

Sunday 11th July is designated “Sea Sunday”:- the following is offered as a resource for prayer and meditation. Other information can be found at <https://www.missiontoseafarers.org/sea-sunday>

Sea Sunday Special – Psalm 107, verses 23 – 32 and Mark chapter 4, verses 35 – 41

Both these passages are well worth reading and using as a basis for our prayers for those “*that go down to the sea in ships*”!

We start with that well known verse 23 from Psalm 107 and ask ourselves, “why do people go to sea in the first place?” ... There are two main reasons ... the first is for commercial reasons and the second, well because it is there ... people just want to, nothing else, like the 14 year old girl from Devon who wants to be the youngest person to sail round Britain. Our thoughts and prayers on Sea Sunday are particularly for those who earn their living at sea, our fisher-folk and merchant seafarers along with the RNLI (lifeboats).

Some background information for prayer:-

Commerce:- From a commercial viewpoint, it has been estimated that over 90% of the world’s goods are transported by sea, and that includes our televisions, our mobile phones, the food that we eat, the clothes that we wear, in fact most products that we can think of ... however do we ever think of the seafarers who helped to transport these goods? ... We rarely do, because unless we live in a busy port, why should we. Because the viability of a business depends on reducing costs as far as possible, wages paid by some employers are very low and many seafarers are from poor countries. The Philippines and China provide about half the total worldwide.

Safety:- Much commercial shipping sails under a “flag of convenience”. Shipowners who want to hide their ownership may select a flag-of-convenience jurisdiction which enables them to be legally anonymous. Some ships with flags of convenience have been found engaging in crime, offering substandard working conditions, and negatively impacting the environment. Owners may select a jurisdiction to reduce operating costs, avoiding higher taxes in the owners' country and bypass laws that protect the wages and working conditions of mariners.

Fishing:- This remains one of the most dangerous of occupations! Those who are lost at sea are often younger men with dependent families.

Cruise Ships:- The cancellation of cruises has meant that the ships and their crews have been laid up for the duration. Some of them here in Lyme Bay and Torbay. The Mission to Seafarers has been giving assistance where ever and when ever possible. Please pray for all involved.

Psalm 107:- The overall theme of this psalm is one of thanksgiving for the steadfast love of the Lord God for those He has redeemed. Verses 1 - 3; 8 - 9; 15 - 16; 21 - 22; 31 - 32 and 43. For Sea Sunday there is a vivid description of a storm at sea in verses 25 - 28. (See also the story of Paul’s shipwreck in Acts chapter 27, verses 13 - 44).

Mark chapter 4, verses 35 - 41:- The picture of the Lord Jesus Christ asleep on a cushion while the storm rages round him is again a vivid description of what can and does happen! He felt, and was, safe because of his complete and utter trust in God the Father. When he speaks it is with the authority of the One by whom and through whom all things came into existence. (John chapter 1, verse 3 and Colossians chapter 1, verses 15 - 16).

In the midst of turmoil in life, for whatever reason, it would be good to hear that voice of authority!

Peace! Be still! So often for seafarers today it is not the threat of physical storms (although that is always there) rather it is the isolation, separation from family and friends for months, if not years, and primitive living conditions!

As an encouragement for your prayers and an assurance that the Lord God hears them read Hebrews chapter 6, verses 13 - 20.

*Will your anchor hold in the storms of life
when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
will your anchor drift, or firm remain?*

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul,
steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour’s love!*

Priscilla Jane Owen (1829-1907)