

## Luke 8: 22-25 – Jesus is Lord

### Prayer

When we were working with the Church Mission Society we had link parishes in the island of Jersey, which was great because CMS paid for us to visit them. We took the car on the boat and on one occasion our return trip was delayed because of a storm and we were on the first boat the following day. The channel between Jersey and Guernsey is choppy at the best of times, but that day it was exhilarating. David my oldest son and I were out on the top deck while we pitched and tossed – great fun, while my wife and younger son were groaning down below.

Jesus and his disciples had been busy. Crowds were coming after them all the time, giving them little rest. Jesus was feeling drained. All the teaching and healing took it out of him, and he was quite happy to get in a boat heading across the lake. We all know the feeling of needing to get away for a break. But it doesn't always work out as we expect. Galilee is notorious for sudden storms apparently – the wind whips down from the hills and stirs up the waters dangerously. And one of those storms hit as Jesus slept in the boat, worn out. He must have been exhausted to sleep through until the disciples woke him in a panic because they felt they were losing control. Some of them were professional fishermen, so it must have been fairly serious. *Master, master, we are perishing!* Possible. Jesus woke, rebuked the wind and the raging waters and there was calm. Question – *where is your faith?* They were afraid and amazed; I am sure we could find the colloquialisms to fit. *Who is this?* Jesus in control when the storm hit.

When the storm hit... Ukraine, Gaza and Israel, the West Bank and Lebanon, when the storm hit Goma and Bukavu in eastern Congo. When the storm hit in our land – we haven't really got over Covid, cost of living challenges, climate change. *Where is your faith?* Is it in the political leaders? In Trump and Putin, Zelenskyy and von Leyen, in Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves? It's easy to be cynical and to be honest the first two I mentioned invite cynicism. But as someone involved to some extent on a small scale as a Town Councillor I want to say that many people in politics are actually trying to improve life for people and just being cynical about all of them are the same, just in it for themselves, is not true and doesn't help. Cynicism can open the door to extremism. Politicians are human beings and like all of us get some things right and other things, well... I'd put in a plea for a cautious and critical faith in politicians.

When the storm hit... the church of England. Safeguarding and the leadership. *Where is your faith?* There was a comment in 'Church Times' last week from Angela Tilby: *The Church of England is one of many institutions in which there is a temptation to believe that human fallibility can be eliminated by adopting suitable processes.* Where is your faith? Is it in getting the process right? Don't get me wrong. I am 100% committed to our safeguarding processes as necessary, but will they make saints out of all of us sinners? I don't think so.

When the storm hit... our parishes, and no-one applied to the advert to come and be our Vicar. All the blighters who looked at it and thought no. A vacancy is not an easy time – ask Brian or Robin who have vacancy responsibilities as churchwardens. *Where is your faith?*

When the storm hit us... personally. There are some empty seats in church where Poppy sat, where Sue sat, where Renate sat. What's going on in your life that you are hiding so well? Worried about tests, should you go to the doctor, worried about someone in your family, something to do with relationships? Feeling tired and the pressure of it all, the expectations that people have of you, that

you have of yourself... *Where is your faith?* Maybe in our own resources because you are resilient and anyway there are lots of people worse off and all that? Keep smiling, keep cheerful and carry on. It will all be all right. But faith is not the same as blind optimism, and our own resources are not inexhaustible.

Jesus was there in the boat, in the storm, but the disciples had forgotten what it meant. They carried on with Jesus there but to all intents and purposes he may well not have been. And it is so easy for us to do likewise – to carry on with our lives as if Jesus really has nothing to do with what we are doing. The storm struck and the disciples panicked because they had forgotten who was there in the boat with them. He was there and he did care. Sometimes it takes a storm to drive us to the point of crying out to the Lord who is there.

Here's another tale of visiting an island - Borneo and the Malaysian state of Sabah. Forty years ago or so there was a church there in trouble. It was founded by missionaries and for years it was dominated by missionaries. Then the government expelled all the missionaries and the church was bereft – every single parish in vacancy and no-one to apply. People had to take responsibility for the church when all the leaders and trained people were gone. So they prayed. For the first time they did more than just say their prayers like dutiful Anglicans, they prayed. And as they prayed they realised that if they were going to survive, let alone grow, they had to recognise that Jesus Christ is the centre of the church and that they had nothing else to offer others. The tremendous growth in the church in Sabah goes back to the very time when the wind and the waves threatened to overwhelm them, and they cried out to Jesus to rescue them and build them up. I was sent to Sabah to go and see what a growing church looks like – not a perfect church by any means but a dynamic one. I love the programme they started called 1-1-3 – that is every Christian took responsibility to lead one other person to Christ every three years and then committed to helping them grow in discipleship to Jesus Christ. Amazingly simple idea. Had it worked as envisaged the church would have doubled and redoubled in size within a few years. But it didn't work; the church only doubled in size.

Where is your faith? In our story Jesus calmed the storm. He showed himself to be Lord over creation, but he is not Jesus of the magic wand. The disciples needed to learn to trust Jesus, to put their faith in him. They would learn that he would not always wave the magic wand and make all the storm go away, but – let's stretch the picture a little – Jesus would never abandon the boat they were in. The calm and the peace he brings is within – within us as individuals, within us as a church community. There's no easy faith that if we trust him enough he will make all the storm, all the nasty stuff go away. But he is Lord and there are two promises we can hang on to. The first is that promise that he will never leave you nor forsake you. That's the promise that Paul writes and we use in our prayer of blessing – *The peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds*. And the second promise is this – that the storm may rage but the storm will never have the last word. Last word – we should look at Revelation, last book in the Bible and the promise in chapter 21:

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,  
See the home of God is among mortals.  
He will dwell with them, they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them,  
he will wipe away every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more,  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away.  
Amen! Come Lord Jesus.*

**Bible Readings:**

Genesis 2: 4b-9, 15-24 and Luke 8: 22-25

**Collect:**

Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image: teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen .

**Post Communion:**

God our creator, by your gift the tree of life was set at the heart of the earthly paradise, and the bread of life at the heart of your Church: may we who have been nourished at your table on earth be transformed by the glory of the Saviour's cross and enjoy the delights of eternity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

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