

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 23 February 2025 - The Second Sunday Before Lent

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Genesis 2.4b – 9 and 15-25; Psalm 65; Revelation 4; Luke 8. 22-25

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Rachel Rosborough, Vice Principal, Westcott House

Sermon on Luke 8:22-25

Ten years ago, the MET office, in conjunction with their Irish and Dutch counterparts, started naming storms - not every little bluster of wind but storms which are considered to have the potential to cause disruption or damage which could result in an amber or red warning. The idea is that naming the storm makes it easier to communicate with the public about risk, warning and behaviour, as by partly humanising a storm, it is thought it gains more interest. However, this is not without its pitfalls, the names chosen apparently having an impact on how people feel about the storm, whether the name is traditionally male or female, whether it is familiar or not, what cultural or religious connotations the name holds. In fact, Hurricane Katrina, one of the most devastating hurricanes in the US, resulted in that name dropping off the list of the most popular girls names.

In the few verses we hear today from Luke's gospel, we read of a storm. We know this story well. The disciples are in the boat with Jesus, Jesus falls asleep, and the winds begin to rise, the boat was in danger of sinking and the disciples were in danger. This must have been quite a storm, one that nowadays would be named and have warnings attached to it. It must have been serious, these men, many of them fishermen, would have weathered many a storm in the past and yet here they are frightened and sense danger.

So, what are we to take from these verses? Well rather than identifying the storm, thinking about its power for destruction or harm, giving it a name, this passage is about identifying who Jesus is, thinking about his power and working out who he is. We hear the question from the disciples, when Jesus calms the storm, 'who then is this?'

Who then is this? Throughout the chapters of the gospels, we can see unfolding answers to this question about Jesus' identity. Through parables, through healings and encounters with different people, through his words, through his actions, gradually a picture emerges. And today we note some very significant things.

Firstly, Jesus' humanity.

We see in this passage someone out with his closest friends, in a boat having escaped the crowds. He has been busy, so he spends time with friends, and he nods off. I am sure we can identify with this. He is tired and he sleeps. He is human.

And this is not the only place we see this. Throughout the gospels Jesus shows himself to be thoroughly human. He is born as a vulnerable baby with a long list of ancestors, he grows up and learns a trade, he works, he chooses close friends, he eats, he drinks, he cries, he sleeps, he is tempted, he gets angry, he is betrayed, he feels pain, he dies.

Deeply and definitely and completely human. Perhaps that is obvious, but actually it is worth dwelling on for a moment because it is easy to overlook it because of all the other stuff we know or wonder about Jesus. Do you ever think of Jesus as a little boy, playing, falling over, do you ever think of him laughing as he must have done? Jesus was human – like us, not sort of human or a bit human but thoroughly human.

But the question remains, the question is and has been throughout history, what kind of man is this Jesus? It was on the lips of the disciples, and it has been on the lips of many since. Who then is this?

Billy Connolly, the comedian, once said ‘I can’t believe in Christianity, but I think Jesus is a wonderful man.’ Jesus, the wonderful man, the good man.

Well of course, in many ways that is an answer to the question that the disciples raised. Jesus was a good man. He spoke of, and showed, love and forgiveness and compassion. He healed, he defended the weak and the poor. He stood up against those who sought to oppress. A good man.

A good man is a good thing. Perhaps even worth following. We like good people, and the world would undoubtedly be a greater place if we all followed the goodies. But is that it about Jesus? Is that why Jesus has followers around the world and throughout history, that his stories, his way, has survived over 2000 years of persecution, rebellion, science, changes in thought and practice and technology, because he was good?

There are numerous bible stories that we could read to show that Jesus was a good man, but this isn’t one of them. Here we have a reading about Jesus, a man who with a word, can control the wind and the waves, calms a storm. Who then is this?

Just as the gospel writers don’t go to great pains to spell out in minute detail that Jesus was a human, they merely leave us markers throughout their story that build that picture of Jesus the man, here too I think we see a marker but of a different kind. A marker that, along with others peppered through the New Testament, build up for us a picture of Jesus as God himself.

He calms the storm, the wind, the waves, with a single command. That can only take us back to Genesis, to the beginning when, with a word, God brings into being the sea and the sky. Now we see the man Jesus with a word commanding that same sea and sky, God's creation. Who then is this? Not merely a good man but a God man.

Jesus the God man.

This is but one marker that from the moment of Jesus' birth, throughout his ministry and death and resurrection, throughout the history of the church, have caused people to wonder, to grapple, to try and understand to try and decide whether this man, could also be God. Read through the gospels and look for those markers, the way we see the very human Jesus on one hand, and the very divine Jesus on the other.

His birth, the most human and real of events, also involved angels and the Spirit of God. The way he ate and drank with people showing the human need for sustenance, and also used food and drink in miracles, and spoke of himself as that sustaining food and drink. When he sees the human experience of pain and death, Jesus brings about Godly healing and restoration. And when he himself experiences the reality of human death, we then see the bringing of new life from it in the resurrection. The life of Jesus is full of humanity and godliness inextricably woven together in the person of Jesus, not able to be separated yet experienced and displayed in full.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

Loving God, whose word brought order from chaos, stillness from storms, and calm to troubled hearts, we come before you in prayer asking that you might bring peace to the troubled and stormy places and situations in life.

We pray for places in the world affected by natural disaster, war and unrest asking that you would bring calm, peace, restoration and hope.

We pray for your church across the world, giving thanks for places where there is growth and flourishing, and praying for places where there is disagreement, division, or loss of trust. Would you bring unity, generosity and grace.

We pray for those who are sick, distressed, lonely or afraid, that you would bring healing, restoration and joy.

We pray for ourselves, bringing before God the storms of our own lives and trusting him to bring us to peace.

We thank you Lord that just as you were with the disciples in storm, you are with each of us and the people and places for whom we have prayed. May they know your presence in their time of need. Amen

Suggested hymns/songs

I the Lord of Sea and Sky
God, Whose Almighty Word
We Plough The Fields and Scatter
Eternal Father Strong to Save
Light of the Minds that Know Him
O Lord My God
Be Still for the Presence of the Lord
Jesu Lover of My Soul

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.com/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)