

Dear Friends,

Mark 4: 37-38

Dear Friends,

Jesus and his friends are in a little boat on Lake Galilee. They have sailed into a heavy storm. They are at the mercy of the wind and waves. It's not long since they felt close to heaven as they listened to Jesus and his message. Now they feel close to heaven because they fear that their time on earth could be at an end.

I wonder if you have ever unexpectedly found yourself in the middle of a storm. Not perhaps a real physical storm, but an experience that threatens to capsize and drown you. Maybe a sudden health scare or some troubling problem that unexpectedly needs to be managed. It hits you out of nowhere. It leaves you feeling as vulnerable and frightened as the friends of Jesus in their fragile boat.

I wonder if sometimes the most threatening storms are those which arise from within. It could be emotional turmoil, strong feelings which you are just not able to control. It could be a storm of thinking. You can't stop your mind from dwelling on something. Maybe a feeling of guilt keeps surfacing, or there's some anxiety that gnaws at you, or a temptation that won't let you go. It's like storm force ten. The winds knock you off balance. The waves threaten to overwhelm you. The little boat that is you and your life looks like it might get broken to pieces.

As they go through the storm, the friends of Jesus are very frightened. They are used to this lake. They are experienced at fishing. But they have never known anything quite like this. Their fear makes them agitated and anxious. It makes them panic. They find it hard to think straight or act sensibly.

And while the friends panic, Jesus trusts. In the middle of the storm, he is asleep with his head resting on a cushion. He is able to sleep because he has confidence. He has confidence in his friends. They are experienced on the lake. They know how to get through a storm and handle a boat. He trusts them. He also has confidence in you. You may not believe in yourself, but Jesus believes in you. You can handle the things that come your way. You can manage and deal with all that is placed in your hands. You are a powerful, gifted person. Can you do it? Yes, you can.

But more than having confidence in his friends, Jesus has confidence in God. His calm is like that of the psalmist who wrote, "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you make me dwell in safety".

The friends of Jesus however are not impressed. He should be awake and doing something. He should be helping. They wake him up, saying, "Don't you care that we are perishing?" Are your prayers ever like that? Does God sometimes seem to be silent and sleeping, when you want God to be active and working. Perhaps you too shake a fist at God and say, "Aren't you bothered that we are being completely destroyed?"

Jesus wakes. The friends are preoccupied with keeping the boat afloat and themselves alive. They want him to join them in bailing out, setting the sails or taking a turn with the oars. But he has a better idea.

God bless you,

Tony