

Dear friends,

This week we explore what happens in moments of vulnerability. There are powerful words in the reading about the impact of the choice to align yourself with Jesus – and the potential there is to divide people who choose discipleship over familial loyalty leads to an eruption of emotions from Jesus. These emotions allow us to see the humanity Jesus shares with us. He displays his vulnerability and, as we think about how he felt, perhaps we each may take time to look at our own vulnerabilities and strong emotions. I keep you all in my prayers & wish you every blessing in the coming days. Margaret.

Call to worship:

When Jesus walked on this earth, he felt what we feel.

He saw human joy and pain – he saw human vulnerability and strength.

Let us be thankful that he knows how our emotions work.

Loving God, thank you that when we are happy and when we are sad you are with us.

When we are frustrated or angry, you are there with us.

When we are confused and don't know how we feel, you are with us.

Lord, may we give ourselves, and all of our emotions, to our worship now. Amen.

Summer is here and so many patterns change – holidays, new places, old places, new faces, old faces, old churches, new churches, families together and families apart.

Jesus, Lord of our journeying and travelling, as we come to you, from near or far, what unites us is you – your calling, your love, your living and your dying.

In strength and in our vulnerability, we come to meet you afresh on the road today. Amen.

The words to 'What a friend we have in Jesus' written by Joseph Medlicott Scriven [1819-1886]

StF 531

1 What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

2 Have we trials and temptations, is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged: take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness: take it to the Lord in prayer.

3 Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Saviour, still our refuge – take it to the Lord in prayer!

Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer;

in his arms he'll take and shield you, you will find a solace there.

Prayers including the Lord's Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you walked this earth as we do – you faced acceptance and rejection – you faced welcome and hostility. You set your eyes on the journey to Jerusalem and we can't imagine our life if you hadn't.

God the Father, you gave us Jesus – an example, a teacher, a friend, a prophet, priest and king – and then a sacrifice for each of us.

God the Holy Spirit, burning within – inspiring, enlarging, warming, urging us ever on.

Triune God, our emotions change with the day, with the mood, with the moment, but we adore you for your steadfastness, your faithfulness, your constancy. Amen.

What I don't understand, Lord, I cast aside, ignore, object to, ridicule and rebuke. What I don't understand I think must be wrong. People who are different sometimes worry me, frighten me, disturb and concern me and so I may turn my back on them. I may ignore their needs, their cries for help, their pain and anguish.

Almighty God, I am sorry that in my vulnerable moments I may have hurt other people, made them feel worthless, unloved, unwanted. Lord, forgive me, I pray, and strengthen my resolve to see other people's lives and views, needs and desires. Amen.

God understands our vulnerability and confusion and forgives all who truly repent – all who are really sorry for wrong deeds and wrong thoughts and wrong ways.

God forgives – journey in peace. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and 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.

Luke 12: 49-56. [The New Testament Volume 1 – Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. A New Translation by William Barclay. Copyright William Barclay 1968]

'I have come to set the world ablaze. What is it that I want? Would that it were already kindled! I must be plunged into a flood-tide of suffering, and there can be no relief for me, until I have gone through it to the end.

Do you think that my coming will bring peace to the world? Far from it. I tell you, the result of my coming will be to bring division. From now on in one house there will be five people in a state of division, three against two and two against three. They will be divided father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'

He said to the crowds: 'When you see a cloud rising, you immediately say: "Rain is on the way," and the rain comes. When you feel the south wind blowing, you say: "It will be as hot as an oven," and it is. You play at being religious. You know how to read the weather signs from the appearance of the earth and of the sky. Why cannot you read the signs of the present crisis?'

Meditation of a Galilean family: [A Most Amazing Man – Year C. Written by Nick Fawcett. Copyright 2009 Nick Fawcett]

Mother: I could listen to that man all day. Couldn't *you*? What a teacher!

Father: Are you joking? I can't stand the man!

Mother: But why? He's unlike anyone else I've heard before: speaks with real authority.

Father: And whose authority is *that*, I'd like to know! No, he's too full of himself by half.

Son: Oh come on dad, be fair – look at the miracles he’s performed, the people he’s helped and healed: surely that counts for something.

Father: Pah, trickery! Mark my words; he’s up to no good.

Mother: Well I say we should talk to him, think about what he says.

Father: Over my dead body!

Son: At least give him a chance.

Give him what for!

Daughter: I’m with you, dad! Who does this guy think he is, not only telling us how to live our lives, but claiming to forgive sins? I thought only God can do that.

Mother: But he’s *from* God, surely – the one we’ve waited for all these years.

Father: get real, woman! He’s a charlatan, the devil in disguise as like as not!

Son: Whoa, that’s a bit strong!

Father: Not strong enough. We’ve had too many would-be messiahs before and look where they’ve got us.

Son: But this man is different. He talks sense, makes God real – or at least he does for me.

Father: Huh, he’s turned your mind.

Son: he’s changed my life.

Father: Rubbish!

Son: No, truly. I believe what they are saying about him: that he is the Son of God.

Father: Then you’re no son of mine!

Daughter: Stop it, everyone! What’s happening to us? Why are we arguing? Can’t we just beg to differ?

Son: Fine by me.

Father: me too – provided we hear no more of this Jesus nonsense.

Son: I’m sorry, dad, but I can’t just hide what I believe! It’s part of me now, don’t you see?’

Father: No, I just see a pig-headed fool.

Son: You’re wrong.

Father: Am I?

Son: Yes.

Father: No!

Son: Yes!

Daughter: Here we go again..... What was that Jesus said: not peace but division? I’m beginning to see what he means.

Reflection: We often see Jesus as having it all together, being focused and set on what God sent him to do regardless. But here we encounter one of his periodic eruptions of emotion. It is a glimpse into his humanity and is therefore sacred ground. It is a reminder that it is ok to feel vulnerable in the face of God’s call. We have to face our vulnerabilities and press on.

I wonder if James or John or one of the women in the close group of disciples felt the need to put a hand on Jesus’ shoulder as he spoke, to offer comfort and support. Here is a glimpse of the emotional cost of following God’s call. And if this affected Jesus, then surely it will affect us. One of the great prophets, Jeremiah, complained to God that he couldn’t take the pressure. So how do we support one another in this journey of faith. How do we offer a helping hand to those who are vulnerable – and how do we ask for that helping hand when we need it?

It can be quite awkward to witness a moment of high emotion. Whether grief and tears or extreme delight or joy, being around someone expressing a powerful sentiment can sometimes make us feel embarrassed or uneasy. Here, Jesus himself expresses intense grief about the situation he is facing. Here we are not seeing a sanitised version of the kindly Jesus meek and mild, but a real person capable of the full range of human emotions.

Prayer: We pray for peace – peace that comes from trust, and not from threat of war.

We pray for places where war and conflict rage.

We pray for peace – peace that comes from understanding, and not from mistrust.

We pray for places where reconciliation is needed.

We pray for peace – peace that comes from strength and is not imposed by violence.

We pray for places where people's security is threatened.

We pray for peace – peace that comes from love, and not from hatred.

We pray for places where hope and goodness are lacking.

We pray for peace – peace that comes from God, and surpasses everything we know and understand.

Amen.

The words to 'Great is thy faithfulness' written by Thomas O. Chisholm [1866-1960] StF 51

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 for ever wilt be:
*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, springtime and harvest, sun, moon, and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness of thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Refrain.....

3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Refrain.

Close:

Lord, go with us.

Help us to seek your treasure and help us to look for all that you are doing right now.

Help us – by our example and by our words – to share your treasure and your life-giving story with the people we meet this week. Amen.

Lord, with your help, we shall not fail you.

With your presence, we shall be strong.

With your light, we shall conquer the darkness.

With your love, we shall be free.

With your Spirit, we shall have the power to bring you glory and honour and praise. Amen.

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