

**Poole Bay Methodist Circuit Worship**  
**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

**Set free to Serve - Led by Reverend Sarah Knebel**

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Hello and welcome to our service, as together we share in worship and sing praise to God. Today, through prayer, reflection and song, we will be focussing on the account of Peter's encounter with Jesus on the beach after the resurrection, and on what it means to be met with Jesus just as we are and be forgiven, loved and set free to serve.

**Call to Worship:**

Come, just as you are to worship,  
Come,  
Come, just as you are before your God,  
Come,  
Come, now is the time to worship,  
now is the time to give your heart to God.  
So come ....

As we still ourselves for this time of worship and come into God's presence, we sing our first hymn.

**Hymn:**            **StF 556 [Just as I am without one plea](#)**

1. Just as I am, without one plea  
but that you died to set me free,  
and at your bidding, 'Come to me!'  
Lamb of God, I come!
2. Just as I am, though tossed about  
with many a conflict, many a doubt,  
fightings within and fears without,  
Lamb of God, I come!
3. Just as I am, you will receive,  
will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve:  
because your promise I believe,  
Lamb of God, I come!
4. Just as I am, of that free love  
the breadth, length, depth and height to prove,  
here for a time and then above,  
Lamb of God, I come!

Charlotte Elliott (1789–1871)

adapted by Jubilate Hymns (alt.) Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 556

Many of us will be familiar with the biblical account of how Thomas, who doubted the disciples' word that Jesus was alive, had to meet with Jesus and touch Jesus in order to believe. Today, we hear of Peter's encounter with the risen Jesus. The very same Peter, who denied Jesus three times on the night before Jesus died.

**Reading: John 21: 1-19 (JB Phillips New Testament)**

Later on, Jesus showed himself again to his disciples on the shore of Lake Tiberias, and he did it in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two other disciples

were together, when Simon Peter said, “I’m going fishing.” “All right,” they replied, “we’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat and during the night caught nothing at all. But just as dawn began to break, Jesus stood there on the beach, although the disciples had no idea that it was Jesus. “Have you caught anything, lads?” Jesus called out to them. “No,” they replied. “Throw the net on the right side of the boat,” said Jesus, “and you’ll have a catch.” So they threw out the net and found that they were now not strong enough to pull it in because it was so full of fish! At this, the disciple that Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!”

Hearing this, Peter slipped on his clothes, for he had been naked, and plunged into the sea. The other disciples followed in the boat, for they were only about a hundred yards from the shore, dragging in the net full of fish. When they had landed, they saw that a charcoal fire was burning, with a fish placed on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring me some of the fish you’ve just caught.” So Simon Peter got into the boat and hauled the net ashore full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three altogether. But in spite of the large number the net was not torn. Then Jesus said to them, “Come and have your breakfast.” None of the disciples dared to ask him who he was; they knew it was the Lord. Jesus went and took the bread and gave it to them and gave them all fish as well. This is already the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples after his resurrection from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others?” “Yes, Lord,” he replied, “you know that I am your friend.” “Then feed my lambs,” returned Jesus. Then he said for the second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord,” returned Peter. “You know that I am your friend.” “Then care for my sheep,” replied Jesus. Then for the third time, Jesus spoke to him and said, “Simon, son of John, are you my friend?” Peter was deeply hurt because Jesus’ third question to him was “Are you my friend?”, and he said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I am your friend!” “Then feed my sheep,” Jesus said to him. “I tell you truly, Peter, that when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you liked, but when you are an old man, you are going to stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and take you where you do not want to go.” (He said this to show the kind of death—by crucifixion—by which Peter was going to honour God.) Then Jesus said to him, “You must follow me.”

#### **Prayer:**

Life-giving God,  
We come just as we are,  
longing to meet with Jesus,  
and Jesus longs to meet with us.

You are the God of glory, the God of love,  
and we thank you for your amazing grace.  
We come to you now and sit in the warmth of your love,  
just as the disciples sat with you by the fire on the shore.

Like Peter, we say sorry, Lord, for all the times we’ve knowingly done wrong.  
We say sorry for all the times we’ve failed to recognise you or your presence with us.  
In quietness, we come now and lay before you all that we are sorry for.

*[silent prayer]*

All powerful, all seeing, all knowing Lord,  
we offer up our prayers seeking forgiveness and restoration.  
We come to you, with open hands and open hearts.  
Here we are.

Loving God, reassure us, mend our brokenness, and use us to bring glory to you,  
assured that past wrongs are burnt on the coals of your love – forgiven and forgotten.  
In the name of Christ we pray. **Amen.**

*(Adapted from Roots: Resources for Churches, Adult and All Age, May/June 2022: Issue 119)*

**A Reflection: Come as you are and be set free to serve:**

Come, just as you are to worship. Come, just as you are before your God. I wonder, what those words mean for you today. What is your 'just as you are' in this moment? Perhaps your tired, worn down, lonely, lost, unhappy, bitter, angry, guilt-ridden, or perhaps you're brimming over with enthusiasm and excitement and ready to get stuck in to something new. I wonder how the disciples were feeling on that day when Jesus appeared, unexpectedly, on the beach and they found themselves in his presence? Did they feel the weight of the world on their shoulders, in the absence of their friend? Did they need someone to reassure them that everything was going to be ok? Someone who would lift their spirits, and set them on a new course? I wonder whether, just like the disciples fishing that day, there might not be something in each one of us that is weighing us down, holding us back from wholeheartedly singing God's glory to the full, each one of us seeking Jesus understanding, seeking faith in our potential, seeking his love and transformation, seeking to be set free from something that holds us back from serving God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind.

In our reading we find Peter grieving for Jesus, bearing the weight of all that has happened on his shoulders, feeling guilty because of his denial, carrying the shame, angry with himself for what he has done and knowing that Jesus knew. Not even the resurrection itself could wave a magic wand and get rid of that memory. He's out of his depth. Confused by all that has happened and being a practical man he seeks normality in what he does best – he goes fishing. He doesn't need to think when he's fishing, it's second nature to him, everything just happens as it should. In a fishing boat he is never out of his depth, but then he catches nothing – it's a wasted trip, until as a new day dawns, as the cock begins to crow in the distance, a stranger on the beach tells them to fish on the other side of the boat. As they net a hefty catch they suddenly remember that this is the stuff that happens when Jesus is around. Peter doesn't think twice, nor does he seem to be reluctant to meet Jesus, in the moment a sheer sense of joy seems to overtake him and he jumps straight into the water and races to meet him. Seeing Jesus, in that moment gives Peter hope. [...] Not even the resurrection itself could wave a magic wand and get rid of the memory that Peter was carrying, nothing could, except perhaps revisiting the memory and bathing it in God's own healing.

What happens next, makes this gospel passage, for me one of my favourites.

Arriving at the beach the disciples see a charcoal fire with fish and bread cooking on it, and though Jesus invites them to add their fish to it, he did not need it to feed them or to meet their needs. The symbolism here is intense. The smell of charcoal fire they gather round, reminds Peter of the night on which he denied Jesus, they've just hauled in a massive catch of fish – grounding them all in the miraculous catch of fish and their first calling to follow Jesus, and they share together in abundance bread and fish, taking them back both to the feeding of the 5000 and the intimacy of the Last Supper. They are reminded of Jesus' power, wisdom, authority and might – there can be no denial now of who they are eating with, or of Jesus' ability to meet their needs. They did not need to bring anything with them as they met with Jesus that day on the beach, they came, just as they were, with all their flaws and failings, tired and weary from the night of fishing, weighed down and Jesus met their needs, Jesus provided for them, supported them, trusted them, loved them. And then, he turns to Peter and offers him a new beginning: 'Simon Peter, do you love me?' Here is the chance Peter needs to make good, but the word Jesus uses for love is 'agape' – it refers to sacrificial love, and perhaps Peter's response shows a new honesty, for Peter responds using the word 'philo' – the love of friendship. 'You know I love you.' Again Jesus asks, using the word 'agape' – it's almost as if he is pushing Peter to admit his faults, his knowledge that the strength of his love let him down, that when push came to shove on that occasion he couldn't sacrifice himself for Jesus, in the way that Jesus sacrificed himself for us. On the third time of asking, Jesus meets Peter where he is at, using the word 'philo' and Peter breaks. 'You know everything Lord, you know I love you.' Nothing is hidden in these words. Peter let's go of all that he is holding, all that he is carrying – you know I let you down, you know I wasn't ready to go with you to death, even when I thought I was, but I do love you, you know that.

The rose tinted glasses are gone. Faults and failures exposed. The honeymoon period is over and in faith Jesus calls Peter to a deeper commitment. In the intimacy of that moment, in the three questions, in the depth of that confession, Peter is transformed as a new day dawns, as the cock crows again, set free to be fully alive, to be fully whole, to serve and to be given a new purpose to commit to, to tend to and to feed Jesus' followers, to nurture Christ's people, to sing with full voice of the glory of God.

As we come today what is holding us back from achieving God's purpose for us, what burden are we carrying that is stopping us from being fully whole, fully alive? Peter's whole life could have been blighted by his denial, by his cowardice during the events of holy week, but he receives forgiveness, a forgiveness that changes his life. Just as for Peter, God waits to free us from those burdens and the feelings and emotions that come with them, to transform us, to forgive us (if needed), to give us the chance to redeem the past, to give us a new direction and new hope. God loves us. What's holding us back? [...] What do we need to bring, as individuals, as a church, to Jesus for healing and for hope? What do we need let go of and place on the charcoals of the fire?

Jesus invites us to come as we are, with all that we are. We are not alone, many have gone before us, including Peter, who have carried heavy burdens, who have made mistakes, who have been set free to serve and to do great things. Like Peter, Jesus trusts us, he loves us, he has faith in us. A new day is dawning, the sun rises on the darkness of the night, and into the darkness Christ comes to set us free to be fully alive, to be fully whole, to serve in the ministry of supporting his flock and to sing of the glory of God.

**Hymn:**        **STF 173 [Into the darkness of this world](#)**

1. Into the darkness of this world,  
into the shadows of the night;  
into this loveless place you came,  
lightened our burdens, eased our pain,  
and made these hearts your home.  
Into the darkness once again —  
come, Lord Jesus, come.  
*Come with your love  
to make us whole,  
come with your light to lead us on,  
driving the darkness far from our souls:  
come, Lord Jesus, come.*
2. Into the longing of our souls,  
into these heavy hearts of stone,  
shine on us now your piercing light,  
order our lives and souls aright,  
by grace and love unknown,  
until in you our hearts unite —  
come, Lord Jesus, come.  
*Come with your love ...*
3. O Holy Child, Emmanuel,  
hope of the ages, God with us,  
visit again this broken place,  
till all the earth declares your praise  
and your great mercies own.  
Now let your love be born in us,  
come, Lord Jesus, come.  
*Come in your glory,  
take your place,  
Jesus, the Name above all names,  
we long to see you face to face,  
come, Lord Jesus, come.*

**Prayer:**

Response: *Lord in your mercy, **receive our prayer.***

Welcoming God,

We thank you that when we feel lost, you welcome us, and remind us our home is found in you.

We thank you that when we feel afraid, you welcome us, and remind us our confidence is found in you.

We thank you that when we feel angry, you welcome us, and remind us our peace is found in you.

We thank you that when we feel sad, you welcome us, and remind us our joy is found in you.

Welcoming God, we thank you that your love is unconditional, open-hearted and all-embracing. In you we find our place.

Jesus said to Peter: feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep.

Lord, we pray for the world.

A world that cries out for justice, freedom and peace.

Where people are hungry, homeless or poor.

Where conflict is ever-present, and refugees flee to find safety.

Lord help us to feed your lambs.

*Lord in your mercy, **receive our prayer.***

Lord, we pray for each other.

For all who are sick, anxious or afraid.

For all who are lonely, depressed or grieving.

In a moment of quiet we bring to God the people and places we are most concerned about:

(...)

Lord, help us to tend your sheep.

*Lord in your mercy, **receive our prayer.***

Lord, we pray for ourselves.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit,

that we may offer a word of welcome, or a gesture of kindness to all we meet.

Lord, help us to feed your sheep.

*Lord in your mercy, **receive our prayer.***

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

Let us say the **The Lord's Prayer**, using which ever form or language speaks to your heart.

**Hymn:**        **StF 351 [In Christ Alone](#)**

1. In Christ alone my hope is found,  
he is my light, my strength, my song;  
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground,  
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My Comforter, my All in All,  
here in the love of Christ I stand.

2. In Christ alone! — who took on flesh,  
fullness of God in helpless babe!  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
scorned by the ones he came to save:  
till on that cross as Jesus died,  
the wrath of God was satisfied  
for every sin on him was laid;  
here in the death of Christ I live.
3. There in the ground his body lay,  
light of the world by darkness slain:  
then bursting forth in glorious Day  
up from the grave he rose again!  
And as he stands in victory,  
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  
for I am his and he is mine —  
bought with the precious blood of Christ.
4. No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
this is the power of Christ in me;  
from life's first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
can ever pluck me from his hand;  
till he returns or calls me home,  
here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Keith Getty (b.1974) and Stuart Townend (b.1963)

Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 351

## Blessing

Send us out, Lord,  
not perfect creations but always work in progress.  
Keep before us the vision of heaven on earth.  
Show us the way of life that is the pattern of Christ.  
Fill our hearts with the hope and promise  
of your ongoing work of transformation in our lives.  
now and every day.

**Amen.**

So may we go in peace, to love and serve the Lord in all we do. Amen.

**Amen.**

Every blessing to you all.

Rev Sarah

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*Links to music and images used within this service:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykc-wMWyjbo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xh89fzSEXbE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rn9-UNer6MQ>

<https://unsplash.com/photos/a-campfire-is-lit-up-with-a-bright-flame-hAiGAs0TsOI>