

2 Corinthians 6v1-13 & Mark 4v35-end.

Introduction:

I don't know what you expect when you come to church... Maybe to join in, to sing, to worship God, to sit and receive or maybe to attend, see friends or work on your shopping list! Wherever we are this morning I believe that God has something for us to hear, for us to be challenged.

That is my prayer for us this morning. That we would be open to hearing God and being challenged by him!

The Bible readings this morning are amazing. The familiar story of Jesus in the storm and the list of Paul and all he endured. He loved lists, I can really relate to that – I love making lists too and sometimes I even write things on lists that I've already done just so I can tick them off!

Let's focus on the story of Jesus in the storm to start with.

Imagine the story, Jesus disciples have been following him around amazed at the things they see. Then they get to the lake and Jesus asks them to go across in the boats – at last – something they know how to do!

Confidently they get the boats sorted and set off. They are the experts at this, they've been fishing on lakes like this for years – it runs in the family. Jesus is a carpenter after all, let us deal with this. Then when they see the storm coming it may have been a little nerve racking... but then it gets worse. The waves rise the rain is pouring down and the wind is blowing them all over the place. This is not good. They must have seen storms like this before wreck boats.

They panic. You know it's serious when the experts panic!

In the middle of all this as they think this is the end for them all, they're going to die they see Jesus asleep. I have no idea how he managed to remain asleep – and as we see neither do the disciples!

When Jesus awakes he doesn't thank them but rather scolds them.

He speaks to the waves and to the storm – be still.

There's silence.

The disciples must have been completely dumb stuck as they see Jesus do what they thought was impossible. Who is this?! Their relationship with him changes in this very

moment. He is more than they had imagined. He is not just a Rabbi to follow but something much more...

Jesus' words are really telling too. He doesn't stop the storm before it came, but said rather

'Why did you not trust in me? I was here the whole time, when I'm around you don't need to fear the storm.'

With Jesus we don't need to fear the storm.

The storm did come for them, the storms do come for us too – Jesus didn't say he would stop the storms ever appearing, but rather when they do come, you don't need to fear.

Life.

It's not easy. We need to be real about this.

What happens when the storms in life come? Who do you turn to?

The disciples didn't understand the power of Jesus with them. With faith in him they don't need to fear the storm. He doesn't stop it coming but trust in him through it.

It got me thinking this week about the storms in my own life. I've been through some over the years and I imagine many more to come too! That's how life seems to be.

I was reflecting back to a time a number of years ago when we were pregnant for the second time. We'd got a beautiful daughter already and then had the excitement of having a second child. The pregnancy didn't go well, my wife bleed throughout and we had constant checks.

One morning my wife went to the bathroom and collapsed. We lost the baby there, her body was shutting down. She went as white as you can imagine. After speaking to the hospital they said we needed an ambulance. They arrived and checked her blood pressure. It was very low. They couldn't do anything to raise it so we were rushed to hospital.

I'd called a neighbour to look after our daughter while we dashed off. When we arrived the doctors and nurses all rushed around. I didn't have a clue what was going on. I saw a chart with blood pressure ranges on it – one end had 'normal' and then progressively lower measures 'low', 'very low', 'serious', 'critical' and then 'emergency' – the last one was dead!

When I saw my wife's machine read out it showed that she was in the emergency range, one before they needed to operate. It was life threatening. I stood there thinking that we had just lost our baby and now I may lose my wife too. It was a storm for us.

On the days back and forth from the hospital I prayed and worshipped God. I could do nothing else. I knew Jesus with me. I had a sense of God's arms enfolding me and comforting me.

In the storm Jesus was there.

When we read Paul's writings too we see someone who endured all sorts of hardships. We are in good company when we suffer. We're not alone

My experience is that sometimes we come to church and it feels a bit like a social club. We say 'hi, how are you?' expecting the answer 'fine'. I tell people I'm fine regardless of how I'm really doing! We all fall into that way of living...

This is not how church should be.

This is the one place where we should be able to be real about life's struggles and the storms we face.

The early church showed amazing things where they shared things in common, not just financial but when people rejoiced they rejoiced with them and when one person mourned they mourned with them. Life was lived deeply.

In life's storms they were with each other.

Life's storms come.

How we respond shows our relationship with God. Do we trust that Jesus is with us? Will you trust him now?

Prayer

You may be here this morning and have never fully given your life to Jesus - to trust in him and follow him. There's opportunity now to do that. To ask Jesus into your boat, to follow him and know him with you in the good times and bad.

Perhaps you're in a storm time right now, maybe the storms of life seem to be overpowering and you need to see Jesus with you.

The storms come but we know that we don't need to fear the storm with Jesus.

Pray come Holy Spirit.