

Mark 4 35-41 – Jesus Calms the Storm

Today I have chosen to use a different Gospel reading but it is actually a reading in the lectionary for this day just in a different year of the three-year cycle. So please read the passage now.

Mark's main theme running through the gospel is always the same –the kingdom of God. Four chapters in we have been told what the Kingdom of God is like – the crowds have come to listen, and the disciples have grappled with what Jesus has spoken. For the disciples there have been private classes, but they still do not understand and this practical adventure on the lake confirms that this is the case.

The passage opens with Jesus encouraging the disciples to move on. Jesus has given his message to the crowds and he is now leaving them behind and moving on to a different region.

This is the moment where the crowds have to take stock of all they have heard and reach their own conclusions about Jesus. Are they to be influenced by what they have seen and will what they have seen cause them to respond to Jesus? Will they recognise who he truly is or not.

This moment of movement reminds us as the people of God are called to share Gods love and his message with people that there is a point to move on to leave behind those who we have spent time with sharing the message of God. In leaving one of two things will happen their faith will remain solid or they will drift away.

John Wesley knew that. He would preach in a town and thousands would come and be formed into classes and Wesley would move onto another place. On return six months a year later, he would seek reports from those in leadership of the classes and bands and review the membership often he would remove significant numbers sometimes 50% would be removed

We are not to be afraid of moving on if we sense God is leading us. The important thing to note is that the disciples do not decide when to move on it is Jesus who makes the decision. How often do we consult with God on the issues that face us? Are we prepared to listen when God says it's time to move on? It's very real for my family and as we leave Cardiff my prayer is the work; we have invested in with you will continue to grow and flourish in our absence.

I guess in part that depends on whether we listen for God's word in a situation or whether we do our own thing and make the decision ourselves. The opening passage reminds us of the need to be in step with God and to follow his direction.

As soon as Jesus has made the decision the disciples act and then take responsibility. In this, we see that following Jesus' will lead to a need to respond and to act. How often do we respond and act when we feel God's call upon our life? Once we know the direction that we are being called by God are we prepared to go?

So, Jesus calls his people his team to do something and they then respond. The disciples had by now been living closely together they would have shared their skills their gifting as they talked four of them were fishermen it made sense for them to take the lead no problem sailing boats across the lake. What skills do we bring to God?

The disciples accepted Jesus' right to lead and then Jesus recognises their skills and leaves it up to them to do their role. He is so confident in their abilities that he himself goes to sleep – he lets them get on with sailing the boat.

But during the short journey their skills are put to the test – this is no gentle sea crossing a squall comes up and the boat is being pounded by strong relentless waves that are breaking across the boat. Picture the chaos, the water flooding the boat and yet Jesus sleeps. He trusts them to come through.

The disciples meeting the problem of dangerous rough seas – of a kind they ought to know how to deal with - realise that the situation is beyond them and they turn to Jesus and ask for help. It would have been so easy for the fishermen to have decided not to lose face to keep on sailing on their own to prove they could do it with their skills in their way. But they realise that their skills are not up to this particular storm. This is the big one. Did they ask too soon – could they have sailed through the storm without asking for help? We will never know.

They call out for help and in that moment show that they still do not understand. They fail to trust their leader, they fail to understand what he's about, they think he does not care for them – in their minds he is letting them down. It is voiced in their cry to him

“Teacher don't you care if we drown?”

Of course, Jesus cares and he does calm the storm but he allowed the storm so they might realise they are capable of dealing with more than they thought they could deal with. As we move forward are, we ready to be pushed a little further, to ride out the storm so that we might realise we have grown and developed through the time we have spent together in our community. So, we can more fully help others to experience being part of the kingdom of God.