

Dear Friends,

Mark 4: 39-41

Jesus is waking up after a calm and peaceful sleep. As he returns to consciousness, he realises what's happening around him. He is on a boat in the middle of a fierce storm. His friends are frightened and anxious. They've woken him because they want him to help. He does. He rebukes the wind and the waves. He uses the same tone and one of the exact same words that he used when he cast out an unclean spirit. He says, "Silence. Be muzzled". Instantly the wind becomes still and a great calm comes upon the sea. There was a great storm, now there is a great calm.

Jesus says, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" Notice that Jesus makes a contrast between faith and fear. We might think that the opposite of faith is doubt. It isn't. The opposite of faith is fear. The friends are filled with fear.

It's natural to want to survive and to do all we can to keep ourselves safe. But we can become too fearful. Playing it safe and avoiding risks can hold you back from being fully alive. Jesus wants faith and not fear to be the strongest force in you. The life of faith is life lived with God. It is to be connected in fellowship with God. It is to be in union with God, God evermore dwelling in you and you in God.

You experience storms, but faith gives you confidence that with God you are in safe hands. Before you were born, God knit you together in your mother's womb. God has been holding you each and every day. God will carry you home, to "a safe lodging, a holy rest and peace at the last".

Allow God to take away your fears. Give in to God stilling your storms. Say "Yes" to God taking care of you. Loosen your grip and let go of your fears, cares and worries. May they be like one of those helium filled balloons. Watch them float up into the sky and drift away, until they are out of sight and gone forever.

Teresa of Avilla showed her confidence in God who stills the storms. She said this, "Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. All things pass away. God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing. God alone suffices".

And after the storm has been stilled, the friends feel great fear. There was a great storm, which was followed by a great calm, now there is great fear. It's a different kind of fear to what they experienced earlier. Then they were frightened and agitated. They were panicking. God doesn't want that kind of fear. That doesn't do you or anyone else any good. The fear now is different. This is awe and reverence. They see the power and authority of Jesus and know that they need to take him very seriously. They need to respond in the right way. Their lives really do depend on it.

The friends then ask each other "Who is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?" And they ask you the same question. "Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus to you? Are you ready to take Jesus, just as he is, and trust him as he takes you out into the depths and through the storms?"

God bless you,

Tony