

St. Mary's Sermons

Date of Sermon: 23rd March 2020

Matthew 8:23-27

New Living Translation (NLT)

Jesus Calms the Storm

²³Then Jesus got into the boat and started across the lake with his disciples. ²⁴Suddenly, a fierce storm struck the lake, with waves breaking into the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵The disciples went and woke him up, *shouting*, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

²⁶Jesus responded, "Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!" Then he got up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly there was a great calm.

²⁷The disciples were amazed. "Who is this man?" they asked. "Even the winds and waves obey him!"

This incident has always been one of my favourites from the gospels. Two things have struck me powerfully again as I have reflected on it in the light of the current crisis:

1. I'm sure when the storm started to brew up the disciples did not panic. They were experienced sailors, they knew the lake like the back of their hand and they would have been confident that with their experience and skills they would have been able to successfully ride the storm out. For them to panic it must have been **very bad!**
2. The last thing that I could do personally in the middle of a storm at sea is sleep! There have been a couple of occasions when I have been caught up in such a storm. Even though it is over twenty years ago I can vividly remember a particularly rough crossing from Lanzarote to Fuerteventura. We were all sat on the floor sliding from side to side, as the waves buffeted the boat. It seemed hours before we eventually reached our destination. I've never in my life been so glad to set foot on dry land!

Yet there was Jesus at the back of the boat fast asleep, totally oblivious to what was happening. That was until the disciples realized that they had absolutely no hope of saving themselves and fearing for the worst, woke him up. Jesus simply stood up and told the wind to shut up! (the best translation of the original Greek).

The disciples were amazed by Jesus power and Jesus chided them for their lack of faith.

The current pandemic is the severest "storm" that the world has encountered for many years, certainly in my life time, probably since the Second World War. Like the disciples we are currently trying to get ourselves out of the mess. Governments have reacted in the best way that they can, and of course we should be grateful for the all that our scientists and medics are doing to try and help us overcome it but it still feels at the moment as though the storm is overwhelming us.

We should certainly not imagine that it is ok for God removed from the pain and suffering of this world, looking down on us from the isolated safety of heaven. If this story teaches us one thing it is that **God is with us even in the midst of the storms** and as long as we have God with us we can know that we are safe in his keeping and that ultimately nothing can harm us. More than that, we can know his peace in our lives enabling us to remain calm despite all that is going on around us.

I am reminded of the old chorus we used to sing:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will go strangely dim
in the light of his Glory and grace.

In practice for me that means:-

1. Watching less news on the TV as there is very little hope in the news at the moment
2. Making sure that I start and end the day in prayer and playing worship songs helps me to keep my eyes on Jesus and not to focus on the problems.

May God keep you in all your days.
May Christ shield you in all your ways.
May the Spirit bring you healing and peace.
May God the Holy Trinity drive all darkness from you
And pour upon you blessing and light. Amen

Thank you for all the kind comments about the Facetimed service yesterday. If you have not yet managed to see it yet, it has now been posted on youtube.

It has been suggested that future services include prayers written by a member of the congregation, if you would like to write some **short prayers** please let me know

I'll be sending our more suggested hymns for the 12 noon prayer times tomorrow.

Let's not forget to pray for all those who are striving to ensure that we all have enough to eat.