

**Sunday 23 February 2025**  
**The Second Sunday before Lent**

**Liverpool Parish Church**

**OT: Genesis 2:4b-9, 15-end**

**NT: Revelation 4**

**Gp: Luke 8: 22-25**

In our Gospel reading today we hear about the disciples in the boat going across the lake and the boat began to fill with water. I'm sure we can relate to the fear they felt. Water can be life giving and can be powerful. I'm sure we can all think back to experiences we've had involving water. Perhaps it was seeing a beautiful waterfall or suffering a burst pipe at home. I can recall ten years ago being on holiday with Kevin and Lily and being in a waterpark. We were in a wave pool and having a wonderful time, when suddenly a huge wave came and covered all of us and my glasses (which I can't see without) were swept away. I didn't have a spare pair, and I absolutely panicked! Thankfully, a kind fellow holidaymaker retrieved my glasses for me – the relief was overwhelming, and I was filled with gratitude and thanked the person profusely for rescuing my glasses. We also hear in the news terrible stories of devastating floods washing through communities, or tsunamis sweeping through villages and towns. Water out of our control can be terrifying.

For those seasoned fishermen, the storm took them by surprise and made them afraid. They must have experienced the sudden storms the lake was known for. On this occasion, something was significantly different for them, and they feared for their lives. Often in the Bible the sea is used as a metaphor for life itself and the chaos that may surround us at any point. In the book of Revelation, when it says there is 'no more sea' it is a metaphor for no more chaos and disorganisation. Revelation imagines a time when we know what it is to live peacefully in the presence of God.

During the storm on the lake, whilst the disciples are panicking, Jesus sleeps peacefully. He has fallen asleep before the storm starts- and it is reassuring to know that Jesus gets tired in the middle of the day and needs to rest! It is a reminder of his humanity, as we are about to see his divinity unfold. He is, at this moment, the living embodiment of what it is to be peaceful in the presence of God. No matter the extent of the chaos and tumult around him, Jesus sleeps. His disciples come to him in fear that they are on the point of death- and at the same time in the certainty that if Jesus was awake, they would be safe. Sure enough, Jesus stands up and commands the chaos to become calm, the tumult to be tamed, and peace to be restored. The disciples have what they ask for and now they are confused.

The disciples in the midst of the storm can do nothing to save themselves. However, they have Jesus with them (even if he is asleep). They turned to him when all seemed lost, and they were convinced that only death awaited them. Somewhere in that cry of 'Master, Master we are perishing!' was the unspoken plea 'help us!' There was an assumption that

Jesus could intervene and bring rescue. In the simple act of waking him up, there was trust. Jesus was present and therefore Jesus would do something.

However, Jesus's act of power over chaos leads to confusion. Who is this that the wind, and the waves obey him? Who is this- throughout the chapters of the Gospels, we can see unfolding answers to this question about the identity of Jesus. Through parables, through healing, encounters with people and his words, gradually a picture emerges. Today we can note the humanity of Jesus, he is spending time with his friends, and he is tired, so he nods off, like anyone would. Then as soon as the disciples cry out to him, he wakes and responds to their presenting need.

We might ask the disciples, what did you expect would happen when you woke Jesus up? We have the benefit of hindsight in our ability to connect Jesus who speaks words over creation as the very word of creation in the poetry of Genesis. The one who commanded the wind and the waves into being is the one who now commands them to be peaceful. The disciples at that moment were yet to make that connection. I have a beautiful painting and you can look at it after the service, of Jesus standing at the bow of the boat, with the disciples cowering behind him- commanding the storm to be still. It is a beautiful image.

Here we have an invitation to encounter Jesus amongst our own periods of chaos and tumult. Life can be overwhelming, like being caught in the middle of a big storm, and we share the experiences of the disciples in the boat when we fear that all is lost. We may pray faithfully that something will change, but it may feel as though Jesus is fast asleep and unaware of our prayers and the chaos. At this point, we could simply give up praying and await the inevitable. Or we can persist and shake Jesus awake, trusting that by his very presence, something will change. Then we can witness the life-changing power of Jesus to bring calm to chaos as he meets us in the storms of life.

We can experience many storms in our lives, we can encounter illness, poverty, debt and the failure of relationships. We encounter poverty every time we walk through Liverpool city centre and see the homeless people on the streets. The use of foodbanks even by people who are working is on the increase and people are struggling to make ends meet. Whatever your storm is relative to your situation and how we respond to these storms is important and can test and strengthen our faith. In 2019, Kevin my husband had to receive a course of radiotherapy for the treatment of Lymphoma. Thankfully, that treatment was successful and I'm forever grateful to God and the NHS. This was a testing time, but served to strengthen my faith and gave me the momentum to run the race for life for Cancer Research.

On a world level, we hear about Gaza and Palestine, Russia and Ukraine and the Sudanese civil war- so much conflict and violence! We can wonder if Jesus is indeed asleep in the boat. Instead of wondering, we can reach out and ask him to help. Persistence in prayer through the storms of life, personal, national and global can effect change. As you go about your week, listening to the news and encountering storms, take time to shake Jesus awake and

pray to him about all that is concerning you. Let Jesus stand at the bow of your life and command the storm to be still.

**Mthr Jennifer Brady**