

# Jesus calms the storm

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Date: 08 November 2020

Preacher: John Woods

[0:00] Well, good morning and welcome everybody to this pre-recorded service for the 8th November 2020 Calvary Church! At this point we're just entering lockdown number two here in the UK and as a church we're meeting together like this on YouTube and also on Zoom which gives an opportunity for interaction and a bit more of a sense of belonging.

So the Zoom is good, it's not what we would like it to be but it's certainly better than nothing. We are advancing our plans to prepare for limited meetings in our building.

When it's safe and responsible to do so please look out for updates on that. So welcome to you if you're regular or if you're just dropping in. For those dropping in I say the usual word of introduction that we're a small independent Baptist church based in the UK in the seaside town of Brighton which is directly south of London.

My name's Philip Wells and I'm an elder at the church here. So I'm going to be leading today and the talk will be given by my friend and colleague John Woods from Lansing.

And we're very grateful to him for the support and help he's been giving us. He's going to be speaking about the storm on the lake with Christ in the boat, with Christ in the vessel I smile at the storm as John Newton would have said.

[1:38] Today is actually Remembrance Sunday. This is the Sunday in which we stop to think of those who have given their lives in war. And the origin of this in UK terms is our own nation's experience of loss in the European war 1914-1918, going back to that.

And then subsequently the World War 1939-1945. And we think of the service and sacrifice of the armed forces community from Britain and the Commonwealth.

Of course, we're an international church and the Church of Jesus Christ is an international body with brothers and sisters from many nations. So we extend our thinking to those from many nations who lost their lives and their loved ones in armed conflict.

And we're going to be led in that. We pray for God to have mercy on us and pray that he will speed the day when wars cease and spears are turned into pruning hooks.

And we're going to have a two-minute silence where we invite all to stand or sit in respectful silence before God. And Angie Reeves is going to lead us in this.

[2:49] But she'll do that a bit later on in the proceedings as announced. So the plan is up on the screen here next to my head. And we are going to pray as we begin and then we'll sing this psalm.

Let's pray. Almighty God, we come in the midst of storms and perplexity. We come in a world where there is war and suffering.

And we look forward to the day when wars will cease and the peace of the living God will extend across the whole of humanity.

We thank you that you are the one who forgives our sins.

We thank you that you are the one who makes us glad by the stream which flows in the city of God. We thank you that you are our help and strength and that you help us in the right time, in our time of need.

[3:59] We thank you that your plans and purposes will not fail, but because you are almighty, your plans will succeed to exalt Jesus Christ, to make him visibly and consciously and deliberately and obviously the centre and pinnacle of all the cosmos.

So speed that day, we pray, but in our present day, come and be with us for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. So in a moment, we're going to sing Psalm 46b.

And this is the song that says, And this is the song that says, God is our refuge and strength and ever present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars to cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the shields with fire. Be still and know that I am God.

[5:17] I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord Almighty is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.

So this is Psalm 46 in version B in the Praise Hymnbook. And it's an appropriate reminder that God, it is God who makes wars to cease. And the tune is originally from a 1955 war film in the style of a march.

And I hope you'll find it appropriate and not insensitive for this tune to be put to use in a psalm that looks forward to God ending all wars.

So we sing Psalm 46b. Psalm 46b. Psalm 46b. Psalm 46b. Psalm 46b. Psalm 46b. Psalm 46b. Psalm 46b.

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[6:19] Psalm 46b. Psalm 46b. Psalm 46b. Psalm 46b. Though mountains shake and tremble, though swirling floods are raging, God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore.

There is a flowing river within God's holy city, God is in the midst of hell, she shall not be moved. God's help is swiftly given, wars vanish at his presence, God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore.

Come see the works of a maker, learn of his deeds all-powerful.

Wars will cease across the world when he shatters the spear. Be still and know your creator, uplift him in the nations.

[8:17] God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore. Angie Reeves for many years has been busy around this time of year with the poppy appeal.

And she's going to tell us something about Remembrance Sunday. So over to you, Angie. Thank you. Today is Remembrance Sunday. What is Remembrance Sunday all about?

Remembrance Sunday is a memorial day observed every year on November the 11th, or the nearest Sunday to that date. The day honours those who serve to defend our democratic freedom and our way of life.

Millions of lives were lost in conflict throughout Europe and the world during World War I. It was a war that truly affected the whole of the world. On November the 11th, we unite across different faiths, cultures and backgrounds to remember the service and the sacrifice of the armed forces community, both here in Great Britain and the Commonwealth.

Why November the 11th? Well, that was the day, in 1918, at 11am, that a special agreement was signed which silenced the guns after four years and four months of fighting.

[9:47] Now, every year, with dignity and respect, we remember those who did not return home, those that sacrificed their lives for our freedom. Remembrance Sunday is usually marked by ceremonies and church services at local war memorials in both cities, towns and villages.

It's attended by civic dignitaries, ex-servicemen and women, and members of the local and regular armed forces, reserve units, cadet forces and many other organisations.

As a Lieutenant Commander, Royal Naval Reserve Cadet Officer, I've attended many of these parades, both here and abroad, laying a wreath at the memorials. It's a solemn occasion, and one of which can be a very emotional experience.

Today, on Remembrance Sunday, we also observe the two-minute silence. The history of this goes back to 1918, when on Signal Hill, in South Africa, there was a two-minute silence, which was initiated by the noonday gun.

The first minute was for those that returned alive. The second was for those that fell. King George VI decreed to the nation in 1919 that this should be the practice here, and it is now common practice every year in many parts of the world that we come together to remember those that were lost, and we observe the two-minute silence out of dignity and respect.

[11:24] So what is the poppy all about? Poppies are seen as a symbol of remembrance and hope for a peaceful future, and worn this time of year, November.

They were adopted as a symbol of remembrance because they grew freely on the bleak, muddy, blood-spilled battlefields after the war ended. At this time of year, Australians, and some other nations, wear the poppy too.

Australians also wear a sprig of rosemary because it grows wild on the Gallipoli Peninsula, where many lives were also lost. The Royal British Legion organised the poppy appeal, and all the money donated from the purchase of poppies helps support veterans, forces personnel, and their families who have served and sacrificed throughout generations.

It provides aid in many forms, bereavement, homelessness, and everything in between. It funds, crucially, charity work for those in need.

Lest we forget Lest we forget is a phrase commonly spoken at remembrance parades. It was written in a poem by Rudyard Kipling, which reads, God of our fathers, known of old, Lord of our far-flung battle line, Beneath whose awful hand we hold, Dominion over palm and pine, Lord God of hosts, be with us yet, Lest we forget, Lest we forget.

[13:01] The poem is widely acknowledged as being connected with Deuteronomy 4, verses 7-9. What other nation is so great as to have their God near them, the way our Lord God is near us when we pray to him?

And what other nation is so great as to have righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? Only be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget things that your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live.

Teach your children and their children after them. Let us pray together. Lord Jesus, you came that the world might know the peace that you have experienced with the Father eternally.

Yet you have taught us that in this life there will be wars and rumour of wars. Nations will rise against nations as violence works itself out in the world.

However, through you the world may be saved. O Lord, send your Spirit into the hearts of men that the world might know the true peace through your abundant mercy.

[14:13] You are a God of peace who abhors violence. You encourage unity. Lord, teach us to be peacemakers and walk in a manner that reflects the wondrous peace that is given through your Spirit in Christ.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks so much for that, Angie. So let us now have two minutes of respectful silence as we've had explained to us.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. On these occasions, we often sing a version of Psalm 90 On these occasions we often sing a version of Psalm 90.

It's the Psalm that reminds us very starkly of the brevity of life and the frailty of life and that our solidity, our stability is not in the stability and solidity of this life but in the solidity and stability of the Lord God himself.

[17:11] Psalm 90 is the one that says, Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

You turn men back to dust. And so he does. But our help comes from the Lord God who is from everlasting to everlasting. Our God, our help in ages past.

So the Psalm reminds us of the brevity of life and prays that while we're here on earth we may live lives but have something of eternity about them. And the prayer in Psalm 90 is establish the work of our hands.

And also to pray that God will more than compensate for the losses and crosses and pains of this broken world. Relent, O Lord, how long will it be?

Have compassion on your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

[18:18] Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble. Lord, more than compensate for all the brokenness of this world.

And God will do that to a degree in this life, but absolutely, totally and abundantly in the world to come. So we're going to sing, Our God, our help in ages past.

Let's sing. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[21:13] A thousand ages in your sight are like an evening gone.

Short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun.

Before the rising sun. Time like an ever-roaming stream will bear us all away.

We fly as forgotten as a dream. Dies with the dawning day.

Our God, our hope in ages past. Our hope for years to come.

[22:27] Be our defence while life shall last. And our eternal home.

And our eternal home. Now we're going to pray.

And let's do it the other way around this time. Let's pray the Lord's Prayer first. And then take a moment to enlarge on the petition which says, Your kingdom come.

Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. And we'll... So let's pray the Lord's Prayer first. If we'll say it out loud. And then we'll enlarge upon it in further prayer. So let us say together.

Our Father in heaven. Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[23:27] Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our sins. As we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation.

But deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Forever and ever.

Amen. And as we continue to pray, I'm reminded of Isaiah chapter 2.

Which says, In the last days the mountain of the Lord's house will be established as chief among the mountains. It will be raised above the hills. And all nations will stream to it.

Many peoples will come and say, Let us go up to the house of the Lord. To the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways that we may walk in his paths.

The law will go out from Zion. The word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples.

[24:28] They will beat their swords into plowshares. Their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation.

Nor will they train for war anymore. And let's pray for the fulfilment of that word from the Lord.

Heavenly Father, we pray for the building of your holy temple.

The raising of the mountain of your holy city. So we understand that this means we are to pray for the building of your church. We pray for the spreading of the gospel.

That across the world, many nations will come and say, Let us go to the house of the God of Jacob.

We pray, Lord, for this in the UK here.

We pray for the European nations. Pray for the Asian nations, the African nations, the Chinese nations, the North American and South American nations.

[25:30] And whatever other nations they may be. Lord, enlarge your kingdom and may many peoples come to Jesus Christ to seek him and to seek his ways.

We pray for the true preaching and teaching of your word. That the word of the Lord may indeed go out from Zion. So please bless all preachers, evangelists, teachers, Sunday school workers, children's workers, theological students, theological professors, trading establishments across the world.

We pray that your word might be taught carefully, honestly, with integrity and truthfulness.

Particularly pray for our friends, Chris Hawthorne and his wife going back to Zambia.

We pray that you would bless there the work of training that they do there. We pray that there would be justice and holiness in your city.

That there would be true judgment. And that your people would be delivered from sin, from wrongness, from twistedness.

[26:44] Teach us your ways, O Lord. Teach us true humility and deep repentance. Give us lives that embody genuinely something of the healing and redeeming and righteousness that is the essence of your kingdom.

We pray too for the settling of disputes in your church. We pray for the unity of your church and the peace of your church. We pray for the unity of the church. That old antagonisms would be left and new peace would be established.

We pray that swords would be beaten into plowshares. We pray that nation may not take up sword against nation anymore.

We ask in your common grace to send peace into the nations. So we pray for all matters of international relations. We pray for all places of weather of wars and rumours of war.

Please will you send your peace in your common grace, we ask. But until the great day of peace, we ask in the fullness of your saving grace that your church may demonstrate peace and unity and harmony.

[27:59] We pray that even as today we have representatives of nations that once tried to kill each other. Who are sitting together as friends and brothers and sisters within the kingdom of grace.

That is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Please develop, establish, confirm and expand that work so that your purposes will be fulfilled.

So please fulfil all your purposes for us and in us and through us. For Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen. Amen. Our next song is by John Newton. Written, I think, more for its teaching content than its poetic excellence.

Let me just click to show which one it is. It's the one that says, with Christ in the vessel I smile at the storm. It begins, be gone, unbelief, my saviour is near.

[28:59] Be gone, meaning get away from me. Unbelief, this part of me that doesn't want to trust you. Get rid of that, Lord. And fill me with faith in your word.

With Christ in the vessel I smile at the storm. It's 875, actually. Amen. Be gone, unbelief, my saviour is near.

And for my relief will surely appear. By prayer let me wrestle and prove that he saves.

With Christ in the vessel I smile at the waves. Though dark be my way, since he is my guide, Then I must obey, and he will provide.

With human trust broken, when mortals all fail. The word he has spoken shall surely prevail.

[30:30] His love in time past forbids me to think.

He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink. And can he have taught me to trust in his name.

And this far have brought me to put me to shame. Why should I complain of want or distress?

Temptation or pain, he told me no less. The heirs of salvation I know from his word.

Through much tribulation must follow their Lord. Temptation or pain, he told me no less.

[32:13] Oh, how pleasant the conqueror's song. And I'm going to hand over to John Woods.

Thank you again very much, John, for ministering this word to us. Thank you for your welcome to Calvary Church today. I'm very pleased to be here and take another look at Mark's gospel.

I'm going to be reading from Mark chapter 4 in a moment. But before we do that, let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for this opportunity to be together here in this place today to worship you.

We would thank you for the opportunity to call upon your name now and pray that you will help us as we look into your word together. Help us, we pray, to understand.

Help us to receive from you. Help us to learn your truth. Help us to experience your presence. We live in uncertain times and we pray that you will speak words of reassurance and hope and strength to us.

[33:24] And we pray that we would have a larger perspective on who you are and what you're doing in our lives and our world. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

We turn for our reading to Mark chapter 4 verses 35 to 41. That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, let's go over to the other side.

Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along just as he was in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up and the great waves broke over the boat so that it was nearly swamped.

Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, teacher, don't you care if we drown?

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, quiet, be still. And it was completely calm.

[34:25] He said to his disciples, why is it you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? They were terrified and asked each other, who is this?

Even the wind and the waves obey him. Have you ever been caught in a storm? This week, I took a walk and when I left Lansing, sea level Lansing, it was lovely and sunny.

When I climbed up into the downs, I found that the top of the downs was completely blanketed with thick mist.

Just a very short distance and a very different experience of weather. They say that on the Sea of Galilee, it's very easy for one moment, everything to be calm and the next moment for there to be chaos.

Look back at this year and it feels a little bit like that. We began the year in January and February and everything seemed to be fine.

[35:42] Everything seemed to be in order. The economy was ticking along. Church programs were getting into their step again after Christmas. And then suddenly, the unseen storm of coronavirus swept through the world and swept through our country and has changed things beyond recognition.

Of course, in the last few weeks, you as a church have experienced something of unexpected storms. The loss of a well-loved elder.

The loss of another elder in very challenging circumstances. These are difficult things to navigate. Difficult experiences for us to go through. And we wonder quite what God might be saying to us in them and what God might be doing in them. Mark's gospel speaks to these seasons of our souls. A virus. Loss. Disappointment. The kind of experiences that can crush our lives.

[37:06] Kind of experiences that maybe can destroy the things that are very precious to us. So imagine the scene.

Jesus has been very busy throughout chapter four teaching and helping the people. It's exhausting to preach God's word.

It's exhausting to help and to heal. Jesus has been giving and giving and giving. And here at this point, he leaves the crowds.

And he seeks a moment of refuge. He's been busy, busy, busy with the crowd on the land. And there is a boat ready.

And the ready boat takes him on a boat trip. I don't know about you. It's rather nice, isn't it, to take a trip on a boat, whether it be on a river or a lake, or to have a nice, relaxing cruise.

[38:14] You've had a really busy season of life. And there you are, sitting in your room, looking out at the balcony on the cruise ship, drinking a cool glass of drink and enjoying the view of a calm sea.

Perfect. What couldn't be better than that? Jesus, of course, was drained. Sometimes we get to that stage where there's a day off or a holiday, and it feels as though our battery has drained right down to empty.

We're like a phone where the phone is flashing, that there's hardly any battery left, and we need to very soon plug in and be recharged.

Jesus has given everything. And we're told there in Mark chapter 4 that they take Jesus just as he was and put him into the boat.

He's got nothing left in the tank, humanly speaking. He's dead beat. He's worn out. And he's placed in the boat.

[39:37] And the boat takes the trip onto the lake accompanied by some other boats, we're told. But there's nothing more said about them later in the story.

The story is organised around three uses of the word great or megas. Like, oh, mega.

It's somewhat obscured by the translations in some of the translations of Mark. But the three greats, 37, 39, 41, are great storm, great calm, and great fear.

And the first of those greats comes in verse 37. There was a great storm. A furious storm arose. As we said, the Lake of Galilee was known for having unexpected and ferocious storms arise.

[40:43] Things look calm and good, and then suddenly it looks as though all hell is let loose. It's what they say in East Anglia, where we come from, that you go out on a day to the seaside and you set yourself up at the seaside.

And we say it's too nice too early. We've set up at 10 o'clock and then at 12 o'clock it's raining. Too nice. Too soon. And that was the experience of Jesus and the disciples on the lake. It was nice. Too nice.

Too soon. A great storm breaks over the boat. And of course, you need to recognize that storms have a certain metaphorical symbolism in biblical thinking.

In the Old Testament, the ability to control a storm was an indication of God being at work.

[41:53] The image of a storm was a metaphor for chaotic evil and life's troubles. And believers in the Old Testament could always trust in God through the storms of life.

So we remember those words from Isaiah, chapter 43 and verse 2. Though you pass through the waters, I will be with you.

So this story would have immediately conjured up in people's minds the idea of God being at work, but also the idea of the chaos of evil and the chaos of trouble, which challenge God's people.

And in fact, in the early church and throughout the history of the church, the idea of the church as a boat navigating troubled seas is an image which has been used again and again of the church in history, the church in trouble.

But the reminder, the reassurance that when in trouble, there is the presence of the living God and the deliverance of the living God.

[43:17] It's important to say that Mark's attention is not so much upon the boat or the storm, but on the person who's asleep in the storm.

This is the fascinating elephant in the room in this story. Jesus is asleep.

I remember hearing a sermon by a man called Fred Craddock, and he made the very interesting observation that he couldn't imagine Jesus being asleep.

He said, I can imagine many things. I can imagine Jesus preaching. I can imagine Jesus healing. I can imagine Jesus at a table eating with people.

I can imagine him walking and standing and sitting and engaging with people. I just find it difficult to imagine him sleeping. It's not because I've got some kind of strange or spooky idea about Jesus that he somehow could continue living without sleeping.

[44:25] I know that he was truly God and truly human. He had to eat. He had to drink. He had to sleep. And therefore, sleep was not an unusual activity for him.

He needed to do it. It's just that I find it very difficult in my gallery of images to imagine Jesus asleep. Now, we all need to sleep. And as Fred Craddock said, some of you this morning know what it is to be asleep right now.

But I find it difficult to picture Jesus asleep. And the reason Craddock said that he found it difficult to imagine Jesus asleep is because sleep is a very private thing.

It's something that we kind of do on our own unless we kind of nod off when we're on a train or something. Usually when we sleep, we're on our own or with our wives or husbands.

We're vulnerable when we're asleep. We can come apart and unravel a bit when we sleep. When we're awake, we hold ourselves together.

[45:40] But when we're asleep, things kind of go wrong. We sprawl and we stretch and we drool and we snore. All these things just are not something that we want to particularly make public.

So sleep is a private thing. And also sleep is something that we engage in for a variety of different reasons.

So some people sleep to avoid boredom. Some people sleep because they're trying to avoid something that they don't want to face.

Maybe they wake up on a particularly cold morning and have a look at the weather outside and decide to pull the duvet over their heads again and see if they can perhaps get a few more minutes of sleep before they have to get up and face the day.

Sleep can be a form of avoiding. And of course, the dangerous thing to be thinking about Jesus is that Jesus, asleep here on the boat, is avoiding, avoiding helping the disciples, avoiding doing anything to deliver them, avoiding exercising care for them.

[47:13] Of course, you can't help but remember that there was another man of God, another preacher, who was found sleeping in their cabin in a storm.

This story reminds us of the story of Jonah running away from his mission to preach to Nineveh and hiding in his bedroom when the sailors were out of their mind with terror because of the storm which had afflicted that boat.

He was avoiding going to preach to Nineveh. He was avoiding being any help to these troubled sailors. He was asleep because he was hiding.

Jesus is asleep in the stern, and that's a problem for the disciples. And of course, it is something of a dilemma for us.

Why did he sleep like that? The storm is raging around the disciples, but it's got nothing on the storm that's raging inside the disciples.

[48:26] You know what it's like? You're tearing your hair out, worrying about something, and then someone else is in the same situation, and they just don't seem to be particularly bothered about the situation.

They seem to be untroubled about what's going on around them. And sometimes we can become more irritated by the person who seems to be showing disregard for our difficulty than we are disturbed by the actual difficulty itself.

So imagine all the feelings that had been going through the disciples' minds on this day. They were happy to be on the boat with Jesus in the first instance.

They had a busy day too, and they were very glad that the day was over and that they were able to have a change. They were concerned when they began to see the weather begin to change, and then they were afraid when they saw the magnitude of the storm that was coming towards them.

These men had learned to respect the water. I come from a fishing community, and I know what it is to have family members experiencing shipwreck.

[49:55] I know it is to have friends who have lost multiple members of their family. In one instance, three members of their family in a tragic loss of life at sea off the east coast.

These men were experienced. They knew what the water could do, and they were afraid. And then their fear turned into anger.

It's interesting, isn't it, that when things go wrong, we can begin to blame. We've kind of seen that a little bit in the election in America and also in the situation around the coronavirus in our own British government.

There was a tendency for anger to begin to emerge and for blame to begin to be attributed to other people for what's going on.

They're afraid and they're angry. And they decide, well, you know, let's wake him up. I wonder who made the suggestion. Let's wake him up.

[51:04] Who's going to do it? And whether it was gingerly or whether it was boldly, they go to wake Jesus up. Teacher, don't you care that we are about to drown?

Don't you care? Don't you care for us? Don't you care that we're perishing? It's an interesting statement. It's not so much a request.

It's more of an accusation. It's more that they're kind of pointing the finger. Jesus, you don't seem to be caring about us.

Teacher, do you care? Teacher, do you care for us? And I guess that there have been times in our lives, maybe over the last few weeks, when we think, you know, are you on my side, God?

Are you for me? Do you care for me? Are you interested in me? Are you abandoning me? Do you care for us, teacher?

[52:15] Do you care if we're going to die? Do you care if this boat's going to be broken up and we just all end up in the bottom of the water? No, I think it's important to recognize, and it was true here for the disciples, that it's not easy for us to believe that Jesus is in command of our destiny.

It's not always easy for us either. We think about our lives, our families, our church. During COVID, with all the kind of changes, not being able to be involved in normal services and ministries and programs, what will church look like in the future?

We worry about our nation and our world. We worry about so many things, and sometimes it's difficult for us to grasp this. Is Jesus in command?

Does he know what he's doing? Is he really working his purposes out? The disciples ask the question.

And Jesus got up, and he spoke to the wind and the waves. Quiet! Be still!

[53:30] It's a command. Jesus is commanding the winds and the waves, and there was, the second of the mega words, there was a great calm.

Jesus is like God at the Red Sea, dividing the Red Sea, calming the Red Sea. He got up, and he commands, and there is a great calm.

Almost as instantly as the storm was whipped up, the calm emerges. Be still and know that I am God.

I will be exalted in the earth. God's ability to still the storm and to still our lives is amazing.

The peace of God that transcends our hearts, our understanding, will guard and keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

[54:48] Peace. Peace. Peace that the world cannot give and the world cannot take away. Peace. Peace. Be still. And there was a great calm.

Why are you afraid, says Jesus? Do you still have no faith? Fear and faith.

God says to us, is it 365 times in the Bible, do not be afraid. And yet the natural tendency is for us to experience fear, to be afraid, to be terrified, because we find it difficult at those moments where we need to trust, to trust and not be afraid.

I think it was A.W. Tozer who said, you know, that we say that we trust in God, but we make sure that we never allow ourselves to be left in situations where we really do need to trust in God.

Fear and faith. These are the two great themes of the biblical story.

[56:38] Of course, we find that in life we experience great challenges, great storms in our life. The dark of redundancy or broken health or broken relationships.

The challenge of bereavement. Death of death of death of a loved one. Things that bring great uncertainty and great fear into our lives.

And all that is for you. What are the storms that are threatening to crush your confidence in God?

Fear and faith. They needed him to do things. He needed them to trust him.

It's kind of an interesting thing, isn't it, in our relationship with the Lord Jesus. We do need him to do things for us. We are dependent upon him. And we assume sometimes when those things are delayed.

[57:50] And of course, we all got used in this last year to waiting. Waiting for a change in circumstances. When we are forced to wait, we assume that he has forgotten.

He's gone away. He's let us down. He's disappointed us. But delays are not necessarily indication of a lack of interest by Jesus.

Sometimes the delays are part of his deliverance. Part of his plan. Part of bringing us to a deeper experience of himself.

They were terrified. Fearful. But Jesus wants them to trust. And compare the lesson of Mark chapter 4 and verse 27.

The word sleep has appeared another time in this chapter, interestingly. In the story that only appears in Mark's gospel of the growing seed.

[59:01] Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows. Though he does not know how. Jesus has spoken to them that day in his teaching.

This parable that speaks about his working. And Jesus very specifically says that whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows. The work of Jesus continues whether he is asleep or awake.

That's what he's taught his disciples today. And the first time they experience him asleep, they assume that he's not at work. He's not doing what he has promised to do.

But that's not an appropriate conclusion. Because Jesus is always attentive. Interested. In touch. In control. On our case. In our lives. Involved in our world. What do we see when we kind of think about this particular idea?

[60:05] Who is in control? The sleep of Jesus is an act of total and complete trust. He goes to sleep in the boat because he knows that there's nothing that can threaten him.

There's nothing that can destroy him. It reminds me a little of Peter's experience, maybe learning from this particular experience. When in Acts chapter 12, he'd been arrested.

And he was about to be executed the next day, so everybody thought. He was in prison. And he was in such a deep sleep that the angel who comes to deliver him has to poke him hard in order to wake him up.

He was asleep because he knew that Jesus was in control. Maybe he learnt that from this moment.

They say that Mark's gospel is pretty much the memories of Peter written down by Mark.

Perhaps he remembered. And that's why he was able to sleep with such confidence. Who is in control? Jesus is in control.

[61:16] Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him. It's an interesting question.

We've said that the Old Testament tells us that stilling the storm is a mark of divine activity. Who then is this?

Even the wind and the waves obey him. Jesus, as we saw last week, is the great category breaker. We can't put him into a neat box. There is no one like him. He is unique. And this particular event and the three events that follow it, the calming of the storm in the demon-possessed man, the healing of the woman with the issue of blood and the raising of Jairus' daughter, all are indications of the authority of Jesus, that there is no one at all like him.

In a sense, what's happened in this story of Mark chapter 4 is that Jesus, in the minds of the disciples, begins big, the big teacher, healer, helper.

[62:42] As the storm takes hold, he begins to shrink in their eyes. And shrink in their eyes. They look at him sleeping and he shrinks in their eyes.

They think he doesn't care. They think he's not interested. They think that he's powerless. And then when Jesus stands up and commands the storm, Jesus grows beyond their wildest imagination. Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him. Now, the odd thing about the last verse of Mark's gospel chapter 4 is that we get the third of these mega words, great words.

They experienced great fear. They were terrified. The end of Mark chapter 4 is a question mark. Question mark. As they're continually troubled about who Jesus is and the implications of this.

[63:58] They're trembling. They're trembling with fear. They're trembling with awe. It's remarkable, isn't it, that they seem to be more fearful after the storm than they are in.

The storm. Because they've encountered Jesus. Who is not a kind of cosy, reassuring figure. Although he does provide us strong and encouraging reassurance. But he is the Lord of all. He is the master of the universe.

He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Mark chapter 16 and verse 8. The gospel ends with the women experiencing fear.

Mark understands human psychology. Mark understands that Christians are not always courageous.

[65:09] Mark understands what it is to fear and to fail. We have a story like Mark chapter 4 in the Bible.

Because it reminds us of how human we are in our situations of trial. The progress of faith is not a straight line.

Up, up, up, up, up, up. It is a very wiggly line. Sometimes we are magnificent in our confidence.

And sometimes we are troubled. And sometimes our faith and our fear are mixed in equal measure. It's a reminder that we are in touch with Jesus.

Jesus who is greater than all our fears. Jesus who is greater than all the threats that come to us.

[66:26] Remember the words that were asked about Aslan, the lion. Lucy asks, Is he safe?

Oh, no. He's not safe. But he is good. And here in this story, we were reminded of that reality. Jesus is not safe. But he is good. He is good. And he is the one who is with us on stormy days. Who can fill us and our fearful hearts with faith in stormy days. That even though we find it difficult maybe to join the dots in our confidence and believe that God will in fact be at work in our lives. He will. He will. We can trust him on stormy days. Jesus says, I will be with you in your storm. [67:28] Coming back to those words of Isaiah 43. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. You've been through storms in these last months.

I am with you, he says. And I will be with you. Behold, I'm with you to the end of the age, as Matthew's gospel puts it.

He is a very present help in time of trouble. In your circumstances today, maybe Jesus has got smaller because of your troubles.

Just pray and expect Jesus to get bigger and bigger and bigger and greater.

Because he is with you. And he is for you. Praise God. Amen.

[68:37] John requested that we include this song, which we're going to have now. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. Sweetest frame, I think he means frame of mind. That even if I'm in a really spiritual frame of mind, I don't put my trust in that, but I put my trust in Jesus.

So we're going to sing this with all the verses that are normally in the hymn book. But we're going to have the chorus which says, Christ alone, cornerstone.

So it's a little bit of a hybrid, I suppose. But the words will come up on the screen. And I think most of us know the tune. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

[69:56] Jesus' blood and righteousness. No merit of my own, I claim.

But wholly trust in Jesus' name. When darkness fails His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace.

In every high and stormy gale, My anchor holds and will not fail.

Christ alone, cornerstone, We've made strong in the Savior's love.

Through the storm, He is Lord, Lord of all.

[71:04] He knows His love. He knows His love. He knows His love. Support me in the rising flood.

When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and say.

I cast His light, His counsel, promises and power.

His name and honor, Lord of all. I'll stay to save me from the burning rain.

Christ alone, cornerstone, Christ alone, cornerstone, We've made strong in the Savior's love.

[72:10] Through the storm, He is Lord, Lord of all. Christ alone, Lord of all. When the Lord comes, His voice shall sound.

Oh, may I then in Him be found. Lord in His righteousness alone.

Christ alone, faultless to stand before the throne. Christ alone, cornerstone, We've made strong in the Savior's love.

Through the storm, He is Lord, Lord of all.

Christ alone, cornerstone, We've made strong in the Savior's love.

[73:26] Through the storm, He is Lord, Lord of all.

Let's pray. Lord, thank you that you are with us through the storm. Help us to trust you and to see and know in our own experience truly how great you are.

To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence, without fault and with great joy. To the only God our Savior, be glory, majesty, power and authority.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore. Amen. Amen. Amen. That's the end of our time for this morning.

And we hope that we will see one another before too long. And until that day comes or until we meet the Lord, it's goodbye from me just now. Bye bye.

[74:44] Bye bye. Bye bye.