

Job 38:1-11 and Mark 4:35-41

The Sea of Galilee is a beautiful inland body of water but it is actually a freshwater lake and due to its unique location surrounded by hills and 700 feet below sea level it is prone to sudden violent storms. So out of the blue it can very quickly turn from being a calm tranquil still water into a life threatening storm.

Our storms are similar - we're chugging along quite happily and then suddenly something comes along to rock our boat. It could be a phone call, a text message, results of a test or a visit to the doctor, anything really. And it throws our lives into complete chaos.

Any of us can manage quite happily whilst the seas of our life are calm – but how do we react when the storm hits us? And it is inevitable that at some point we will encounter a storm, it's a reality of life. Life is like that its unpredictable. That's when we really need our faith.

But faith isn't something that we can tuck away and pull out and put on when we need it – it's more like a muscle that we need to use regularly in order to keep it strong. Our daily prayers, our bible readings and weekly worship are all ways of keeping our faith muscle strong so that when that storm rocks our boat we're ready to find the strength to endure it and weather it out.

Storms can cause us to doubt God and stretch our faith. But we can also learn through life's storms – and find that not all disrupt life – some come to clear a path and help us see things more clearly.

Jesus was IN the boat with the disciples, sleeping. They were seasoned fishermen used to the Sea of Galilee's quirks so they would have experienced storms like this before - and in their own strength they tried to control the boat and stop it from capsizing and being overwhelmed whilst Jesus slept on. Only when they realised that they couldn't cope did they wake him up and cry out to him for help. We mustn't leave it this late to call out to Jesus, don't wait until it becomes a crisis – share your worries and concerns as soon as they arise.

Jesus was irritated by the disciples lack of faith – in their lateness in getting him involved – let's not make the same mistake and be accused of a lack of faith. We must be confident in our faith – Jesus clearly says that fear is a lack of faith. "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

Jesus came to save us from our sin and reconcile us to God. So trust in him. He hasn't promised to calm every storm – but he has promised never to leave us or forsake us.

And we recall Paul telling the Philippians in chapter 4: 6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. And also my

go to verse from Psalm 46 verse 10 – Be still and know that I am God. When the storm hits the first instruction is to be still and the second to know that God has it.

When we are afraid or distressed we are actually exposing a weakness in our faith. We not totally trusting God and his plans for us. By calming the storm Jesus increased the faith of the disciples and taught them that he was always there and opened their eyes and demonstrated his power over nature.

But if you are feeling weak and failing, please take heart – we've all been there! Don't sit helplessly with it. Just as the disciples asked Jesus for help, why not share with someone who can support and pray with you? We always have someone in our prayer corner during our services so please go to them and - with them...bring it to God.

Our passage from Job – is God speaking to Job out of the whirlwind – which in Hebrew can be translated as storm. God's revelation to Job is that the universe is far bigger, far stronger and far more mysterious than we can ever imagine. It's God's realm and we can't determine how God will act or the reasons for his actions. It reminds us that God may not always provide the answers we seek, indeed he never answered Job's questions! Job never found out why such calamity came his way, but in meeting God he was satisfied with God's transcendent power.

God is always there with us in the storms, the foundation and the cornerstone. He is our firm foundation when things feel unsteady or uncertain.

We should be in an on-going dialogue with God. God reminds Job that we have no control over our lives, and our wisdom is limited – but God knows all and has a plan for everything.

Sometimes we are struggling and we might be tempted to turn away from God and feel he has abandoned us – but remember he's right there with us – during these trials and turbulent times we should rely on God rather than on ourselves. His peace within us can still the disorder and chaos in our lives. Life built on faith will help us weather the storms of life as God never loses his hold on us.

God gives us the freedom to choose how we will react to our circumstances. He won't force his will on us. Sometimes we bring problems on ourselves and then blame God. We justify it by saying it must be God's will – but really God would not get pleasure out of planning our mistakes and misery. The truth is that yes God has a plan for our lives – but he has also given us free will.

We must keep talking to God and trusting him!

If we find ourselves in a storm, we must pray to be given the strength to get through it and learn from it. Dear Lord thank you for protecting us and bringing us peace in times of trouble. Amen

Carol Elsasser, 23 June 2024

