

**Written Service Sunday July 16<sup>th</sup> 2023**  
**A service of worship for use at home**  
**Prepared by Jan Davies**

Charity number 1134226

**Theme:** Calming of the storm - Power over Chaos

**Call to Worship:** Psalm 104:1

Praise the Lord O my soul!  
O Lord, my God how great You are!  
You are clothed with majesty and glory;  
You cover yourself with light.

**Prayers of Adoration and Praise:**

God of all created things,  
**We praise and adore you.**  
God of all space and time,  
**We praise and adore you.**  
God of the morning light,  
**We praise and adore you.**  
God of the evening,  
**We praise and adore you.**  
God of Trinity, three in one,  
**We praise and adore you.**  
Saviour Jesus, man and God, lover and friend,  
**We praise and adore you.**  
Holy Spirit, comforter and advocate, ever present God,  
**We praise and adore you. Amen**

**Hymn: O worship the King, all glorious above Vs 1,2,3 and 6**

O worship the King, all-glorious above;  
O gratefully sing, His power and His love:  
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,  
Pavilioned in splendour, and girded with praise.

The earth with its store of wonders untold,  
Almighty, your power has founded of old;  
Established it fast by a changeless decree,  
And round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.

O tell of His might, O sing of His grace,  
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;  
His chariots of wrath the deep thunder clouds  
form,  
And dark is His path on the wings of the storm.

O measureless Might, ineffable Love,  
While angels delight to hymn you above,  
Your ransomed creation, though feeble our  
praise,  
In true adoration our voices we raise.

**Reading:** Mark 4:35-41

On the evening of the same day, Jesus said to His disciples, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they left the crowd; and the disciples got into the boat in which Jesus was already sitting, and they took Him with them. Other boats were there too.

Suddenly a strong wind blew up and the waves began to spill over into the boat, so that it was about to fill with water. Jesus was in the back of the boat, sleeping with His head on a pillow. The disciples woke Him up and said, "Teacher, don't you care that we are about to die?"

Jesus stood up and commanded the wind, "Be quiet!" and He said to the waves, "Be still!" The wind died down and there was a great calm. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Why are you frightened? Have you still no faith?"

But they were terribly afraid and said to one another, "Who is this man? Even the wind and waves obey Him!"

## Sermon Part One: The power of Jesus over creation and chaos

If you ever visit Israel and go to the Sea of Galilee, you will see notices up in all the car parks telling drivers that they leave their cars at their own risk because when the storms come, cars have been known to end up in the sea, having been washed away by huge waves. It is of course not a sea at all, but a very large inland lake. It is well known for its violent storms which come very suddenly and without warning.

- So, The Sea of Galilee was notorious for its quick change from calm to raging storm
- If you go to Google Earth you will see that the Sea of Galilee is part of a very deep valley which runs down through the Sea of Galilee, the deep Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and on down through Africa to become the Great Rift valley.
- Deep river valleys run into the Sea of Galilee which funnels the wind out onto the lake, causing the kind of storms which you don't normally see on in-land lakes but are usually associated with the deep seas and oceans.
- The Israelites were **not** a sea faring people – the nearest they got to the sea was fishing on this inland lake.
- To understand this story fully we need to know that for them, the sea and ocean represented evil and chaos: they were afraid of it!
- Note that in Genesis, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters bringing order out of chaos.
- This storm recorded in Mark represents the chaos that life can be sometimes – but it also represents the uncontrolled power of the natural world.
- In the verses before and after, Jesus is being revealed as having power over sickness and evil spirits; here He is revealed as having power over creation itself and all the forces of evil. Mark is trying to show us **who** Jesus is; only God can do what Jesus does – so this Jesus is so much greater than a wonderful preacher and teacher. So, bit by bit, our Jesus, the man we know and love is revealed as divine and having divine power.
- Note the reaction of the disciples 'Who is this man?'
- In the book of Job – we all know the story – Job loses everything, his family, his wealth, his home, his cattle and finally his health – but he remains faithful – what he desires more than anything else is to speak to God, to lay his case before God – in the end God hears him and answers him.
- In the stilling of the storm – Jesus is revealed as having the power of God Himself. And, remember that, for those first followers of Jesus, this was an amazing revelation.

### Reading: Job 1:13-22

One day when Job's children were having a feast at the home of their eldest brother, a messenger came running to Job. "We were ploughing the fields with the oxen", he said "and the donkeys were in a nearby pasture. Suddenly the Sabaeans attacked and stole them all. They killed every one of your servants except me. I am the only one who escaped to tell you."

Before he had finished speaking, another servant came and he said, "Lightning came and struck the sheep and the shepherds and killed them all. I am the only one to have escaped to tell you.

Before he had finished speaking another servant came and he said, "Three bands of Chaldean raiders came and took away the camels, and killed all your servants except me. I am the only one to have escaped to tell you."

Before he had finished speaking another servant came and he said, "Your children were all having a feast at the home of the eldest son, when a storm came in from the desert. It blew the house down and killed them all. Only I have escaped to tell you."

Then Job stood up and tore his clothes in grief. He shaved his head and threw himself down on the ground. He said, "I was born with nothing, and I will die with nothing. The Lord gave and now He has taken away. May His name be praised!"

In spite of all that had happened, Job did not sin by blaming the Lord God.

## Hymn: Abide with me (vss 1,3,4 and 5.)

Abide with me; fast falls eventide;  
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

I need thy presence every passing hour;  
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?  
Who, like thyself, my guide and stay can be?  
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

I fear no foe, with thee at hand to bless;  
Ills have no weight, teas no bitterness;  
Where is death's sting? Where grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still, if thou abide with me.

Hold thou the cross before me closing eyes;  
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the  
skies;  
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain  
shadows flee;  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

## Sermon Part Two: The power of God over the chaos and confusion of our lives:

- There are times when I listen to the street preachers in town:
- The impression given that life as a Christian is always good.  
As a young enthusiastic Christian, from Teacher Training College we went out to the local coffee bars (well it was the 1960s!) to accost people and tell them how wonderful the Christian life is – a real rose garden.
- **Well, we were lying!**
- I'm not saying it is always bad – but if you read the story of Job or the reading from Mark it will show that there are times when being a follower of Christ is a struggle
- We are told by Jesus to 'take up your Cross every day and follow Him!'

What does this mean when the violent storms invade our lives? When we feel insecure, frightened or in pain? Storms do come and when they do, they are painful and difficult. Some people, especially those who join with the hope that they will never experience a storm that they will be saved from all the buffeting experienced by non Christians. They simply cannot cope when things go wrong; they become angry with God and simply walk out in a temper – never to darken the door of a church again.

What have we to say to people like that? What we **can't** say is that being a follower of Jesus is an insurance against anything going wrong. But, what we can say it that our God is right there beside you in the storm. Jurgen Moltman, a Christian writer who was in the German army during the war and experienced the bombing of Dresden in which his friend was blown to pieces said later that Jesus is able to bring an inner calm to the storm that rages **within** us – not necessarily to change the circumstances and make it all better but to calm the storm within us.

What storms have you suffered I wonder?

1. Uncertainty and doubt: There are times when I listen to people I admire, for example Stephen Fry the actor and comedian or Professor Brian Cox, the famous physicist and astronomer, who are not only openly sceptical about the existence of God, but ridicule anything other than the physical world we can touch, see or measure.

At times when we doubt that God even exists, how can we regain faith at such a time? Do you just close you mind to it? And hope it all goes away?

For me I have to go back to basics. What made me first believe? I always to go back to Jesus; to all He did, taught and was. I ask myself was Jesus deluded or a liar or a charlatan – or was He who He said He was?

I then take a leaf out of the scientist's book and look at the way that this world works, with the knowledge that if any of the physical forces of the universe were altered by just a tiny fraction, then the universe would never have existed. Everything is so finely balanced. Is this just chance? What or who holds this all together?

And by opening myself to God, by prayer and study and thinking through what I believe I find the calm is restored and the storm passes.

2. The tempest of anxiety: what makes you anxious?

Exams, illness of self or family, moving house, losing a job, not having one in the first place, getting lost? Often at times like these you find it hard to muster up the faith to pray for yourself. So, what do you do then?

It is at such times that the value of Christian friends, someone to pray with, someone to pray for you, someone who can offer you practical help, like a bed for the night for you and the dog when the house was flooded! This is what being part of a worshipping community is all about. When we haven't the strength or ability to carry ourselves then others carry us until the calm returns. Jesus often acts through other people; look out for that help next time you are in the middle of a storm of anxiety.

3. And finally the storm of sorrow caused by bereavement, loneliness, pain, rejection. It is at such times when the waves can feel as though they are going to swamp you. It is at such times when Jesus stands beside us – we may not feel His presence – but we know that there is nothing we experience which He does not fully understand.

I can only speak of my own experience but, at such times He has opened my mind to the fact that **this** life is not all there is. This life is wonderful, an amazing gift but there is more beyond this for us to look forward to. His resurrection, His new life gives me hope that all will be well; that we move on from here to something greater, something infinitely better. It doesn't stop the pain of separation, but this knowledge does eventually bring the calm after the storm.

We batter ourselves in the storms that rage around us – we need to recognise that our God, our Father, is greater than the storm.

The trouble with this life is that we can only see it from our view point, from this position in time and space. God has a different perspective on life. He can see everything and He knows what He is doing – we need to trust Him

**Prayers: Confession**

Lord, who can deal with all chaos and confusion,

We admit that at times we give in to anxiety;

There are times when we allow the storms to rage around us and within us.

You said 'Be not be afraid'

Yet Lord we are so often afraid; afraid of pain; fearful of being lonely; afraid of the future; fearful of being unloved or not appreciated; afraid that we might not have enough money for our needs (or even afraid that we won't have as much as other people)

And also Lord we are fearful of death.

Forgive us Lord that so often we do not trust you and sometimes we do not appreciate how much Jesus suffered for us. Help us to learn Lord that you really mean that we should not be afraid.

Lord, you said that if we are faithful and admit our sins, you will forgive us – and on that we depend.

**Prayers: Intercessions: using the words of Psalm 72**

Teach the king to judge with your righteousness O God;

Share with Him your own justice,

So that he will rule over your people with justice, and govern the oppressed with righteousness.

May the land enjoy prosperity and its people experience justice.

May the king judge the poor fairly; May he help the needy

And defeat their oppressors.

***(In the quiet we pray for the government of this country and others. A prayer for justice throughout the world – especially in places where there is violence and war, or where people are suffering because of climate change)***

May your people worship you as long as the sun shines, as long as the moon gives light, for ages to come.

May the king be like rain on the fields, like showers falling on the land.

May righteousness flourish in his lifetime and may prosperity last as long as the moon gives light.

***(In the quiet we pray for the church both in this country and where people suffer persecution. We pray for its worship and mission)***

He rescues the poor who call upon him, and those who are needy and neglected.  
He has pity on the weak and poor; he saves the lives of those in need.  
He rescues them from oppression and violence for their lives are precious to him.

***(We pray for people that we know who are in need)***

Praise the Lord, the God of Israel!  
He alone does wonderful things.  
Praise His glorious name forever. **Amen**

**Hymn: Lord I come to you**

Lord, I come to you, let my heart be changed, renewed,  
Flowing from the grace that I've found in you.  
And Lord, I've come to know the weaknesses I see in me,  
Will be stripped away by the power of your love.

*(Chorus) Hold me close, let your love surround me;  
Bring me near, draw me to your side.  
And as I wait, I'll rise up like the eagle,  
And I will soar with you, your Spirit leads me on  
In the power of your love.*

Lord, unveil my eyes, let me see you face to face,  
The knowledge of you love, as you live in me,  
Lord, renew my mind, as your will unfolds in my life  
In living every day by the power of your love.

*(Chorus)*

**Final prayer and Blessing:**

The Lord who conquered darkness with light,

**Grant us peace.**

The Lord who conquered death with life,

**Grant us peace.**

The Lord who conquered loneliness with love,

**Grant us peace.**

May the Lord's blessing go with us this day and always. **Amen**