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Christ Church West Wimbledon
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“Ninth Sunday after Trinity”

9 SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY 2020

I've always liked our Gospel story, the encounter between Jesus and the disciples. It gives us a picture of the Sea of Galilee which, for those who have been fortunate enough to visit the Holy Land, will know is a clear and accurate one. The vast lake can be calm and peaceful or it can be rough and stormy. So, it is easy to picture the chaos of the scene as the disciples' fear for their lives as their boat is caught in a storm. And it falls to impulsive Peter to draw out the teaching of Jesus 'have faith'.

We are all a bit like Peter at times. When everything goes well, we sail across the calm waters without a care in the world. But then something happens to knock us off course. It may be something small and insignificant or something huge and life changing.....whatever it is, we can be easily knocked off balance – sometimes to the extent that we doubt and lose faith.

Perhaps the one thing that will almost always cause upset to everyone is when illness strikes us, often when we least expect it. Mentally and physically we can be hit very hard when ill health befalls us, whether we are younger or older. We naturally expect to be in good health and when that isn't the case, it can be something of a disaster. Humanly and quite naturally we become frightened and full of fear because we are not in control and we feel we are sinking. “Lord save me” is often all we can cry out. And then we often find that God is there, holding us and supporting us, even when we can't see it at the time. As I was reflecting on the story, I thought about the piece called Footprints. You'll probably know it but it's perhaps worth hearing again:

One night I dreamed a dream. As I was walking along the beach with my Lord across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to me and one to my Lord. After the last scene of my life flashed before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that at many times along the path of my life, especially at the very lowest and saddest times, there was only one set of footprints. This really troubled me, so I

asked the Lord about it. "Lord, you said once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints. I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, you would leave me." He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you during your trials and testings. When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

In this passage, as in our Gospel story, the voice of God speaks into the fears of those disciples and brings hope and peace. So it is for us. What are our fears that need to be calmed? What are our doubts that need to be reshaped by faith? Let us hold to the truth that God is always with us, holding us in the palm of his hand – whether we can see it or not.

Remember too, one final thing: as Peter was sinking, it is highly likely that the other disciples would have instinctively reached out to help him. When we feel we are sinking for whatever reason, remember those family, friends and neighbours who are so often there to help us and support us and pray for us. And maybe that is enough for now.