Home Service Sheet for Sunday 24th April 2022 (Prepared by the Revd Terry Hepworth)  
  
Call To Worship:                Psalm 121  
  
I lift up my eyes to the hills.  
    From where does my help come?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
    who made heaven and earth.  
He will not let your foot be moved;  
    he who keeps you will not slumber.  
Behold, he who keeps Israel  
    will neither slumber nor sleep.  
The Lord is your keeper;  
    the Lord is your shade on your right hand.  
The sun shall not strike you by day,  
    nor the moon by night.  
The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
    he will keep your life.  
The Lord will keep  
    your going out and your coming in  
    from this time forth and forevermore.  
  
Opening Prayer  
  
God of all grace, we thank you that we can turn to you and declare Abba Father. And indeed you are our father. As we worship you this day we pray for your presence within by the Holy Spirit. May our worship as we open ourselves to you through your Spirit be acceptable for it comes from hearts that belong to you. Grant us your mercy and bring us your peace in Jesus name we pray. Amen  
  
Hymn:   God Sent His Son they called him Jesus  
  
<https://youtu.be/vsOaRkpjoiM>  
  
God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus,  
He came to love, heal, and forgive;  
He lived and died to buy my pardon,  
An empty grave is there  
To prove my Saviour lives.  
  
Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,  
Because He lives, All fear is gone;  
Because I know He holds the future,  
And life is worth the  
Living just because He lives.  
  
How sweet to hold, a new born baby,  
And feel the pride, and joy he gives;  
But greater still, the calm assurance  
This child can face Uncertain Days  
because He lives.  
  
And then one day, Ill cross the river,  
I'll fight life’s final war with pain;  
And then as death gives way to victory,  
I'll see the lights of glory and  
 I'll Know He lives.  
  
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 that 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.  
  
Bible Reading:          John 21  
  
After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.  
  
Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered him, “No.” He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.  
  
When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.  
  
When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”  
  
Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?” When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?” Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!” So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?”  
  
This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.  
  
Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.  
  
Reflection                      Feed my sheep  
  
This story is Peter’s story first and foremost but it is also our story as well.  
  
The fishing boat is bobbing gently on the lake, a hundred yards offshore. Occasionally a wave slaps against its side though the lake is surprisingly still this morning.  
Though it is very early, the six fishermen in the boat are stripped for work, the gleam of sweat on their backs just visible in the glow of dawn.  
  
All night they have put out their net, then pulled it in again, time after time. Time after time. They labour all night to earn a living. But not this night. This night they haven't netted a single fish.  
Dawn is upon them now, the sun just breaking above the hills east of Galilee. Their hopes of fish to sell are gone with the night. Maybe they should try another net or two before they quit.  
Maybe they'll be lucky.  
  
On shore, the sleepy village of Capernaum is beginning to stir. On its rocky beach the fishermen can see the glow of a small fire. Occasionally a breeze brings them the aroma of fish cooking. Peter's stomach remembers its hunger, and his mouth can almost taste the savoury fish.  
  
Who's tending the fire? It's a man. Peter can see that much. He looks familiar, but Peter can't place him. Now the man brings up his hands and cups them about his mouth. A moment later his voice reaches the boat:  
  
"Boys," he shouts. "Put your nets out on the right side of the boat and you'll find some...."  
  
"Every landlubber thinks he's an expert fisherman!" fumes Peter. But they are ready to put out the net again. Why not the right side this time? What do they have to lose?  
  
All of a sudden, the stillness of morning is broken by the writhing of trapped fish and a tremendous tug on the net that, for a moment, threatens to capsize the boat.  
The men are instantly alert and position themselves to pull in the thrashing net. They must have caught a whole school of fish.  
  
Peter looks up from his exertion to the man on the shore. John, too, is straining to see him. "It's the Lord!" shouts John. "It's Jesus!" The others are struggling with the net, but Peter doesn't care. He grabs his clothes, dives into the lake, and swims with powerful strokes until the water is shallow enough for him to run splashing the rest of the way.  
  
Dripping, he drops to his knees before Jesus  the risen Lord, the man he has spent three years following, emulating, serving.  
  
"Bring some more fish," says Jesus. So Peter runs to the boat, now nearly ashore, and helps haul in the net. They count 153 fish! Amazing!  
  
Jesus calls to the men  "Come, have some breakfast!"  
  
They squat around the fire and wolf down the bread and the fish Jesus has prepared. Hot fish! Hot bread after a long night's work!  
Fish and bread. Bread and fish. Why does this seem so familiar? Peter wonders. And then he recalls the day when, only a mile or two from here, Jesus had fed the 5,000 with five barley loaves and two fish.  
  
Peter and these very men had carried basket after basket of fish and bread to the crowd until all were full. Jesus, the great Feeder of men is feeding them again this morning.  
Now Jesus calls Peter aside. "Do you love me Peter more than these?"  
  
Now with pain, Peter remembers how three times he had vehemently denied Jesus just before his crucifixion. He can hardly look Jesus in the eye. He mumbles, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."  
  
"Peter, feed my sheep," says Jesus. Three times Jesus asked Peter to reaffirm his love  once for each time Peter had denied him.  
  
Three times Jesus reaffirms Peter's call to ministry. Jesus not only forgives Peter, he restores him fully to his confidence.  
  
Feed my sheep, years ago, Jesus had told Peter and his colleagues, "I will make you fishers of men." Sure enough — together they had ministered to many thousands of men and women, boys and girls on what amounted to a three-year spiritual fishing expedition.  
  
"Feed my sheep."  
  
Not physical food. Jesus is talking about spiritual food — teaching, praying, leading, exhorting, serving. Jesus is asking for Peter's love, but with that love, obedience too.  
Peter knows what he's saying. Jesus had once described the crowds as harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.  
  
"Yes, I love you, Jesus," says Peter clearly, lifting his eyes to meet the Master's.  
  
"Then feed my sheep," says the great Feeder of men.  
 "Peter, I need you to feed my sheep for me."  
"Yes, Lord, of course I will," whispers Peter, as his eyes flood with tears. "You can count on me.  
  
Can the Lord count on us to feed his sheep. Many have debated over the years what Jesus meant by do you love me more than these.  
Some have argued Jesus was speaking about the other disciples as if to say do you love me Peter more than James and John etc.  
Do you love me enough to put me first and forget about them?  
  
I don’t think so. Some have argued it’s the fish or fishing. As if Jesus is saying do you love me enough to forget about your past life and to put my will at the front of your thinking?  
  
Or simply am I going to be number one in your life from now on Peter?  
  
I think that is more like it. Peter is being restored and Jesus is probing the heart of Peter and saying between the lines. I know you have let me down but do you still love me more than anything, and having received the affirmation three times corresponding to the three denials Jesus affirms his position in the team.  
  
We all from time to time let the Lord down and sometimes it’s hard having done so to get up and carry on. This incident with Peter should fill all of our hearts with hope this day. That hope, that sure knowledge, that with Jesus there is forgiveness and full restoration. I say full restoration because Peter was restored to his former position.  
  
Such is the love of the Lord for us.  
We don’t do that do we, if someone fails no matter how sorry they are they are never allowed back to their former position.  
  
If someone in a moment of weakness helps themselves to the money they are looking after, we might forgive them but we would not let them look after money again.  
We say well you would never put temptation in their way once tempted and fallen it might happen again.  
  
If someone lets us down badly maybe a friend we never really trust them again do we.  
  
Jesus is not like that when he restores Peter he does not say Peter I do trust you but I am going to put James in charge you take your orders from him.  
  
No he says Peter feed my sheep. Forgiveness restoration such is the work of the Lord. Maybe there is a lesson there for us.  
  
Peter was going to have plenty of opportunities to let Jesus down again in the future and he does, but that does not stop the Lord allowing him to make mistakes.  
  
I honestly believe that if Judas Iscariot had lived and had come to the Lord repenting of what he had done. Jesus would have forgiven him and restored him.  
  
It gives us hope for whenever we fail there is forgiveness there is restoration but also when people fail us or fail the church when people let us down, let us respond with the same sort of love and forgiveness that Jesus has for us.  
  
Jesus looks to us. He looks us in the eye and with love and compassion he says I know you have let me down. I know you have failed; He might even say I know you will fail tomorrow but do you love me?  
  
And when we respond as Peter did with affirmation Lord you know I love you then Jesus restores us such is his love for us.  
Remember what Jesus has and does do for us every day we are called to do the same to those around us.  
  
How does it go father forgive me as I forgive those who wrong me? Do unto others as you would have them do to you. Or the words of Jesus to us this day, Go and do likewise. Amen  
  
Pastoral Prayer  
Heavenly Father, We thank you that with you there is forgiveness and restoration. Lord we are to quick to judge to quick to condemn. Help us to be always mindful of the forgiveness we have received and be prepared to forgive those who let us down. Help us to see others as you see us and be prepared to lift up a fallen brother or sister in Christ and help them once more to find acceptance and forgiveness. Grant us your peace this day and dwell in all of our hearts by your Spirit. Amen.  
  
Benediction  
  
Heavenly Father, bless us and keep us this day and all days. Surround us with your love and strength and be unto us all that we need. This we pray in Jesus’ Name, amen.