

We are now in the final stages of planning our holiday. On Tuesday we catch the ferry to France and then we travel on towards the south. We have looked at the maps, we've thought about a few campsites. And now we look forward to the journey.

We all undertake journeys, some of them we take alone; others we undertake in the company of others. Of course life is a journey, we are all at different stages along that journey, we all have our own particular experiences along that journey. There are people, companions along the way, who have been important to us, people who have encouraged us, who have loved us, have just been there for us.

I want to think this morning on Jesus our companion along the way. I want to start with this particular icon that is up on the screen – It comes from the Coptic Church in Egypt, entitled 'Jesus and the believer'. I love that image of Jesus with his arms around one of his followers – it summons up ideas of companionship, of encouragement.

In Baptism we are called to be a follower of Jesus. If we are to follow, we need to keep our eyes on Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews encourages us to

run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, *Heb 12:1,2*

Let us take a look back at our icon. We see not only Jesus with his arms around the believer, but in turn his hand is raised in blessing. Our fellowship with Jesus enables us to be a channel of blessing – through us, through our actions, our words, our presence we can bring something of the love and presence of God into someone else's life.

Of course, sometimes we can lose sight of Jesus. It may be for a variety of reasons. It might be some crisis hits our life, illness in ourselves or a loved one, loss of job, break up of a relationship, bereavement – and we feel very alone. Jesus just doesn't seem to be around. Or it might be just careless on our part – we get so absorbed with other things, we just don't bother looking for him. This week, we've seen a number of tributes to Glen Campbell. I was struck by one particular interview when he spoke of one period of his life when things fell apart with alcohol and drugs. He spoke of a time when 'God was no longer in control of my life.'

It is at this point I turn to our Gospel reading for today which is Matthew's account of Jesus walking on the water. But Matthew has one additional feature not related by the other Gospel writers. It is of Peter leaving the safety of the boat and the other disciples and, on Jesus' invitation, stepping out onto the water. In the Gospel account we are given, all is well until Peter takes his eyes off Jesus – he notices the strong wind, he begins to be afraid, he begins to sink.

Peter loses sight of Jesus, but Jesus has not lost sight of Peter and he reaches out to help.

Sometimes in our following of Jesus we are, like Peter, called to leave the security of the boat, the familiar, the safe, our comfort zone. Maybe we find ourselves in a situation of conflict and we discover the difficulty of the path of forgiveness, of reconciliation that Jesus calls us to follow. Or we find ourselves standing alongside a loved one facing serious illness or loss of job and we are only too aware of our inadequacy to help. We find ourselves fearful, we find ourselves sinking. And Jesus is there reaching out to help.

To return to our icon; in Jesus' presence, enfolded in the arms of his love, we can become ones through whom Jesus reaches out to bless, the touch the hurting, the lonely, the despairing.

In the words of one of the lessons of the Ordination Service, 'Christ's love compels us.' May we respond to that in our own journey of faith. May others see something of Christ in us, in the values we adopt, in the example we set. May they see something of the love of Christ in our own life and come to show it in their own. Having been blessed by God, may we in turn be a channel of his blessing to others.

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.