

Worship 4 Everyone
23rd February 2025
Stilling the Storm - Part 1 Being Safe

In the game we've just played, the blindfolded person had to get from the back of church to the safety of the boat at the front, by listening to the instructions so that they would avoid the obstacles in the way.

Where do you feel safe?

Illustrations on the screen of....

- At home
- Under bed?
- Behind sofa?
- At Church?
- At a club or activity?

Sometimes it's not about where you are, but who you're with

Illustrations on the screen of....

- Family
- Friends

Story

....of the stilling of the storm with slides with addition of - "Why were you afraid?" Jesus asked them. "You know that you can trust me." Finishing with...

"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.
In God, whose word I praise—"

Those words come from Psalm 56:3-4, and were written by King David – who fought Goliath and won – with God's help.

Jesus doesn't promise us that everything will always be easy.
Sometimes bad things, and sad things, will happen

But he does promise that he will always be with us, loving us and helping us through those bad or sad things - and that we can always trust him.

W4E Jesus Calms a Storm Part 2

One day [Jesus] got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side of the lake.' So they put out, and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A gale swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. They went to him and woke him up, shouting, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, 'Where is your faith?' They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?'

Luke 8:22-25

I've never been to the Holy Land, but those who have tell me that the Sea of Galilee is notorious for sudden and terrifying squalls – wind, waves, the lot. And those who know far more than I do about those days tell me that even the disciples who were fishermen probably could not swim. So, if the boat foundered they were in real danger.

And as we've just heard, their panicked response is to wake Jesus.

And he rebukes / tells off / commands – the wind and waves to stop. And the storm is stilled. Maybe we can imagine their relief!

But I wonder – was this what the disciples were expecting?

With the benefit of hindsight we tend to read the story as the disciples asking Jesus to "do something!!!".

Yet what they had shouted was "Master we are perishing!" I wonder if they were including him in the "**we** are perishing" – if they were warning him that he needed to be ready to abandon ship? To prepare himself for a watery grave?

For when they are safe he challenges the disciples too.

"You of little faith" has always seemed a bit harsh of Jesus!

I wonder if, in their panic had they lost sight of who he is. Or were they maybe still ‘getting it?’

Maybe the disciples are on another voyage – of discovery. One of the things I love about them is that they ask the important questions on our behalf.

‘Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?’ they ask

In Mark’s account he adds that “They were filled with great awe”

Who is this Jesus that he can do this?

At some point we all have to ask for ourselves

Who is this Jesus?

In our other reading we heard the ‘alternative’ account of the story of Creation. Not quite as poetic as Gen 1 with its repeating refrains – and God said, and there was evening and there was morning etc

But still telling the same story.

In Genesis 1 God *says*

In Genesis 2 God **does**

God formed

God breathed

God planted

God made to grow....

The Creation is God’s and responds to God’s direction. God’s command.

God, and God alone, has the authority and power to command creation to *do*....

No wonder the disciples were full of awe

They had seen Jesus’ healings and teaching – *under* God’s authority

Here *with* God’s authority

Not just a rabbi

Is this another sign that Jesus really is – in some mysterious way – God in human form?

God in person

Who is this Jesus that he can do this?

Many of us grew up with these stories – in Sunday School, in school assemblies, in Scripture lessons

Maybe they've become part of who we are – without us actually asking the question for ourselves.

Maybe some of us are with the disciples in this. Intrigued, and on a journey of discovery about who Jesus is.

Maybe we owe it to ourselves – and to him – to do what the disciples did, think about what we have seen and experienced of God, and make our own decision.

Who is this Jesus that he can do this?

And if / *when* - we – with the disciples – decide that Jesus *is* God, *is* Lord over all that has been made, then our perspective begins to change from what can *God* do for *me*, to what can *I* do for *God*.

For, as we heard earlier, God keeps us safe. But I'm not sure we can say he is a 'safe' God.....

Why is this important/relevant?

Maybe you know the story of the Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe?

Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy have been transported to the Land of Narnia, which is under the spell of the White Witch, so it's always winter, yet never Christmas. A couple of (talking) beavers take them in, and Mr Beaver explains

that he is to take them to the mysterious Aslan, the great king who has finally come to overthrow the White Witch. Lucy, the youngest, asks Mr Beaver if Aslan is a man.

“Aslan a man?” said the beaver sternly. “Certainly not. Aslan is a lion – *the* lion. The great Lion.”

“Oooh, said Susan, “I thought he was a man. Is he - quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a Lion.

“That you will dearie, and no mistake,” said Mrs Beaver. “If there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or else just silly.”

“Then he isn’t safe?” said Lucy.

“Safe?” said Mr Beaver. “Who said anything about safe? Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

Yes, God keeps us safe, but he is not a “safe God”, a “tame God”

More - a challenging God

Yet the God in whom we can have faith. Trust. Believe.

For he **is** good

Some of life’s challenges are local and daily. Illness. Bereavement. Loneliness. God can and does help us in these times – and many here will have experienced that.

But these are not the only challenges that we may be called to face. At a time when the world is changing so rapidly, and suddenly feels so uncertain and it feels like darkness is gathering – we are called to be God’s light.

There will be – already are – times when God asks us to stand up for what we believe to be God’s way. To stand out from others around us.

What sort of future do we want for our children/ grandchildren – and all who will come after us?

One based on power, greed, division, exclusion, everyone for themselves?

Or one based on mutual respect, on inclusion, on community, on fairness?

And if it's the latter, then recent events suggest that the road ahead may well be very rocky. Just as the road ahead looked rocky for Jesus first followers.

But **as** they had faith. **As** they believed. **As** they trusted – they discovered that whatever they were going through, God in Jesus was with them through the power of the Holy Spirit – and gave them the strength and the courage and the assurance of his never-ending love to cope with whatever life threw at them.

As St Paul wrote

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

...I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:35-39

They had an eternal security in God's love that nothing and no-one could take away. If you like, they knew that Jesus was in their boat, alongside them, as they weathered the storms and winds of their lives.

And as we face up to the challenges of a changing world, may we know the same.