

# Sunday Worship for 20 June 2021

## The Third Sunday after Trinity

### Led by Church Mission Society

#### SERMON

*Cathy Ross and Jonny Baker*

So Jonny, when we were asked to lead the service for the C of E and you looked up the lectionary reading for the day, you were amazed and delighted, I think, because the reading is one that we've been using at CMS to frame all that we're doing and some of our future ideas and visions. So just tell us why are you so excited about this reading? Yeah, that was amazing, I thought, I couldn't quite believe it. But yeah I absolutely love this passage where Jesus says, "Let's go to the other side of the lake" And it's in Mark's Gospel and before that Jesus has done ministry, first off in the church space. So the synagogue and then in people's homes, like Peter's mother-in-law and then with the crowds. But then there's this other thing, which is, he says to the disciples, "Let's go to the other side of the lake." And you think, why would he say that?

Everything is going so well where they are. And the other side of the lake is Gentile territory. You know, they end up in tombs, which is unclean. So you just think, why does he go to that space? But that's what I love about it, because I think in terms of CMS and pioneers that we work with, we're all about the other side of the lake. You need ministry in the other spaces too. So the church space, homes, public, but actually the edges, the margins, the other side of the lake. So that's why I really love that passage. I mean, this passage, Cathy, I think has been, I've heard it talked about a lot actually through Coronavirus, because of the storm and it feels like we're going through a storm or in a storm or something.

So what are your reflections on that part of the story? Yeah, I mean, it does feel like we've been going through a storm since last year doesn't know it was COVID-19 and just so much suffering and grief and trauma and loss, so much change. So it really feels like a storm has been buffeting us, but, you know, without wanting to minimise all the suffering and the grief, it's also, I think, an opportunity, a catalyst, a provocation. I remember at the beginning of the first lockdown reading something by Indian novelist Arundhati Roy where she said, she talked about the pandemic as a portal and do we have the courage? Can we take the risk to walk through this portal and leave behind some of our baggage and try and enter a new world. And not just go back to the old normal, but it's an opportunity to create something new, especially with the inspiration and power of the spirit.

So I've done quite a bit of thinking about the storm and trying to sort of reframe it as something a bit more positive. And I guess the other thing that intrigued me about this passage is that either Jesus was totally exhausted or he was just completely at peace, because he's sleeping during the storm. And you think, how on earth did he manage that? And the disciples are terrified and there's a storm raging on and yet he's peacefully asleep.

So I think it kind of gives me hope too that when we get through the storm, there is possibilities and newness and an opportunity for, for a new adventure, I guess, for something new to happen. And in a sense, maybe that's what happens when they get to the other side of the lake.

I don't know, what do you think? Yeah, no, I like that. And I mean, we didn't hear the second part of the story of what happens on the other side of the lake. So when they get there, they're in the tombs and there's this guy who has been in chains and breaks the chains and is, you know, tormented by spirits called Legion. And I think Legion must remind people of the Roman Empire. So there's a sense of domination for the situation and his own troubles. But the thing that happens on the other side of the lake is through an encounter with Jesus, he gets healed, transformed. So that's, I love that on the other side of the lake. But one of the things I really, really love about this story when I think about pioneers, is that the guy wants to go back with Jesus to Jerusalem. He wants to get in the boat, but Jesus says, no, you need to stay where you are.

And I think in terms of mission, it's really significant that people need to stay in their own culture, not come and be like us. And then Jesus says to him, go, you know, go to your own people and tell them what God has done for you. And the best person to share Good News is someone who's culturally close, I think to someone else. So I love that about the story. And then... I mean, I was thinking about it in terms of the Church of England and Fresh Expressions. A couple of years ago at Synod the Church of England has, you know, passed a motion saying that every parish in the country should think about having an expression of church that reaches people who are not going to come to church as it is. So whilst this story sounds exotic and wild with Jesus, actually those places are everywhere. And certainly at CMS, this story, I would say has rocked us to the core. In that, it's made us think about what does it mean to make disciples on the other side of the lake.

That's right at the core of what we feel God has called us to do. So we're recalibrating, rethinking around that, that purpose. So, yeah, love this story! Yeah, I mean it's such a great metaphor for mission, isn't it? The other side of the lake and such great themes of healing and transformation and witness, just a great missional story.

So what we'd like to do now is just a brief moment of pause and ponder. Perhaps you'd like to think about this metaphor, "The other side of the lake", and just reflect on what that might mean for you in your context, your parish, your church community, your village, your town, your city. Just take a moment to pause and ponder on what 'the other side of the lake' means for you.