

Sermon – Trinity 3, Sunday 20 June 2021 Family Communion

Mark 4:35-41

The calming of our storms



In 1986 on the north-west shore of the Sea of Galilee in Israel, the remains of a boat, 8m long and 2m metres wide were discovered.

It was dated from the 1st Century CE, the time of Christ, and is probably very similar to the one in today's Bible reading. Imagine Jesus and his 12 disciples all cramming in to this small boat! I want to suggest to you briefly this morning that this short passage, from the Gospel of St Mark, is both a challenge and an encouragement for us. It is a challenge in the sense that it prompts us to think about where we are placing our trust and it is an encouragement when we or those we love encounter life's storms.

One of the first things St Mark, our gospel writer conveys is why they cram into the boat. Jesus has healed the sick, taught the crowds, is exhausted from ministering but is eagerly pursued by the crowds who want more. A bit like have a million followers on YouTube but finding they're all camped outside your house.

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Except Jesus doesn't have a house. When he reaches the shores of the lake, he suggests they travel over to the other side of the lake, and promptly falls asleep in the stern of the boat (v38). In other words we see Jesus' humanity. St Johns wedding – bride nurse night shift. Felt exhausted from the night shift? Felt run down and at the end of your tether? This passage is encouraging for us in that it reminds us that Jesus is familiar with human frailty. But it seems life's events conspire against him even in the form of the weather! Now the shape of the hills surrounding the Sea of Galilee is such that storms can be channelled quickly and unexpectedly, consequently putting at great risk small boats especially those which are heavily loaded. We also can find that life's circumstances rapidly conspire to create challenging conditions, so we may feel all at sea. However, Jesus was with his disciples right in the midst of the storm, and he went through it with them, seeing them safely to the other side. God knows what it's like to go through it. And he walks with us when we do. Comedian Frank Skinner has written a book called 'the comedian's prayer book' – basically all the prayers he's prayed in the dressing room before the shows; they convey his nervousness, his confidence, his wonder, his hope and his disbelief amidst belief. Through it all he knows Christ is with him. Today is also Father's Day where we remember and show our appreciation for those who were Dads to us. How they have helped us through life's stormy seasons as well as the sunny ones. How much we owe to them! But I just want to also recognise that might not be everyone's experience and there may be those whose memories of their fathers are more painful.

An artist called Eularia Clarke has painted a picture of this Bible passage, one of the reasons I like it is because it reflects the reality of how life's storms and tensions can feel to us.



'Storm over the Lake' by Eularia Clarke

A torrent of water foams over the sinking boat, which too all intents and purposes looks inundated. The disciples are clearly fraught with fear and anxiety, and cry out in their distress. There are clearly more than the twelve present, and many are in modern dress – jeans and trainers, suits and shirts. A woman with a little child clutches him tightly as if she can protect him

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from the seas onslaught. Some have fallen overboard and are floundering. But then there is Jesus - clearly present in the boat with them, hand outstretched, the beginning of the miracle of calming the storm. As we reflect on this image, take a moment to pause & consider where we locate ourselves in that picture?

Perhaps we are in the boat but feeling inundated. Perhaps we can identify with those washed overboard and in danger of being dragged under. Maybe we feel left behind on the shore, feeling we've missed the boat. Perhaps life's storms have battered us such that it's hard to feel comforted about the present, let alone the future.

As the disciples found In the midst of their turmoil, God in Jesus Christ speaks three words of calm: '**Peace. Be still**' (v39). We've seen the humanity of Christ, and now we see the divinity of Christ. The God of heaven, who knows what it's like to be us.

Let's take some time to let Jesus' words rest within us, to acknowledge his presence in the midst of whatever we're going through. Amen.