‘Don’t be afraid. Just believe’
Luke 8: 49-56
28th June 2026

Bowthorpe Church

PRE-SERVICE SONG

Here I am waiting

Come live in me
All my life take over,
Come breathe in me
And I will rise on eagles’ wings.

Here I am waiting
Abide in me I pray
Here I am longing for You.
Hide me in Your love,
Bring me to my knees,
May I know Jesus more and more.

Come live in me
All my life take over,
Come breathe in me
And I will rise on eagles’ wings.

WELCOME

Good morning, everyone, and welcome in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whether you're here every week, visiting for the first time, or returning after some time away, we're really glad you've joined us. As we worship together, let's come honestly—with our questions, our joys, our worries and our hopes—trusting that God meets us exactly where we are.

Today we hear one of the most moving stories in the Gospels. It's about fear, grief, hope, and the surprising power of Jesus to bring life where everyone else sees only loss. Our call to worship emphasises that power.

CALL TO WORSHIP

“God is our refuge and strength, a tested help in times of trouble. And so we need not fear even if the world blows up and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam; let the mountains tremble! The Commander of the armies of heaven is here among us. He, the God of Jacob, has come to rescue us.”
Psalm 46:1- 3, 7 (Living Bible)

SONGS:

Men of faith

Men of faith, rise up and sing
Of the great and glorious King;
You are strong when you feel weak,
In your brokenness complete.

Shout to the north and the south,
Sing to the east and the west:

Jesus is Saviour to all,
Lord of heaven and earth.

Rise up women of the truth,
Stand and sing to broken hearts,
Who can know the healing power
Of our glorious King of love.

Shout to the north and the south,
Sing to the east and the west:
Jesus is Saviour to all,
Lord of heaven and earth.

We've been through fire,
We've been through rain;
We've been refined
By the power of His name.
We've fallen deeper in love with You,
You've burned the truth on our lips.

Shout to the north and the south,
Sing to the east and the west:
Jesus is Saviour to all,
Lord of heaven and earth.

Rise up church with broken wings;
Fill this place with songs again,
Of our God who reigns on high:
By His grace again we'll fly.

Shout to the north and the south,
Sing to the east and the west:
Jesus is Saviour to all,
Lord of heaven and earth.

Jesus, what a beautiful name

Jesus, what a beautiful name.
Son of God, Son of Man,
Lamb that was slain.
Joy and peace, strength and hope,
Grace that blows all fear away.
Jesus, what a beautiful name.

Jesus, what a beautiful name.
Truth revealed, my future sealed,
Healed my pain.
Love and freedom, life and warmth,
Grace that blows all fear away.
Jesus, what a beautiful name.

Jesus, what a beautiful name.
Rescued my soul, my stronghold,
Lifts me from shame.
Forgiveness, security, power and love,
Grace that blows all fear away.
Jesus, what a beautiful name.

HOLY ONE

To You the glory, to You the power,
To You the honour forever more.
Your love brings healing,
Your love's eternal,
Your love's the answer,
The hope of the world,
The hope of the world.

Holy One, my life is in Your hand;
My song an offering of my heart,
Redeemed, washed clean,
By faith I stand secure.
In You, Jesus, I live.

To You the glory, to You the power,
To You the honour forever more.
Your love brings healing,
Your love's eternal,
Your love's the answer,
The hope of the world,
The hope of the world.

OPENING PRAYER

Loving Heavenly Father, thank you for bringing us together today. Some of us arrive full of energy and hope. Others come carrying worries that no one else can see. Some are grieving.
Some are searching. Some aren't quite sure what they believe, yet you welcome every one of us.
Open our hearts to your presence. Quiet the noise within us. Help us hear your voice through scripture, prayer, music and one another. When fear feels louder than hope,
help us to trust you. When life feels overwhelming, help us to remember that you are with us. As we

worship today, renew our faith, strengthen our love, and send us out ready to share your peace with the world.
In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen**

CONFESSION

Gracious God, You know us better than we know ourselves. You know the times when we have trusted you, and the times when fear has taken over. We confess that we have not always loved you with our whole heart. We have not always loved our neighbours as ourselves. We have been impatient, slow to forgive, and reluctant to show compassion. We have turned away from those in need, kept silent when we should have spoken, and spoken when silence would have been kinder. Forgive us for the ways we have hurt others, whether by what we have done or by what we have failed to do. Renew us by your Holy Spirit. Free us from guilt and shame. Give us the courage to begin again, walking in the way of Jesus, sharing his love and living in his peace. **Amen**.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Hear the good news. God's love is greater than our failures. In Jesus Christ we are offered forgiveness, new life and peace. When we turn to God with honest hearts, we are not rejected but welcomed, not condemned but restored. So receive God's forgiveness, trust in God's grace, and live as people who are loved beyond measure.
Amen. Thanks be to God.

NOTICES AND TIME OF SHARING

- Tuesday 10.00am to 12 noon -- Hope Café
- Wednesday 10.00am -- Holy Communion
- Thursday 9.30am -- Tots
- Friday 10.30am to 12 noon -- Food Bank

COMING UP

- Sunday 5th July, Fellowship lunch after church
- Tuesday 7 July 7.30pm, Church Council meeting
- Anything to share?

OFFERTORY SONG

O Lord your word is eternal

O Lord Your Word is eternal
Standing firm in the heavens above
Your faithfulness shall continue
Your promise of love.

O Lord Your Word will sustain me
Day by day, O giver of life
I will delight in Your promise
Your promise of love.

Only Your Word brings healing to the hurting
Only Your Word brings light into the night
Only Your Word will satisfy my hunger
Only Your Word O Lord
It's Your promise of love.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

We say together the words on the screen:

Gracious God, take what we offer today—our time, our talents, our treasure— and use them to make a difference in our world. Accept these gifts as a sign of our hearts. May they bring hope and help to those in need. Amen

PRAYER FOR SUNDAY CLUB

Loving God, thank you for every young person in our church family. As they go to Sunday Club, be with them. Help them to have fun, to make friends, to ask questions, and to discover more about your love for them. Bless those who lead and help today. Give them wisdom, patience and joy as they share the good news of Jesus. We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

READING: Luke 8: 49 - 56 (Carol Hales)

49 While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader.
'Your daughter is dead,' he said. 'Don't bother the teacher anymore.' 50 Hearing this, Jesus said to
Jairus, 'Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.'51 When he arrived at the house of Jairus,
he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and
mother. 52 Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. 'Stop wailing,' Jesus
said. 'She is not dead but asleep.'
53 They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. 54 But he took her by the hand and said, 'My
child, get up!' 55 Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her
something to eat. 56 Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had
happened.
This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

REFLECTION: "Don't be afraid. Just believe."

There are some sentences that change everything. A doctor says, "I'm sorry, it's cancer." An employer says, "We're making redundancies." A police officer knocks on the door. A phone rings late at night. Sometimes just a few words divide life into "before" and "after." That's exactly where today's Gospel begins.

Jairus has already taken an enormous risk. He's a synagogue leader—a respected man in the community—and yet he's thrown pride aside to kneel before Jesus because his twelve-year-old daughter is dying. He's desperate. Jesus agrees to come. Perhaps Jairus begins to hope. Perhaps he thinks, "Maybe we'll get there in time."

But then everything slows down. Jesus stops to speak with a woman who has been suffering from bleeding for twelve years. She had reached out in faith, touched his clothes, and instantly was healed. We reflected on that miracle two weeks ago, but I would like to digress for a moment to

examine something that links these two females – the woman with a near-continuous flow of blood and the small girl lying at death's door. The link is the figure twelve.
For twelve years, one woman had endured illness. For twelve years, one little girl had been cherished by her parents. One had suffered for as long as the other had lived. Jesus stops for one without forgetting the other, showing that no one is overlooked in the kingdom of God.
So... let's return to Jairus.
Imagine how he must have felt. Jesus is blessing a woman in the crowd at a time when every second matters, every conversation feels too long, every delay feels unbearable. And then comes the message no parent ever wants to hear. "Your daughter is dead." No hope. No point in going on. Don't bother the teacher any more. Those words don't simply announce death. They try to close the story. It's over. Nothing more can be done. How often do we hear voices like that?

- "This relationship can't be repaired."
- "You'll never recover."
- "Nothing ever changes."
- "People like us don't get second chances."
- "That's just the way the world is."

Sometimes those voices come from outside us. Sometimes they're our own. Then Jesus speaks. "Don't be afraid; just believe." At first glance, those words can sound impossible. If someone is grieving, telling them simply to "have faith" can feel insensitive. But that's not what Jesus is doing. He isn't telling Jairus to pretend everything is fine. He isn't asking him to switch off his grief. He isn't demanding certainty. He's inviting trust.
There is a difference, you know. Faith isn't pretending that everything will work out exactly as we'd like. Faith is believing that God is still present even when we cannot see a way forward. The Bible is full of frightened people. Abraham, Moses, King David, Mary, the disciples. Again and again God says, "Do not be afraid." Not because frightening things aren't real, but because fear doesn't have the final word.
That matters today. Many people carry hidden fears. Fears about money, about health, about children or grandchildren, about loneliness, about getting older, about the future, about the state of the world, about climate change, war, division, economic uncertainty. Sometimes it feels as though fear has become the background music of modern life.
Jesus doesn't ignore any of that. He simply refuses to let fear become the loudest voice. When they arrive at Jairus's house, people are already mourning. They're weeping and wailing loudly. Then Jesus says, "She isn't dead but asleep." They laugh at him -- not gentle laughter, mocking laughter. Because from their perspective, they recognise reality. Death is final. Hope is foolish. Isn't it interesting how quickly crowds can change? A few moments ago people wanted Jesus. Now they're laughing at him. But faith has never been about following the loudest crowd. The crowd often believes only what it can readily explain. Jesus keeps going anyway. Sometimes following Christ means walking beyond what everyone else thinks is possible.
Then Jesus does something wonderfully personal. He doesn't perform for the crowd. He sends most of the people outside. He creates space. He takes only the parents and three close disciples. Then he takes the little girl's hand.
Imagine that moment. In that culture, touching a dead body would make someone ceremonially unclean. Most people would step back. Jesus steps closer. That tells us something beautiful about God. God moves towards suffering, not away from it. Towards grief; towards illness; towards loneliness; towards brokenness.
Again and again in the Gospels we see Jesus crossing boundaries that everyone else avoids. He touches those others won't touch. He welcomes those others reject. He speaks to those others ignore. He enters places everyone else has given up on.

Perhaps that's exactly what someone here today needs to hear. Maybe you've convinced yourself that God has given up on you. Maybe you've made mistakes. Maybe you feel ashamed. Maybe life hasn't turned out how you imagined. The Gospel says otherwise. Jesus walked into a place where hope seemed impossible. He still does.

What comes next is one of the simplest miracles in scripture. According to Mark 5:41, Jesus says, "Talitha, koum" . It's one of the few times in the Gospels that Jesus speaks in Aramaic. Luke translates it as "My child, get up."

No dramatic speech. No elaborate ceremony. Just a quiet command. And instantly life returns. She stands up. Jesus immediately tells her parents to give her something to eat.

I love that detail. It's so typical of Luke, the careful historian. After such an astonishing miracle, Jesus notices she's probably hungry. The extraordinary and the ordinary belong together. God cares about both. Sometimes we imagine spirituality as escaping everyday life. The Gospels don't allow that. Jesus feeds people. He notices exhaustion. He attends weddings. He shares meals. He cooks breakfast. He knows that holy moments often lead straight back into ordinary routines.

There's wisdom there. Sometimes we pray for spectacular miracles while overlooking quieter ones happening every day. Friendships restored, forgiveness offered, kindness shown. Someone finding courage to ask for help, someone beginning recovery from addiction, someone choosing hope over despair, someone deciding to forgive after years of bitterness. These may not make newspaper headlines, but they are signs of resurrection life.

Of course, we also need to acknowledge something difficult. Not every story ends like Jairus's daughter. Many faithful people pray for healing that never comes. Many continue to grieve loved ones despite heartfelt prayers. If we read this passage carelessly, it can leave us wondering whether we simply didn't believe enough. But that isn't what Luke is teaching.

Jesus never says miracles happen because people achieve perfect faith. If they did, none of us would qualify. Real faith usually includes questions; even doubts; even tears and fears; even confusion. Faith isn't the absence of uncertainty. It's choosing to keep walking with God despite uncertainty.

The greatest miracle in this story isn't simply that one girl lives again. Like all of us, she will, eventually, die another day. The deeper miracle is that in Jesus, death itself no longer has ultimate power. And this story points beyond itself. It points towards Easter, towards the empty tomb, towards the promise that:

- Life is stronger than death
- Love is stronger than hate
- Hope is stronger than despair
- Light is stronger than darkness.

That's the heart of Christian faith. Not that we avoid suffering, but that suffering is never the end of the story. That promise has sustained Christians through wars, pandemics, persecution and personal tragedy for two thousand years. It still does. Our churches today face challenges too. Many congregations are smaller than they once were. Buildings are expensive to maintain. Society has changed enormously.

Sometimes it's tempting to believe the voices saying, "Don't bother anymore." "The church has had its day. "Nothing can change." But the Gospel has always flourished in unlikely places. Again, and again God brings new life where people expect decline. The Church's future has never depended on our strength alone. It depends on the risen Christ.

The same Jesus who walked into Jairus's house still walks among his people today and speaks into their lives. He still calls fearful people into hope. He still gathers communities around love rather than fear. He still surprises us. As an ecumenical congregation, perhaps this story speaks to us in another way. Jesus doesn't ask whether people belong to the right denomination before offering life. His concern is people. Real people; hurting people; hungry people; searching people.

The things that unite Christians are far greater than the things that divide us. When we serve together, pray together, care for neighbours together, and worship together, we become living signs of God's kingdom. In a world so often divided, unity itself becomes a witness.
So where do we hear Jesus speaking today? Perhaps to someone overwhelmed by anxiety: "Don't be afraid." Perhaps to someone grieving: "I am with you." Perhaps to someone who thinks they've failed: "Take my hand." Perhaps to a tired church: "Get up." Perhaps to all of us: "There is still life to be lived."
The final verse tells us that the parents were astonished. Who wouldn't be? Sometimes God still astonishes us. Not always in dramatic ways; often quietly, through unexpected kindness, unexpected peace, unexpected courage, unexpected joy, unexpected forgiveness, unexpected hope.
And perhaps that's the invitation we leave with today.

- To keep our eyes open
- To expect that Christ is still at work
- To trust that no situation is beyond his compassion
- To believe that fear never gets the final word
- To remember that whenever Jesus takes someone by the hand, new life begins.

May we become people who carry that hope into our homes, our workplaces, our schools, our neighbourhoods and our world. Because the story of Jairus's daughter is ultimately not just about one family long ago. It's about the God who still enters houses filled with grief. Still speaks peace into fearful hearts. Still calls people into life. And still says to each one of us, "Don't be afraid. Just believe."
Let us pray:
Lord Jesus, when fear begins to take over, remind us that you are with us. When hope seems distant, help us to trust that you are still at work, even when we cannot yet see the way ahead. Take us by the hand, as you took the hand of Jairus's daughter. Lift us when we fall, strengthen us when we are weary, and fill us with the courage to follow you each day. May your life-giving love shape our words, our choices and our relationships, so that others may catch a glimpse of your hope through us.
We ask it in your name. **Amen**.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION (Christine McGrath)

SONG BEFORE COMMUNION

LORD JESUS CHRIST

Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us,
You are one with us, Mary's son;
Cleansing our souls from all their sin,
Pouring your love and goodness in:
Jesus, our love for you we sing –
Living Lord!

Lord Jesus Christ, now and everyday
Teach us how to pray, Son of God;
You have commanded us to do
This in remembrance, Lord, of you:

Into our lives your power breaks through – living Lord!

Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us,
Born as one of us, Mary's son;
Led out to die on Calvary,
Risen from death to set us free:
Living Lord Jesus, help us see
You are Lord!

Lord Jesus Christ, I would come to you,
Live my life for you, Son of God;
All your commands I know are true,
Your many gifts will make me new:
Into my life your power breaks through – living Lord!

THE PEACE

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace *(Colossians 3:15)*

The peace of the Lord be always with you

and also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord is here.
His Spirit is with us.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give thanks and praise.
It is right to praise you, Father, Lord of all creation; in your love you made us for yourself. When we turned away you did not reject us but came to meet us in your Son. You embraced us as your children and welcomed us to sit and eat with you. In Christ you shared our life that we might live in him and he in us. He opened his arms of love upon the cross and made for all the perfect sacrifice for sin.
On the night he was betrayed, at supper with his friends he took bread, and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to them, saying: Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.
Father, we do this in remembrance of him: his body is the bread of life.
At the end of supper, taking the cup of wine, he gave you thanks, and said: Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins; do this in remembrance of me.
Father, we do this in remembrance of him: his blood is shed for all.
As we proclaim his death and celebrate his rising in glory, send your Holy Spirit that this bread and this wine may be to us the body and blood of your dear Son. As we eat and drink these holy gifts make us one in Christ, our risen Lord.

With your whole Church throughout the world, we offer you this sacrifice of praise and lift our voice to join the eternal song of heaven:
Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come
Your will be done on earth as in heaven
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

THE BREAKING OF BREAD

Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

THE GIVING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

The Body of Christ keep you in eternal life
The Blood of Christ keep you in eternal life

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Through him we offer you our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.

CLOSING SONG

GUIDE ME O THOU GREAT REDEEMER

Guide me, O Thou great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, Bread of Heaven
Feed me now and evermore,
Feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:

Strong Deliverer, Strong Deliverer
Be Thou still my strength and shield,
Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside:
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to Thee,
I will ever give to Thee.

CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Faithful God, thank you for meeting us today. As we leave this place, help us to carry your hope into the week ahead. When we meet fear, help us to choose trust. When we meet sadness, help us to bring compassion. When we meet division, help us to be peacemakers. Take us by the hand, lead us in your love, and help us to recognise the new life you are bringing, often in quiet and unexpected ways. **Amen**.

And now may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us, and those we love, and those we find difficult to love, today and always. **Amen**.

Go in peace to love and serve and share the Lord.

In the name of Christ, Amen.