



What then shall we say to these things?
If God is for us, who can be against us?
He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all,
how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
Romans 8:31-2

Hymn 617

*By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered ,
and confidently waiting, come what may,
we know that God is with us night and morning
and never fails to greet us each new day.*

*Yet is this heart by this troubled year tormented,
still evil days bring burdens hard to bear,
O give our frightened souls the sure salvation
for which, O Lord, you taught us to prepare.*

*And when this cup you give is filled to brimming
with bitter suffering, hard to understand,
we take it thankfully and without trembling
out of so good, and so beloved, a hand.*

*Yet when again, in this same world, you give us
the joy we had, the brightness of your sun,
we shall remember all the days we lived through,
and our whole life shall then be yours alone.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Invocation

The thread of hope weaves through our pandemic fearfulness and our call for your presence to be known among us at this time is an act of faith in itself.

Come Lord Jesus Christ, come.

Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Confession and Assurance

O God, we bring you our prayers at this time of challenge as people who have many different experiences of life.

When we take faith for granted because ours has only been lightly tested and fail to understand why others are less sure:

have mercy on us, loving God.

Enlarge our lives with your truth, Holy Spirit.

When our faith runs low and we turn away from you, loving Jesus, afraid that you will not be there for us at this time or accept the negativity of others toward you at this time:

have mercy on us, loving God.

Enlarge our lives with your truth, Holy Spirit.

If we look at the world with the cynical eyes of the set boundaries of the contemporary trust in science and technology alone:

have mercy on us, loving God.

Enlarge our lives with your truth, Holy Spirit.

If we lower our expectations of your compassion, power and love as the ultimate arbiter in your world:

have mercy on us, loving God.

Enlarge our lives with your truth, Holy Spirit.

Assurance

Do not doubt that the love of God is still far beyond our limited understanding.

The mercy and grace of the Christ is still our true destiny.

The stories of grace in times now long past will be written again in our time and in all time if we dare to stand again on holy ground close to you with the people of old in all their humanness and courageous hope.

Our lives are uplifted by their witness.

Our lives are renewed by your ongoing faithfulness

Receive our thanks and praise for all you continue to be for us.

In the name of the Christ we worship you, O God.

Amen

Hymn 109

What God ordains is always good:

his will is just and holy.

As he directs my life for me

follow meek and lowly.

My God indeed

in every need

knows well how he will shield me;

to him, then, I will yield me.

What God ordains is always good:

he never will deceive me;

he leads me in his own right way,

and never will he leave me.

I take content

what he has sent;

his hand that sends me sadness

will turn my tears to gladness.

What God ordains is always good:

this truth remains unshaken.

Though sorrow, need or death be mine,

I shall not be forsaken.

I fear no harm,

for with his arm

he shall embrace and shield me;

so to my God I yield me.

Scripture Genesis 37:2-4 and Weber/Rice The Amazing Technicolour Dream

These are the generations of Jacob..... Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colours. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him...

Joseph's Dreams

*Joseph's coat annoyed his brothers, but what made them mad
Were the things that Joseph told them of the dreams he often had.
I dreamt that in the fields one day, at corn collecting time,
Your eleven sheaves of corn all turned and bowed to mine,
And then I saw eleven stars, the sun and moon and sky
Bowing down before my star, it made me wonder why?
The dreams were more than crystal clear, the writing on the wall
Meant that Joseph someday soon would rise above them all.*

Genesis 37:12-28

Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them...they conspired against him to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer." Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams. But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; cast him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him"— that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colours that he wore. And they took him and cast him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

Close every door to me

*Close every door to me, hide all the world from me,
Bar all my windows and shut out the light.
Do what you want to me, hate me and laugh at me,
Darken my daytime and torture my night.
If my life were important I would ask will I live or die,
But I know that the answers lie far from this world.
Close every door to me, keep those I love from me,
Children of Israel are never alone.
For I know I shall find my own peace of mind,
For I have been promised a land of my own.*

Any Dream Will Do

I closed my eyes, drew back the curtain, to see what I thought I knew.

Far, far away someone was weeping, But the world was sleeping,

Any dream will do.

I wore my coat with golden lining,

Bright colours shining, Wonderful and new.

And in the east the dawn was breaking,

the world was waking,

Any dream will do.

A crash of drums, a flash of light,

my golden cloak flew out of sight,

The colours faded into darkness I was left alone.

May I return to the beginning,

The light is dimming

And the dream is too.

The world and I we are still waiting, Still hesitating,

Any dream will do.

Give me my coloured coat, my amazing coloured coat,

Give me my coloured coat, my amazing coloured coat

In this is the word of the Lord

Reflection

The great stories of the Bible have long been the inspiration for dramatic and musical illustration. In the medieval period there were the Miracle Plays for example. Then there was the Oberammergau Festival. And in our youth Weber and Rice ventured into the field, first with Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dream Coat; then Jesus Christ Superstar. Today's Hebrew Scripture is the inspiration for the former and I have blended the ancient story and the Musical version.

A family saga, in which threatened fratricide becomes the salvation story of the ongoing faith saga which began with Abraham and was finally to find its resolution in Jesus is brought to light through the symbol of a colourful coat and its wearer's dreams. The message is surely clear and unequivocal. What God ordains is ultimately to be fulfilled. And so we turn to the Gospel and a closing reflection.

Gospel Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." And 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 and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got

into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Thanks be to God for the Gospel.

Praise be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

What an awesome story this is! I remember seeing an artist's pictorial representation of this (It certainly lends itself to artistic interpretation). But of course interpretation is the key. This is not meant to be about the contravening of the laws of science, a miracle. It is about faith in Christ and the importance of unfailing faith. When we commit in faith there is no going back. Peter, with trademark 'sang froid' **got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"**

It is hard to 'stick to our guns' as faith people when life is really challenging. Especially when we feel very alone and unsupported in our commitment, we can find ourselves not even recognising Christ when he comes towards us. We find ourselves afraid of things beyond our understanding; we find ourselves tied to staying with the familiar or the present reality so that the wonder of God seems a frightening intrusion into our closed off world.

Then there are the times when we feel so excited by the imminent presence of God that we feel as though we can attempt anything by ourselves. We forget to grasp the hand of God and embrace the love and support of others as we seek to venture into new possibilities and discoveries as faithful people and as faith communities.; as if "any dream will do". There is no Golden Cloak of immunity in place of God but only the final recognition of faith:

those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Prayers for Ourselves and Others and Lord's Prayer

The raging of destructive life will never defeat the love of God in Jesus Christ. Mercy and compassion comes flowing through the storms that assail us.

Praise be to you, O God, for you challenge all the limitations of our minds and break through our small, unquestioned certainties.

You ride on the waves in joy and gather our life into your hands.

You stand clear of all our assumptions and dance in creation to your own melodies

Praise be to you, O God, for you are all wonder and delight.

Come to us and all the world, gracious Lord. Come in justice, love and compassion to all who stretch out their longing hands towards you.

Show us other outstretched hands that we may join you in caring for them. Hold them and us firm in your embrace, O God.

Reach out to all people as we brave the depths of the unknown even as the first disciples did so long ago.

Guide us, too, across the troubled waters of life that none may be too fearful to leave the shore.

Ensure us of the gift of faith that your Spirit goes with us forever.

Help us to always recognise you when you draw near to us and to live with hearts open to your surprising closeness in unexpected places and unexpected others.

Lift up your hopes in us this day, for this we pray, O Holy Spirit.

Save us from ever believing that evil is triumphant and has the mastery, that your goodness is not mightily at work in the world and will have the final say through the liberating power of love and grace in Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray,

***Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and forever.
Amen***

Hymn 658

*I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?*

Refrain

*Here I am, Lord, is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night;
I will go, Lord, if you lead me,
I will hold your people in my heart*

*I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain,
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send? Refrain*

*I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame,
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them
Whom shall I send? Refrain*

Benediction

Go, now, taking the hand of the Christ,
walk with courage on the waters of life.
Christ will be beside you as we go,
the Spirit will shine light on your way and
God will watch over you with compassion and love.

Amen

Reverend Graeme Kerr