



In our first reading this morning we find Elijah at a very low point in his life, he is defeated, deflated and feels he cannot go on. A point many people have found themselves at in life especially during this pandemic. God does not leave him there, he calls out to him.

There is a lot of chaos and noise but Elijah does not find God in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire; it is in the silence that he hears God talking to him. It is in the silence that God gives Elijah something to do, a task to focus on, a reason to go on despite his difficult circumstances. He needed to get on with what God wanted him to do.

On Wednesday evening, it was with great joy, after just over 20 weeks, we reopened the doors of St Mary Magdalene for worship; soon we will be back in church on a Sunday morning. With restricted numbers, no singing allowed, no moving around church and no physical sharing of the peace things are going to be much quieter and calmer than we are used too. As many of you know, I am not good with silence, and I confess it is usually in the noise and bustle of our weekly morning Eucharist and church life that I find God. With that in mind, like many, I was sceptical how returning to something different would feel.

Over the past weeks I have come to realise it has been in the silence of Friday evenings that God has given me what I have needed to put together our weekly online worship and it was back in church, on Wednesday evening, in those familiar surroundings, that I realised we can build our new 'normal' together.

There was one thing on Wednesday evening that did make a noise, a loud noise - the bell - it might not make the best sound in the world but as it rang out, loud and clear, calling all to worship, there was something victorious about the way it once again told the village, 'we were open' and 'we are ready to serve in a more visible way'.

We are ready to get on with what God needs us to do.

Elijah heard God guiding him onto the next stage of his journey; maybe in the quiet we will be able to hear God more clearly, as He guides us to where the next stage of the journey, for both the church and ourselves, will take us. Over the past 20 weeks, God has taken us where we never expected to go; he has opened up new opportunities for us to spread the Gospel.

Are we ready to go where God will lead us?

Are we ready to get on with the things God needs us to do?

Collect for the day

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the light and life of your church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruits of the spirit in love, 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 forever. Amen

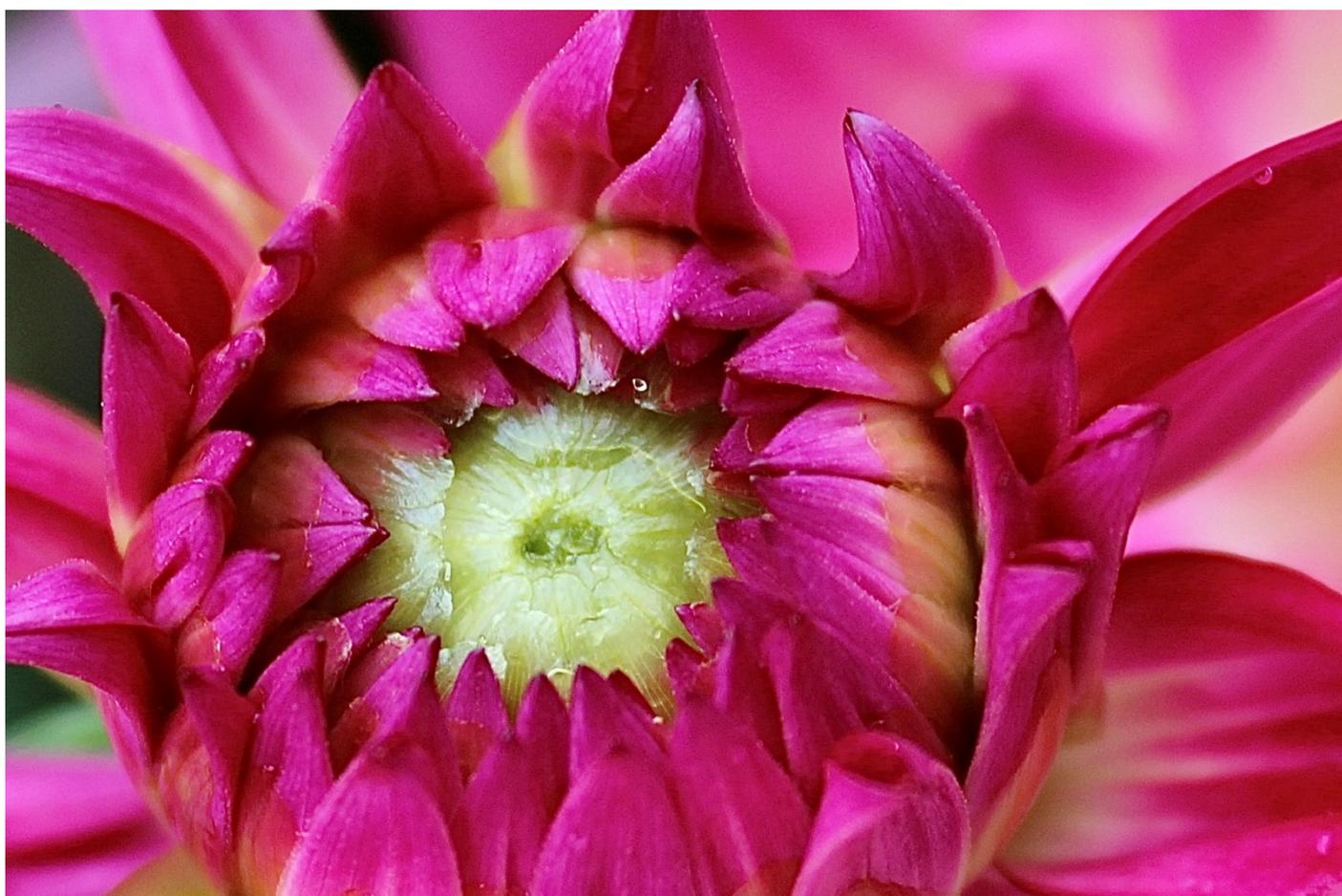
A reading from the 1st book of Kings

At that place 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?" ¹⁰ 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."

¹¹ 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; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

¹³ 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?" ¹⁴ 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." ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. ¹⁸ 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."



A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans

⁵ Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that “the person who does these things will live by them.” ⁶ 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) ⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ 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); ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. ¹¹ The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” ¹² 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. ¹³ For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

¹⁴ 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? ¹⁵ 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!”

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land,^[a] for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

²⁸ Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹ He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” ³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”



Some words of inspiration from Gary Laird

Who has inspired you during your life, a teacher, a parent, a friend we all have stories to tell. I spoke at a year six leavers assembly a few weeks ago to those young people leaving primary school and embarking on their secondary career. A period of immense change, and daunting, but based on their experience in school they will manage through friendship groups. My grandchildren are an inspiration to me even in these difficult times. We too are living through a period of immense change Bishop Nick has told us that things will change I am learning new skills through technology so that the church can flourish. Have you considered learning something new during this lockdown period.

Following the death of Jesus on Good Friday the disciples must have thought all was lost; look where we are 2000 years later. We as Christians have a responsibility to look forward not back and encourage friends, family and colleagues with positive friendly support, remember “the best is yet to come” take care stay safe and inspire others through our faith during this time of Covid 19. “You are not alone, I am with you always”

Words from Fr Rodney

It was a great joy to be able to celebrate the Eucharist at St. Mary Magdalene’s last Wednesday for the first time in over four months. Like many things at the moment it was the same but different, and we are going to have to get used to the ‘new normal’ as gradually our regular worship returns. In many ways that was the experience of the first Christians who themselves had come from a variety of backgrounds and faith traditions. The Gospel for today is all about having faith and not being afraid to both live it and share it with others.

Like many of the stories in the gospels that come from a very different age and outlook, today’s gospel reading challenges the reality of the world as we know it. Did Jesus indeed walk on the lake to his disciples or is there the more practical understanding that he appeared to walk on the lake but was actually walking on one of the many sandbars that stretch out under the surface of the lakes of that area? But the message of the gospel is not about what happened, but about not being afraid as Christians to step out in faith with Jesus. Sometimes people see their faith as a safe and comfortable place, but Jesus calls us to step out in faith and have the confidence to do. Even if, like Peter, we sometimes feel we are starting to ‘sink’, we know that if we reach out to Jesus, he will in some way be there for us to “reach out his hand and catch us” even if it’s not in the way we hoped for or expected.



Let us pray

Father today we give thanks for the first steps we have taken to reopen St Mary's and for the hope for the future it represents. We also give thanks for the hard work and dedication shown by all those involved in the planning and preparation for the new 'normal' and pray that we continue to move forward safely. We also give thanks for the opportunities we have had to worship remotely with one another and other faith communities in the last few months and pray that we continue this fellowship in the future. Amen

Father on the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima on the 6th and Nagasaki on the 9th August 1945, 75 years ago, we are reminded once again of the terrible cost of the hatred and division that still plagues our world. We pray for all those whose lives have been affected by the trauma of war, especially the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We ask for your blessings for all those who continue to work for peace and pray that the challenges of the current situation encourage us to build bridges and repair the damage done by our inability to love others, share resources and protect the many gifts of your wonderful creation. We also pray particularly for the people of Beirut and all those who are attempting to bring aid to the people there and we continue to ask for guidance for our own government as it struggles to deal with the difficulties that face us at the moment. Amen

Father today we continue to pray for the safety and well being of our families, friends and neighbours, particularly those we are parted from at the moment. We think of all those young people awaiting exam results in the next two weeks whilst facing so many uncertainties. We also pray for their families and teachers as they try to support them. We continue to give thanks for all those within our communities working so hard to support us with our everyday lives, especially all those working in our health and social care services and pray for their safety. Amen

Father we pray for the sick in body, mind or spirit and bring before you any known to us who need comfort, strength and love at this timeWe pray especially for all those suffering in the pandemic, their families and all those who care for them and pray for the safety of all those who are

taking the first anxious steps out of shielding themselves or others. We continue to ask for your blessings on the efforts of all those working on treatments and vaccines. Amen

Finally Father we remember all those who have gone before us; those who have died in conflict, those who have died recently, those who have perished in the pandemic, those whose anniversaries are around this time and any we wish to remember particularly today... We thank you for their lives, their friendship, love and support and the many memories we have of them and we ask that they rest in peace and rise in glory.

In a moment of silence bring your own prayers to God

The Lords prayer

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.

