

SERMON NOTES Sunday 23rd June 2024

sunnysidechurch

Passages: **Mark 4.35-41 (and Psalm 107.23-32)**

Some of the main themes from the sermon

When sailing story things can go wrong: mast gets stuck in the bottom of the lake!
Terrible DFDS ferry back from France?!

What about in the car? Most journeys are fine. But if we break down, things get a lot more uncomfortable. Can we stop somewhere safe? How long will the breakdown van take? Will they be able to fix the car? How much will it cost? Are we going to be late to where we're going? What was comfortable can quickly become uncomfortable. That is what we are going to see today.

Context

Mark's Gospel:

Galilean ministry: (Act 1) We see the identity of Jesus (Son of God; sovereign authority; secrecy, not fanfare), and the (Act 2) Way of Jesus (servanthood and suffering).

Jerusalem ministry: (Act 3) We see the work of Jesus (cross and resurrection).

Jesus, disciples, crowd are in region of Capernaum, north of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus has been teaching by the lake/Sea of Galilee. He has been using parables/stories to teach people what God's kingdom is like (remember the mustard seed?). Jesus' point is that God's kingdom is coming and so is the king, but, like a tiny mustard seed growing into a huge tree, the kingdom is not what most expected. It's this carpenter from Nazareth who is the King of this kingdom, who is God's chosen one, the Messiah, even if he isn't the kind of Messiah people thought he would be. This is connected to how the disciples see Jesus. Even they are struggling to get to grips with who Jesus says he is.

Jesus decides he'd like to take the overnight ferry option, so as evening draws in, he asks if they can sail to the other side (region of the Gerasenes). The Lake is about 15 miles long. Jesus bunks down.

Jesus was asleep, but his heart was awake.

A storm begins.....

There were at least four seasoned fishermen in the boat: Peter, Andrew, James and John. Perhaps they tried all sorts before resorting to waking Jesus, we don't

know. Jesus is asleep, but is now awoken by the prayers of his disciples: "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?!" Jesus is ready to respond. These four hardy fisherman turn to the person you really need in a storm: their teacher and carpenter! Their claim that Jesus doesn't care if they drown – understandable, but not true. Have you noticed *where* Jesus is sleeping? In the stern. For anyone not familiar with the parts of a boat, the stern is at the back. What is also at the back of a boat? The rudder. It really is Jesus him at the helm/rudder. He would not let the disciples go down, but they only have a thread of hope that he could save them.

They wake Jesus, and here we see that the world knows the voice of Christ

Like my Grandad with his dogs – they know his voice and respond.

Jesus stands. "What's he going to do?", they must have thought! Jesus rebukes the wind and waves, commanding them to be quiet and still. What a moment that must have been. I think that what we often find most amazing about this scene is that Jesus calmed the storm, and this is amazing! But what I think the disciples would have found more amazing is *who* calmed the storm. Not only is it Jesus the carpenter-come-Rabbi in the boat, but also God himself. Only *God* could have done such a thing. Put yourself in the disciples' shoes for a minute. They knew God/Yahweh as powerful, sovereign, someone only the High Priest would dare approach in the Holy of Holies on one day a year and only in a cloud of incense, having performed complicated sacrificial and cleansing ceremonies. But here is Jesus of Nazareth commanding a storm to settle. Imagine the echoes of Genesis 1, a passage they would have known well, reverberating in the disciples ears, the words of him who created all things, and brought order from chaos. But here he the same voice, now in front of them in a little boat with some scared fishermen. No wonder they were terrified!

The disciples are perplexed *and* privileged.

Confusion reigns at what is going on, but they are privileged to be that close to the awesome might and power of God.

This is normal! The same fear and confusion happens at the end of act two (Chapter 9) when they see Jesus standing with Elijah and Moses. Let's do a spot of camping! Verse 6: Peter doesn't know how to respond and the others are terrified! At the end of act three/at the end of the book the two Marys and Salome come to the tomb finding it empty and with an angel telling them Jesus is alive: 16.8 "They fled from the tomb in terror telling no one because they were afraid."

The elements listen to his voice and are still. *Nothing is beyond the voice of Jesus.* That same Jesus who calmed the storm promised his Spirit to all who follow him. That means that God can speak wherever we are to every angry temper or lustful heart; every restless mind when it's 2am, or hopeless despair. All are attentive to the voice of Jesus. Does that inspire you to prayer, to call out to the name of Jesus? What about every neighbour or family member who mocks you for your faith? I have an uncle who is a self-proclaimed atheist and he likes to poke fun at my Dad and I for being clergy. It's easy to enter into the banter and jibe back. It's not easy for me to pray. But God has made him and if God speaks into his life, he will hear. I need to pray that God will do so. What about every colleague who plain avoids you as a someone who loves Jesus? Every part of the created order knows God's voice. And if a part doesn't acknowledge Jesus as Lord now, Philippians 2 tells us that one day every knee will bow at the Lordship of Christ.

Do we trust God even when the comfortable becomes uncomfortable?

None of us are immune to the storms of life. It doesn't matter how many letters we have in front of our name, money in the bank, insurance, qualifications. Sadly, I know too many people who have hit bumps in the track, to put it mildly: abuse, childlessness, illness, unemployment, and turned away because God seems at best absent from the situation, and at worst to be the instigator of the pain.

As Christians we should be unsurprised when storms come. The question is, do the storms turn you to resentment towards God or do they steer you to utter abandon to his purposes for our lives?

We can turn to him no matter what. Why? Because he is like us! Tired, human, asleep after the cares of the day. In Jesus we have a God who gets us. But Jesus is not just man, he is also Lord of the cosmos. Everything around us hears his voice. He is not just Lord of the cosmos, he is also lover of the cosmos. That is what John 3.16 means. The word for 'world' in that verse is 'cosmos' in the original language. For God so loved the cosmos, the entire created order, so much that he sent his only Son to die for us so that whoever believes in him will have eternal life.

What's our response to that extravagant love *and* awesome majesty? Run away? Hide? Or enter in that perplexion, mystery, reverent fear, whilst delighting in the privilege of having Jesus with us to hear our prayers, with us in the storm, with us as saviour and King?

Amen.