

Good evening, good to see you! Happy Christmas!

As you may know we have begun a series looking at the key events in Jesus' life.

And so far each event has pointed us to a deep, real, human need.

Jesus heals a man's body – and then we go deeper and we see how he heals our soul (our broken relationship with God)

Jesus talks about rest from work – and then we go deeper and we see how he delivers us real rest / deep peace for our whole life.

Tonight, Jesus calms a storm – and the question is: how does this apply to the deeper storms in our life...?"

So we continue in Mark 4v35 which reads

That day when evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."

So it's Jesus' idea to cross the lake,
it's Jesus' idea, his initiative, his prompting,
he is WANTING them to go to sea.

v36 So leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat.

Jesus was exhausted, the crowds had been following him everywhere, he needs some rest

So, as the sun sets behind the mountains,
they pushed the boat out,
and Jesus curls up on a cushion and falls sleep.

Suddenly, without warning,

v37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

The Sea of Galilee sits 700 feet **below** sea level in the Jordan rift valley.

Around it are mountains some 9,000 feet high..

At certain times, the cold air from the mountains clashes with the warm air from the Sea,
and immense thunderstorms can appear out of nowhere
the wind whips down the mountains and causes hurricane-like winds on the lake.

This is what happened in Mark chapter 4.

Luke calls it "a violent storm with floods of rain".

Matthew calls it "thunderous waves breaking over the ship"

20 years later the disciples had not forgotten it.

Furious. Violent. Thunderous - STORM

By v37 they are in serious danger.

The waves are mountainous.

The sea is flooding into the ship.

And these professional, seasoned, capable men know something...

They know this sea.

They know these storms;

They know how much their boat can take.

And they know they are going under...

And they look to Jesus who was

v38 in the stern, sleeping on a cushion.

And they think...

How can he do that?

Doesn't he know what's going on here?

Doesn't he care?!

And disciples woke him and said to him,

"Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

and their voices are thick with accusation...

Storms can happen in all our lives.

They can appear out of nowhere.

And suddenly we are in trouble...

Redundancy, Unemployment

Betrayal from some we love,

Illness that threatens our life

A telephone call, a letter, a knock on the door - Terrible news,

Storms can hit us all

And they can capsize everything we love and

drown us in despair.

Storms are cold, miserable, and soul numbing things.

And when they hit us it is easy to look to God,

and to think he is "asleep on the job".

to think (like the disciples) "God don't you care if I drown?"

So this passage asks us three questions:

Where is our safety

Where is our faith; and

Where is our God

When the Storm comes:

Where is our safety

Where is our faith; and

Where is our God

1. Where is our Safety?

v39 Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!". Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

Jesus woke up, and two amazing things happened.

Firstly, he used two simple words of command.

"be still, be quiet".

He didn't say – "STORM – OK back off give me space",

He didn't roll up his sleeves and psyche himself up!

He didn't get out a wand and shout "Wingardium Leviosa"

(although why he'd want to levitate I am not entirely sure)

He simply said: to the Wind - Quiet – one word!

He said to the waters - Still! – one word! That's it.

To a hurricane's howl - QUIET,

to a mountainous sea - STILL

one word.

That's the first amazing thing.

Secondly which is even more impressive –

Then the wind actually died down—

and the sea became completely calm.

Now you could have argued that it was just a **coincidence**.

That the moment he spoke the wind stopped – it was just coincidence.

But if you have ever been to sea

you would know that it takes forever for the waves to die down after a storm.

Yet when Jesus said, Quiet! Still!

not only did the wind die down but the sea became calm.

This is a miracle of terrifying proportions!

The implications of this, in terms of scale – the whole sea –

makes the healing of the paralysed man look trivial.

The sea, in the Bible, represents Ungovernable power,

it is considered Uncontrollably destructive.

And yet with one word Jesus says STOP! and it stops!...

When storms come into our lives

When *real* some thing uncontrollable hits us

We have two options:

We can believe that we are here by random chance,

so that there is no meaning to this storm,

and no purpose behind it and

no hope in it

We can believe we are at the mercy of forces way beyond us

and therefore there is no-where to run, no-where to hide, no place of safety...

OR

We can say “I know someone who is Lord of the Storm”

I have read about someone with incredible power.

I will go to him.

He is the only place of safety in this storm.

This account says

there is only one place of safety in this universe

there is only one voice which creation obeys

there is only one refuge in the face of death

And that is Jesus

If you are to survive the Storm (all the Storms – any Storm – then you need Jesus in your boat

He is the only place of safety for you.

The second thing this passage asks is

2. Where is your faith?

Jesus said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

Jesus asks the disciples, "Do you still have no faith?"

Actually that could just as easily have been translated as

"Where is your faith?"

"Why are you so afraid - Where is your faith"?

The answer is (*whether we've been a Christian 50 minutes or 50 years_*

2.1 Too often, it is in ourselves – in our own ability to cope.

Most of the time

We live in our strength,

We look at life through our own eyes (of what we think is right, is fair, is possible)

And because of this two things happen:

firstly, we don't see the opportunities that God gives us to make a difference for him, and

secondly, we never discover what is possible with God

God wants you to live a life less ordinary,

He wants you to adventure through life with him,

He wants you to look back and say "boy that was amazing"!

He wants you to join in with him and do what he is already doing

He wants you to make a difference in people's lives

But

If we live life in our own strength, through our own eyes

we end up missing it all.

Therefore - very often the only way God can get us

NOT to live life in our own strength,

NOT to see everything through what WE think is possible

is to take us into a storm –

a storm so big – we cannot handle it ourselves

a storm so big - we **have** to run to him.

It was Jesus' idea to cross the sea.

Because **storms** relocate our faith

from ourselves to Jesus

from reliance on what we can do to reliance upon him.

Storms ask the question – where is our faith?

And too often we realise

It has been for too long – in ourselves, in our own ability to cope.

These disciples never forgot what Jesus did this day,

they never forgot what he did in their lives,

they never forgot what he is capable of

Years later it still changed their life, transformed their boldness,

relocated their faith!

Too often our faith is in our own strength...

2.2 Too often it is in our own feelings.

One of the greatest dangers facing **our** generation is that we validate truth by how we feel.

We validate truth by how we feel

So

If we feel its true then it must be.

If we feel its right then we do it,

If we **don't** feel its true then it can't be

If we **don't** feel it is right then we won't do it

This is an **unmitigated** disaster for our faith.

If we locate our faith/if we place our trust/if we validate truth/

by how we feel

then our faith will be tossed and turned by every wave that hits us!

And therefore

just at the point when we need our faith most,

just at the point when we need it to be strong and reliable and certain

Because we have hitched our faith to how we feel –

when the storm hits us - we feel rubbish

and our faith proves to be weak and fragile and uncertain

This is a disaster!

if we do this (and we ALL do this to some extent)

We will remain spiritual infants –

We will never grow up,

we will never mature

To tie our faith to our feelings means we will be pushed around by every different circumstance to hit us.

But it gets worse than this

To tie our faith to our feelings will mean

we will validate our relationship with God by our circumstances.

So when things are going well –

when the sun is shining and the birds are singing –

we will think God loves us

But when things are not going well –

when its dark, and the wind is deafening, and the waves are frightening

we will think God has abandoned us and that he doesn't care!

Isn't that what happened with the disciples!

“Don't you care if we drown?”

let me ask you –

Do you think Jesus loved these disciples any less because he took them into the storm?

Do you think he was punishing them???

No!!

So let me ask you this...

Do you think God loves someone LESS because they have been made redundant?

Do you think he loves them LESS because they have cancer?

Do you think he loves them less because their children make dumb choices?

No! - This is foolishness!

Let me put it the other way around

Do you think God loves you MORE because you've just got a promotion?

Do you think God loves you more because you have children?

Do you think God loves you more because you just passed your exams!?

Ow come on!!!

This is a mistake of catastrophic proportions!

To think this (and we are ALL tempted to think this)

Is to have just tied our faith to our circumstances

God DOES NOT loves prosperous Bible Believing Americans more than he loves poor, hungry, war-torn Sudanese.

Just because you are in a storm doesn't mean God loves you less.

Just because everything is going well for you doesn't mean God loves you more!

Do not put your faith in yourself, do not put it in your circumstance

2.3 And absolutely do not put your faith in your understanding.

God's ways ARE WAY beyond us

We have such small understanding of what he is doing

If you have a God great enough to be mad at because you find yourself in a storm when he could stop it with one word,

then you also have a God who's great enough to have reasons beyond your understanding

Do you see?

You can't have a God, who you are mad at, because he hasn't stilled the storm

If he is not also, able to have reasons that are way beyond you

you can't have it both ways!

The disciples understood this!

They realised that Jesus was way bigger than they could understand!

Before Jesus calms the storm, they're afraid

After Jesus calms the storm, **they are terrified.**

Do you see this?

" They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him

And the reason is this

if they thought the Storm was powerful

if they knew they had **no chance** of controlling the Storm

then suddenly they realise

that here in front of them

here in the boat with them is someone whose power dwarfs the whole of the cosmos

here in front of them is someone who is **even less** controllable
And that is terrifying.

God is beyond our understanding.

his ways our not our ways

so don't put your faith in your own understanding because you are making God a pygmy – when in fact he is a giant!

We need to place our faith in God

in God's faithfulness –

we need to place our trust in the ONE (the only one) who IS trustworthy

So the \$64,000 question is:

If that is true, then...

3. Where is he!? Where is God?

3.1 Well the short answer is - he is in the boat with you.

Every second you are in the storm he is in the storm with you.

He doesn't drop you

He doesn't stand away from you.

Where you go, he will go

What you face, he faces

What you feel, he feels

Because what happens to you has ALREADY happened to him.

You see Mark deliberately lays out this account using language that is parallel, almost identical, to the language of the famous Old Testament account of Jonah

Follow me on this...

Both Jesus and Jonah are put in a boat,

Both Jesus' and Jonah's boats are overtaken by a storm (the descriptions of the storms are almost identical)

Both Jesus and Jonah are asleep.

Both the Sailors Jesus' boat and the Sailors in Jonah's boat think they are going to die.

Both boats are rescued by a miraculous intervention by God

Both boats find themselves in a sea that is calmed.

And both sets of sailors are more terrified afterwards than they were before.

Two almost identical stories—

Two identical accounts

with just one difference.

In the midst of the storm,

Jonah said to the sailors:

There's only one thing to do if you want to survive the Storm – you need to throw me into its teeth!

The judgement of God must fall on me

If I perish, you survive.

If I die, you will live.

That's what Jonah said...

Which of course isn't what Jesus said.

Or does he?

if we stop looking with our eyes –
if we helicopter out and look at it from God's eyes
we see something different
Something that will change the Storm for us.

We see that Jesus does get thrown into the heart of the storm
to save us from the storm to end all storms!

We see that the waves of death do break over him.
We see the abyss of sin engulf him and drag him down!

On the cross Jesus perishes that we may survive
He dies that we may live
He calms the of Storm of Sin, the injustices of evil, the pain of life

Where is God - He is right there with you.

And what is more... he knows what it is like to feel that God is asleep on the job!
On the cross Jesus says – My God, my God why have you forsaken me?
While Jesus hung on the cross.
It seemed to all the world that God sat on his hands.

Yet we know that what God was doing was more profound than anything we could imagine!

In your storm - Trust God he is there right with you!

3.2 Trust him and he will rescue you .

Sometimes he will rescue you right now in this life.

I have known this to be true in my life

I have seen this to be true other's.

I have seen people with cancer given only months to live, years later playing Squash and beating me (although that last idea is not so much of a miracle),

I have seen God heal relationships that were falling apart,

I have seen lives freed from years of bitterness and guilt.

Sometimes Jesus stands up and speaks and all becomes calm.

And that's absolutely possible.

To believe that God does not intervene in the rough and tumble of our lives is simply to deny the Jesus revealed in the Bible.

Jesus fed the 5000 not because they were about to die – but because they were hungry.

Jesus turned water into wine – not because the entire Jewish political system was about to fall apart – but because a friend needed help.

Jesus produced a cash miracle for Peter in the mouth of the fish – not the size of the national lottery – but simply a few coins to pay the Temple tax.

Jesus gets involved in the day to day action of our lives.

He proves himself to be worthy of trust

therefore do not fear **and** do not validate his love by the circumstances you find yourself in.

But even if the boat sinks,

even if the jaws of death close around you,

even if the darkness surrounds you.

God is still able to rescue WITH JUST ONE WORD!

He did it for Jonah, He did it for Jesus – He'll do it for you

With just one word ALL of Life's Storms will cease

With just one word ALL injustice will be solved

With just one word Eternal Life is yours...

So trust him.

Two pictures to end...

Picture 1 - Imagine - In the hot sun, a little boy builds a sandcastle on the beach.

He takes the sand in a coloured spade,

packs it into his bucket, upends it and makes a tower.

All afternoon he works, spooning out the moat, packing the walls.

Bottle tops for sentries, lolly sticks for bridges.

A sandcastle is built next to the sea's edge.

**Picture 2 – Imagine – a self sufficient man shuffles papers,
orders his life, makes his plans.**

**He works his whole life, toiling, focusing on the job,
building riches and sandcastles.**

he asks

Do I earn enough?

Am I prepared for retirement?

Is my castle strong enough to have a good life?

Two builders of castles: a man and child.

They take granules and press them into being,

they start with nothing and try to make something out of it.

They work hard.

yet for both the tide will come in and the end will come.

The man, foolishly, hovers over his life's work as the tide comes in.

"It's my life, it's my castle", he says, "you can't have it".

But the ocean does not respond.

The little boy, as evening approaches, jumps to his feet and watches the tide come in.

There is no sorrow, no fear, no regret.

What an adventure!

When the last wave sweeps over his castle, he nods, picks up his tools, takes his Father's hand and goes home.

Your safety is in Jesus - never in yourself, you cannot save yourself.

Your value is in Jesus – not in your feelings, not in your circumstances, not in your understanding, in his love for you shown on the cross.

Your life is with God

He will never to leave you or forsake you.

He will never abandon you

He will prove himself faithful forever.

So cast your anxieties upon him – trust him - because he cares for you.