to Bethel to Jericho to the river Jordan. Elijah was going to be taken up by God, which Elisha probably felt heartbroken about, we know this because he tore his cloak in two, which is symbolic in the bible, particularly the Old Testament, and occurred invariably at deeply troublesome times, it denotes a tearing of the inner being. However, Elisha held Elijah’s hand every step of the way until the journey was complete.

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In a similar way, Jesus, needed friendship, understanding and reassurance. Jesus was in a situation, where he found himself atop an enormous mountain with three of his disciples. The transfiguration is the obvious big moment in this passage, but I would like to bring focus to what surrounded this event, which is the physical and spiritual encouragement he needed from all the people present. As Elisha did for Elijah, the appearance of Moses to Jesus, (the first of the greatest prophets), and Moses, (the supreme law giver of Israel), symbolised very powerfully, “I see you, I hear you, I am with you”. This was the encouragement and reassurance Elijah and Jesus needed in their time of stressful uncertainty. The encouragers in these accounts were saying “Go on!”. For Jesus, it was an approval of moving on in his journey in the right direction; to face and accept the cross. I am certain that God, like Elisha, felt an inner tearing in his heart for his son, but he was there right with him – “This is my beloved son, listen to him!”, like Elisha did for Elijah, God saw Jesus through to the end of his journey.

In our moments of sadness, brokenness, when we are feeling vulnerable and sometimes utterly helpless or lost, it is in these very moments that we can gain so much in allowing ourselves to feel supported, to have somebody hold our hand, to be reassured by a deep sense of approval that we are doing ok, that we are moving in the right direction.

Whatever our challenges are at the moment, remember...

“I will not leave you, I will not leave you, I will not leave you”.

Emmanuel – God with us. Amen.

Nicola Collard

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10,000 Reasons (Bless The Lord)

Chorus

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul

Worship His holy name

Sing like never before O my soul

I'll worship Your holy name

1. The sun comes up it's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me
Let me be singing when the evening comes

Chorus

2. You're rich in love and You're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

Chorus

3. And on that day when my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years and then forevermore

Chorus

Worship Your holy name
Yes I'll worship Your holy name

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Great is thy faithfulness

1. Great is Thy faithfulness
O God my Father
There is no shadow
Of turning with Thee
Thou changest not
Thy compassions they fail not
As Thou hast been
Thou forever wilt be

Chorus

*Great is Thy faithfulness
Great is Thy faithfulness
Morning by morning
New mercies I see
All I have needed
Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness
Lord unto me*

2. Summer and winter
And springtime and harvest
Sun moon and stars
In their courses above
Join with all nature
In manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness
Mercy and love

Chorus

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3. Pardon for sin

And a peace that endureth
Thy own dear presence
To cheer and to guide
Strength for today
And bright hope for tomorrow
Blessings all mine
With ten thousand beside

Chorus

Thomas Obediah Chisholm | William Marion Runyan
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Closing Prayer

Holy God,
we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ:
may we who are partakers at his table
reflect his life in word and deed,
that all the world may know his power to change and save.
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**