

## Pentecost 4 – St Aidan’s – 24<sup>th</sup> June 2012

Theme: “Jesus calms the storm”

Reading: Mark 4: 35-41

### Introduction

Last Sunday we looked at two of the parables in this chapter of Mark 4 – the parable of the seed and the parable of the mustard seed. It is in this context that I believe we need to take the story of the calming of the storm by Jesus as further teaching to the disciples about the ‘kingdom of God’.

Already in Mark 3, a few weeks ago, we read of Jesus teaching about the kingdom of God and even his family coming to check up on ‘his sanity’. Jesus was talking about a kingdom, not of this world, but with a reference point around God. The world, as the people knew it in Jesus’ time, was under the all powerful dominion of the Roman Empire. Jesus was trying to teach about a world not limited by Roman power but under the auspices of God. To show a little of that world he taught in parables to try to give the disciples a glimpse of ‘what could be’ beyond the current world.

I just wonder if Jesus calming the storm is in fact an extension of his teaching in parables to the disciples as it sits alongside the series of parables on seeds and the kingdom of God – something for us to think about!

### Middle

Let us look at the Gospel account for a few minutes.

Vss 36-37

After a long day of teaching the crowds Jesus needs a break and requests the disciples to take him to the other-side of the Sea of Galilee to the region of the Gerasenes. The boat sets out with at least four experienced fishermen and in the company of other boats (we hear nothing of those other boats).

Vs 38

A great windstorm arises that causes the boat to take water but Jesus is sound asleep on a cushion. I find this remarkable but maybe I am not a good sailor, especially in small boats. I have travelled tens of thousands of nautical miles on large boats but small ones still frighten me in a rough sea or a heavy, following swell. Even the experienced fishermen are frightened and wake Jesus with the words,

‘Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?’

The deep, calm sleep of Jesus is contrasted with the utter destruction and imminent death that the storm may well bring.

Vs 39

Jesus arises and ‘rebukes’ the wind and calms the waves. This scene may well remind the hearers of sections of the Jonah story where the wind comes up and the sailors are terrified while the main character (Jonah) is asleep. Admittedly Jonah has to sacrifice himself to save the ship. Jesus here simply commands the winds and sea to be still, but he in time will sacrifice himself for others and lie three days in the tomb just as Jonah spends three days in the belly of a large fish. God calms

the sea in the Jonah story. Jesus now calms the storm, showing his divine side to the disciples.

In both accounts a great storm becomes a great calm. Possibly this link with the Jonah story adds impact to the disciples showing them the divinity of Jesus.

Vs 40

Once the storm abates, Jesus turns to the disciples and asks two fundamental questions that lie at the heart of the story:

‘Why are you afraid?’

Do you still have no faith?’

Again the parable of the Sower for seed to fall on fertile ground (4:20) seems to be before the disciples. However, their faith still needs to grow. They act as if the seed has fallen on rocky ground and has failed to take root at all. Hence the link continues back to the earlier parables of this chapter of scripture.

Vs 41 The disciples speak among themselves asking ‘Who is this?’

They are not yet ready to come down on the side of faith. However it appears that the Narrator of Mark’s Gospel is building to that point with the disciples. Even with proof before their eyes the disciples exhibit fear rather than confidence, not unlike the women at the tomb at the very end of this Gospel.

### True Story

A photograph taken shortly after Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in the fall of 2005 shows the devastation of a cemetery in the historic district of that city, with trees toppled, debris covering the ground, several burial vaults broken open and headstones smashed. In the middle of the devastation, untouched by the storm, stands a statue of the risen Christ, arms extended wide, offering a benediction of calm amid the chaos. Such is the image of today’s text: the image of Christ with his arms extended wide over the chaos of our lives and our world, saying, “Peace! Be still!”

### For us

Where are we in this account. Asleep with Jesus, frightened out of our wits by the storm, ready to die, trying to shake and wake Jesus up?

How do we answer Jesus’ questions?

Why are you so afraid?

Do you still have no faith?

Pertinent questions for we who seek to be Jesus’ disciples today!

### Prayer of Trust by Bruce Prewer

Loving God, when we are inclined to worry or panic, speak with authority to us.

Speak directly through Jesus so that fears may be confronted and our faith re-instated.

Through him and in him let us spend our days and nights with the courage and peace of those who know they are being saved and sustained by amazing grace.

And to God be the glory and praise forever and ever. Amen