

Mark 4.35-41. Trinity 3, 20th June 2021

9am (in church) & 10:30 a.m. Zoom Virtual from Vicarage

All-Age Worship @ St. A's Totteridge

In the reading we heard how Jesus was exhausted. People have been coming day and night. He had hardly had time even to eat. He had been pouring himself out until there was little left and he needed space and refreshment. He got into the boat and was asleep almost straight away. There he is in the stern sleeping.

Peter scans the sky and doesn't like the look of it. The wind is rising, the sea is becoming restless. From the heights of Mount Hermon and the hills and valleys around, funnelled through the ravines, winds descend without warning and with great force. Voyagers on the Sea of Galilee often met such storms. The disciples understood that only God could still the storm and bring calm; humans would do best to stay out of it if they could.

Suddenly the storm hits the little boat - there is little the fishermen can do. They cannot escape and the boat is filling with water. Jesus continues to sleep (this reminds me of my son managing to sleep thru' an earthquake in Los Angeles... but that's another story). The boat is in the midst of chaos: the canvas is out of control, the helm won't respond, timber and tackle groan. Like many before them, it seems they could be lost at sea. They are fighting for survival and they call upon Jesus, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?'

Jesus wakes up and rebukes the wind and says to the waves, 'Peace! Be still.' Then the wind ceases and a dead calm ensues... the disciples, being sailors, would probably have known by heart the words of psalm 107:28-29:

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.

... and Jesus turns to his followers and says 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' ...and the disciples turn to each other and ask, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?' And, of course, to this question there is only one answer: Jesus is God.

I suspect that most of us would have been a little challenged in this situation, perhaps a little fearful for our lives, but whether we believe in the gospel story or not, and for what it's worth, I do, there is a very powerful message here about how faith in Christ can help to get us through the most difficult of circumstances, and actually even end up transforming the way we look at things.

As I think about the waters of this storm in the sea of Galilee, I think about how the gift of water can also be used to bestow spiritual gifts like baptism. We use the element of water, the thing the disciples became so scared of, and symbolically turn this into the water of a 'new creation'. A child, or an adult for that matter, in a sacramental act of love and devotion, can be given the chance to walk in the 'newness of life' that our Christian faith bestows.

Christians try to love and care for everyone – recognising everyone as a ‘Child of God’. Because Jesus died for all the ‘Children of God’ and was raised from the dead, this baptismal family life in the Spirit doesn’t end in death but leads onwards to eternal life.

But the Christian faith isn’t just about baptism... or weddings... (lovely as these are)... or funerals for that matter, it’s also about living our lives to the full. So, when we’re happy we can give God thanks for all He’s given us, but when we’re in doubt or troubled by fears, we must remember how we can always turn to divinity.

It’s important for us as church members to think about what storms our church is facing at this time? One of them is trying to keep the church finances in order when so many are preferring to stay at home. So I beg of you, please don’t forget to go to the St Andrews website and make a donation, so we can keep going, both in church and online. There are ways to do this on a regular basis or, if you’re a tad forgetful, all in one go.

But there is another aspect to this story of Jesus calming the storm. It’s about whether or not we as followers of Christ actually *prefer* to keep him sleeping in the back of the boat. Do we not believe he could help, or do we trust too much in our own strengths and resources to get us out of trouble?

Think of the story of Aladdin and his lamp. The lamp had wonderful powers, but most people couldn’t tell. The dirty old lamp standing unused was no better than any other. It could give out a little light if you lit it, but its great power remained untapped. It was only a happy accident for Aladdin that he rubbed the lamp and found the super-power inside.

It’s not much use having a wonderful power available if you don’t ever try to use it. In the same way, it’s no use saying you believe in a Saviour if you don’t call upon him. The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind.

Too often we allow Jesus to sleep on in our lives. We struggle on alone and are often overwhelmed because we don’t call upon him in the storm. While we allow fear to mount and our energies be overpowered, we fail to call upon the greatest power, which is our Lord.

In the storms of fear and sorrow, when we are feeling overwhelmed, we need to know the presence of the power of our God. We need to know again that God can bring order out of chaos and that Christ can give us his peace. Don’t let Jesus sleep in your life; call upon him each day. Take heed of these words from Julian of Norwich:

‘He said not: ‘thou shalt not be tempest-tossed; thou shalt not be work-weary; thou shalt not be distressed.’ But he did say: ‘thou shalt not be overcome.’

Spoken in the name of the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Job 38.1-11 The Lord Answers Job

38 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

2 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

3 Gird up your loins like a man,
I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

4 'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

5 Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

6 On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone

7 when the morning stars sang together
and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

8 'Or who shut in the sea with doors
when it burst out from the womb?—

9 when I made the clouds its garment,
and thick darkness its swaddling band,

10 and prescribed bounds for it,
and set bars and doors,

11 and said, "Thus far shall you come, and no farther,
and here shall your proud waves be stopped"?

2 Corinthians 6.1-13

6 As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain.

2 For he says,

'At an acceptable time I have listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.'

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! 3 We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, 4 but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 5 beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; 6 by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, 7 truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; 8 in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; 9 as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

11 We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. 12 There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. 13 In return—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also.

Mark 4.35-41 Jesus Stills a Storm

35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.' 36 And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. 37 A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so

that the boat was already being swamped. 38But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' 39He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. 40He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' 41And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'