

Sermon by Revd Susanna Pain

21 June 2009

Mark 4:35-41

Who is this that even the mind and the sea obey him?

Good question. Who is this Jesus? What is his authority? If he can control the forces of chaos, he must be God!

No wonder they were 'filled with great fear'

This seems an appropriate response in the presence of the divine.

What do we know of this one we follow from this story?

At first we find him asleep on a cushion in the stern of the boat. Exhausted, no doubt, and at peace.

When a storm blows up as it did on those waters, he sleeps on, unperturbed.

The disciples are terrified and picture themselves drowning, and him with them.

This roused him gruffly. 'Don't you care if we are perishing?' Hear the tone in their voices, hear the appeal, the tear, the anger.

'Don't you care if we are perishing'. In their minds 'Help! Do something about it!

It reminds me of Martha's appeal which was something like 'Why don't you tell her – Mary - to help me!!

Same tone, but more urgent. Children to a parent.

Don't you care if we are perishing -
and the answer?

He rebuked the wind and said to the waves 'Peace, be still'.

No fear here, only quiet, firm authority.

A different perspective.

The storm doesn't happen because they've done something wrong. It's just something that happens along the way. That is important to note. They were on their way to mission?

It is worthwhile reflecting as we go along on the layers in this story.

What if it is a metaphor for the infant church and the fury surrounding it?

What if this speaks to my own inner conflict and turmoil – and the events of my daily life?

‘Don’t you care if I/we are perishing?’ I/we ask Jesus.

And he responds by rebuking the wind and says ‘Peace, be still’ to the turmoil.

He gives me breathing space in the midst of the storm. – A different perspective.

I can breathe again.

But it doesn’t end there.

‘Why are you afraid?’ he asks.

‘Why am I afraid?’

‘Isn’t it obvious?’ I am overwhelmed by my responsibilities, by my choices, by fear of aging and death and illness. I am drowning in complex relationships, job decisions ...

Help, I am afraid.

‘Have you still no faith?’ he says, ‘after all we’ve been through together. Have you still no faith?’

You get tossed about, distracted, fearful. Turn to me again. Look at me.

At peace with myself, asleep even, this is not lack of care, this is trust, that all will be well.

‘trust me’ you are saying.

Trust you, place my faith in you?

Yes, it seems to make a difference. The waters don’t seem quite so high, the wind is less fierce.

I still have issues to deal with, but you are in the boat with me.

I turn to you. I trust you ... and only then am I filled with great awe, fear – a different sort of fear, for I realise in whose presence I stand, who then is this? What is his authority? A healthy fear this time, respect, standing in the presence of God, who is with me in this storm, with us in this storm, whatever it is, we are not alone. We are in this together, with Jesus, the divine.

Somehow this gives me hope, courage, Peace.

Michael Leunig asserts:

There are only feelings – love and fear.

*There are only two languages – love and fear.
There are only two activities - love and fear.
There are only two motives, two procedures, two frameworks, two
results – love and fear. Love and fear.*

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If the boat is symbol of the Christian church what is it like being in this boat together with those we don't even know, or like as well or trust.

Jesus is with us calling us to go to the other side – to outsiders. Jesus and his disciples are on the move. They are not settled.

What are some of the fearful barriers that stop us from 'crossing over' in our task of reaching out ..? Does it all seem too much sometimes?

Where do you return to in order to find the pure stillness of Christ and how does that impact on your capacity to care for yourself properly, while still serve the needs of others?

STORY ABOUT RETREAT