



Advice from Jesus of Nazareth: Believe me! You will fail, sometimes. Here is what to do when you fail.

Opening Prayer

Most glorious yet most humble God, although the universe cannot contain you, you choose to befriend fragile human beings. By your Spirit you take up residence in our lives, turning our mortal bodies into temples of your Spirit. Give us the grace, Lord God, to glorify you in these meagre temples, reflecting your light and sharing your generous love. Through Christ, Jesus, our divine Brother. Amen.

Hymn StF 431 (*Estelle White*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvlhIFELQO8>

Oh, the love of my Lord is the essence
Of all that I love here on earth.
All the beauty I see, he has given to me,
And his giving is gentle as silence.

At the turn of each tide, he is there at my side,
And his touch is as gentle as silence.

Every day, every hour, every moment,
Have been blessed by the strength of his love.

There've been times when I've turned from his presence,
And I've walked other paths, other ways,
But I've called on his name, in the dark of my shame,
And his mercy was gentle as silence.

Reading – Mark 6.1-13

Reflection

Last week I was playing in a golf competition at Felixstowe. It was a close match, and I should have won it. But I didn't. I missed a three-foot put on two occasions during the match. That's what caused me to be a failure in the first round of a knockout competition in which I was confident of at least making it to the Final this year.

Failure is a word that none of us likes. But if you live long and attempt much, you will inevitably run up against failure. In our passage for today we should not miss the fact that Jesus experienced failure and, furthermore, Jesus expected his disciples to fail too.

One day tells the disciples that it is time for them to begin their ministry, going two by two into the countryside preaching and casting out unclean spirits. Jesus advises them to travel light, to take nothing but a staff. They are to carry no bread, no bag, and no money in their belts. They are to wear sandals, and not even take an extra tunic.

Jesus also makes it clear that they will not be insulated from failure just because they are going in his name, so he provides his disciples with a sacrament of failure - shaking the dust off their feet. Failure is not to be the end of the matter for the followers of Jesus.

Failure can lead to better things. John Wesley failed miserably as a missionary when, early in his career, he went to America. That experience weighed heavily upon him and formed the backdrop to his remarkable 're-think' about the over-arching importance of grace on that day at Aldersgate Street when '... his heart was strangely warmed...'. John Wesley went on to lead the greatest Revival England had ever – and has ever – seen.

Failure can be creative. The famous masterpiece by Handel "The Messiah" was written after Handel had suffered a stroke and while he was living in poverty amid bleak surroundings. Handel had suffered through a particularly deep night of gloom and despair over his failure as a musician. It was when he was in this deep and

dark valley that Handel found the ability to unleash his creative genius in a musical score that continues to thrill and inspire us generations later.

Failure can be failure for Christ. One of the remarkable things about the old entrance of Wesley College, Bristol was the plaques on the wall. The walls were covered with plaques dedicated to those students who, in the past, went straight from college to serve overseas. The remarkable thing about those plaques is the date on many of them. Many of the students had survived only a short time. They died young, in the prime of their life from malaria and other tropical diseases, as well as murder from the suspicious locals. Yet still the students continued to go overseas. In terms of success, they failed. But their blood fertilised the ground so that others who kept coming after them could reap a glorious harvest and set up Christ's Church in the hearts of so many in other parts of the world.

Failure is not the end of the world. We should not be afraid to fail. We should expect failure at times. But when it comes, we should bring to mind the sacrament of failure given us by Jesus of Nazareth: shake off the dust and go on.

Prayer

Compassionate God, prayerfully we tune our hearts and minds the needs of other people, and we pray that our small but sincere concern may unite with your immense love and bring blessing to those for whom we pray. Help us to join you in dealing gently with the timid and the anxious, those who jump at their own shadow, and those whose phobias make it a major project to go down the street or to visit a neighbour. Help us to join you in dealing patiently with the foolish who have placed themselves in sordid situations from which it is hard to break free, and with the slow learners who repeat old mistakes. Help us to join you in dealing confrontingly with the excuse makers who won't face up to their mistakes, and with the evasive ones who won't accept their responsibilities. Help us to join you in dealing forcefully with the arrogant who trample over the well-being of others, and with any who would use their wealth and power to buy and bully their way past the rights of others. Help us to join you in dealing mercifully with the victims of the callous, the neglectful, and the cruel, and especially with the many who today feel at the end of their tether, physically, or emotionally or spiritually. Help us to join you in dealing comfortingly with the sick, the dying and the bereaved, and especially with those who have no knowledge of you or are afraid of you rather than trusting your love. Help us to join you in dealing bluntly or gently with your churches according to their respective needs, and especially share your grace to those who are suffering harassment, ridicule, or persecution. In the stillness we continue with our personal concerns.... God of unspeakable love, if you can use us to answer any of the prayers of someone in need, please take us, guide us, and employ us, to the glory of your name. Through Christ Jesus our Redeemer. Amen.

Hymn StF 478 (*Fred Kaan*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzrMMT6lsIY>

Thank you, O God, for the time that is now,
for all the newness your minutes allow,
make us alert with your presence of mind
to fears and longings that move humankind.

Thank you for hopes of the day that will come,
for all the change that will happen in time;
God, for the future our spirits prepare,
hallow our doubts and redeem us from fear.

Thank you, O God, for the time that is past,
for all the values and thoughts that will last.
May we all stagnant tradition ignore,
leaving behind things that matter no more.

Make us afraid of the thoughts that delay,
faithful in all the affairs of today;
keep us, Creator, from playing it safe,
thank you that now is the time of our life!

Blessing

Let us go in peace. For we go in the name of Christ, to the glory of the Father, in the power of the Spirit of God. Amen.

The above includes some prayers from Bruce Prewer.