**Jesus stops the storm** 5/11/23dkm

Read: Job 38, Mark 4:35-41

Text: Mark 4:35-41

Psalms: 33:1-9, 93, 65:1-7, 134a

Because the anti-God theory of evolution is so widely accepted, few people today appreciate the awe and wonder of the mighty works of God. We can also become less than totally amazed because of our familiarity with this and other miracles in the Bible. It is good that we read and keep reading them, but let us not become indifferent or insensitive to the mighty works of Jesus recorded in the Bible. Let us continue to be amazed by this man called Jesus. Boice writes, ‘Most people do not want to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, or bow to him as their personal Lord and Saviour, but somehow most people who actually have heard of Jesus can’t quite banish Jesus from their minds. The person of Jesus broods over our discordant secular times, and who he is and what he was about remains a current question’. The person of Jesus continues to impact millions around the globe.

Jesus’ power to stop the storm certainly impressed and impacted his disciples who were with him in the boat. Three of the four gospel writers record this miracle. Matthew was in the boat himself. Mark was not in the boat but Peter, the probable source for much of his gospel was.

**1. All in the boat**

Jesus was teaching in towns and villages around Galilee. The crowds grew and pressed around him so he got into a boat anchored just of the shore of the lake, Lake Galilee, and preached to them from the boat (4:1). Four of his disciples were fishermen so he had no trouble getting a boat. These men left their nets to follow Jesus but still they knew little about this Rabbi they were following. Why did they leave everything to follow Jesus in the first place? Luke gives us more detail than Matthew or Mark. He tells about an interaction between Peter and Jesus, and the huge, net-breaking, boat-sinking catch of fish. Peter was amazed, truly amazed. He did not attribute the huge catch to good luck; he fell on his knees before Jesus saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord’ (Luke 5:8). His amazement, his astonishment, went beyond words. It led to discipleship and to worship.

At the end of this day of preaching from a boat, and with the crowds still on the shore, Jesus decided to cross over the lake. He suggested to his disciples that they cross over the lake to the other side (4:35). Jesus was not a fisherman (not of fish anyway), but the fishermen-disciples agreed and took him along in their boat. Jesus was very tired and soon fell asleep on a pillow in the stern of the boat (4:38); the others would have been rowing. The lake of Galilee is about 21 km long and 11 km wide, a sizeable body of water. It is some 200 m below sea level. It is surrounded by hills which are quite high on the northern and eastern sides. As the surrounds of the lake heat up in the day the hot air rises and cold air rushes in replace it. Valleys or ravines in these hills funnel the wind so that it whips up large waves on the lake.

**2. A great windstorm**

‘A great windstorm arose’ (4:37). The word Mark uses means a furious gust of wind or hurricane. Matthew says a great tempest arose on the sea (Mat 8:24). The word he uses is ‘*seismos*’, the word for an earthquake; this was a ‘*seismos megas’.* As the gale force winds whipped up huge waves, the rowers did all they could to counter them. But the waves started crashing over the boat, threatening to sink it, and drown all on board. Yet Jesus kept sleeping. Sure, he was physically tired but it must have been more than this. Was it that he knew his hour had not yet come? Was it that he could control the wind and the waves?

Speaking to Job of his sovereign rule over the universe the Lord said,

“Who shut in the sea with doors,

when it burst forth and issued from the womb;

when it made the clouds its garment,

and thick darkness its swaddling band,

when I fixed my limit for it, and set bars and doors;

when I said, ‘this far you may come and no further,

and here your proud waves must stop!’” (Job 38:9-11).

The psalmist writes of the Lord on high as mightier than the mighty waves of the sea, and as ruling the raging sea: ‘when its waves rise you still them’ (Ps 93:4, 89:9).

Some time ago a boy stood on a beach in the USA threatening to sue the President for not taking action to stop climate change? How ridiculous! How tragic! Someone had taught this boy that the sea was advancing. He became fearful that his favourite beach would soon disappear. They also told him that we can stop the advance of the sea. He believed the President could save his beach. How tragic that young people are being taught such things rather than the truth that we find in the Bible.

While speaking of the President, we note that he signs a lot of ‘executive orders’. He signs the order and the thing is done- right? No! Judges sometimes stop his orders being carried out. His word is not as authoritative as he would like. Some think of the Pope’s word as being authoritative when he speaks ‘*ex cathedra*’, but is this the case? No! Yet when Jesus spoke they said he spoke as one having authority (Mat 7:29). They said, ‘No man ever spoke like this man’ (Jn 7:46). People were asking, ‘Who is this man’? The disciples in the boat were about to witness this man demonstrate authority over the wind and the waves.

**3. Astounding miracle**

With great urgency the disciples woke Jesus to tell him they were perishing. Mark has them being a bit more critical of Jesus than the other gospels: ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ (4:38). They criticised Jesus for sleeping when they were furiously trying to stop their boat from sinking, and save themselves from drowning in the furious storm.

Jesus will later rebuke them for lacking faith, but they had some faith, sufficient faith to come asking Jesus for help - Matthew has Jesus saying, ‘O you of little faith’ (Mat 8:26). What did they expect Jesus to do? Give them a hand with the rowing? They had seen Jesus heal lots of sick people and cast out demons but this was different, or was it? Matthew also has them saying, ‘Lord, save us!’ They wanted him to do something to save them, but certainly not in the manner that he did. The angel told Mary that, ‘with God nothing is impossible’ (Luke 1:37). Did the disciples believe this? But who is this man Jesus?

The disciples knew about Moses dividing the Red Sea by the power of God. They knew about the Jordan River stopping for Joshua. They knew the story of Jonah. They knew almighty God had power over the forces of nature but this was different; this was them in the boat; this was the rubber hitting the road, as we say. And then there was the question of, ‘Who is this man Jesus?’ They asked him to save them but what would he do? What could he do? How would you have responded to the storm if you had been in the boat that day? You may have faced other dangers in your life. Maybe you are facing a grave danger today - a life threatening disease, attack from enemies, or some other crisis. Are you living in fear, or by faith?

Jesus responded to the disciple’s pleading. “He arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still! And the wind ceased and there was a great calm” (4:39). The word ‘rebuke’ is interesting in this context. It is found in all the gospel accounts. Leon Morris writes, ‘This is a somewhat surprising verb and may imply that there was an evil force behind the storm’. Another commentator writes, ‘By rebuking the wind and the waves he actually rebuked the powers of Satan, which at that moment were active in the elements’. Was Satan actually trying to drown Jesus while he was asleep? Satan was behind the storm that killed Job’s children. He did this to test Job, the servant of God. But God is powerful to save from all Satan’s attacks. He is omnipotent.

Mark tells us what Jesus said to the wind and the waves- he said ‘Peace, be still!’ (4:39). He could have said the same thing to the disciple’s hearts! The wind obeyed Jesus and stopped, and there was great calm (4:39). The disciples were amazed; absolutely astonished. If they had previously seen men telling the wind to stop they would have laughed. But this was no joke. This was no conjuring trick. This was no scene from a movie. This was no dream or hallucination, as sceptics might say. These men were more awake than they had ever been in their lives. They thought this was the end; that they were about to die. Then Jesus stood up and rebuked the wind. They must have been glad Jesus was in the boat. They must have been glad they came and woke him. But what sort of man was this?

If you believe that God created the heavens and the earth, and everything in them, you have a head start in knowing who Jesus is. If you don’t know how everything came into existence out of nothing you are way behind the mark. Let us stop handicapping our children by failing to teach them that God created the heavens and the earth, and that in six days. Since God spoke the world into existence; since God told the seas, ‘Thus far and no further’; and since Jesus told the wind to stop, and it did, we can conclude that Jesus stopped the wind by the power of God. The Pharisees may have said he did it by the power of Satan but the disciples did not believe such foolishness. Even so, they were not yet ready to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity.

**4. Awe and amazement**

Seeing the wind obey Jesus shocked the disciples. ‘They feared exceedingly’ (4:41). They feared Jesus more than they did the storm! Matthew reports that they “marvelled saying, ‘Who can this man be that the winds and the seas obey Him?’” (Mat 8:27). Jesus rebuked the disciples for being fearful, and of little faith regarding the storm (1:26). Where does that leave you and me? Do you believe that with God all things are possible? Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that he can calm not only storms but also calm your heart. A sinful heart is like the restless, surging sea. It knows no peace (Isa 48:22). In the Bible we are told to fear God, not man. We are to fear God and not the creation because God rules over his creation.

The stopping of the storm is one of only a few ‘nature’ miracles in the gospels, but looking through the whole Bible we find other occasions on which the Lord intervened in the laws of nature that he set in place. When Moses came to the Red Sea he stretched out his hand and rebuked the sea and it dried up (Psalm 106:9). They saw God’s great salvation. When the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant stepped into the flooded Jordan River it stopped flowing and the people crossed over on dry ground. When Joshua was fighting the Canaanites the Lord sent huge and deadly hailstones upon the enemy (Josh 10:11). When Samuel was leading Israel the Philistines came to attack but the Lord thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day (1Sam 7:10).

Satan was behind the storm that killed Job’s children. He did this to test Job, the servant of God. But God is powerful to save from all Satan’s attacks. He is all-powerful.

*‘God is ready to help in time of trouble.*

*Therefore we will not fear,*

*Even though the earth be removed,*

*And the mountains fall into the middle of the sea;*

*Though its waters roar and be troubled’*

(Psalm 46:1-3).

Jesus saved the disciples from drowning in the lake. The disciples, as we know, came to believe in Jesus. They were given the faith to believe. John saw Jesus die on the cross; after the Sabbath he ran to the tomb of Jesus and found it empty; ‘He saw and believed’ (Jn 20:8). Peter was slower to believe but did so after having denied Jesus. John wrote his gospel, ‘that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name’ (Jn 20:31).

I close with the words of a chorus that goes like this:

*With Christ in the vessel we can smile at the storm, smile at the storm, smile at the storm. With Christ in the vessel we can smile at the storm, as we go sailing home.*

Amen.