Sermon Feb 23 2025

Jesus calms the storm-Lk. 8: 23-25 & Rev. 4

INTRO. The Luke reading is the first of 4 miracles, recorded in the same order in all the Synoptic Gospels. It illustrates Jesus’ power over nature. This links with Romans 4, which gives a glimpse into God’s throne room in Heaven, where the 24 Elders & the 4 Living Creatures worship him as Holy & the Creator-“You are worthy, our Lord God, to receive glory, honour & power for you have created all things & by your will they were created & have their being.” Rev. 4: 11b.

The other three miracles show His power over-demons-Legion & the Gadarene swine

-illness-the woman with the issue of blood

-death-Jairus’ daughter

Here, His power over the created natural order is shown-so we will examine the context of this episode, the events, the disciples’ response to the calming of the storm (“fear & amazement”).Last, is the idea that it could be a picture for us as when we face the turbulence of life both within & outside, we can ask Jesus Christ to bring calm.

CONTEXT. Lk. 8: 1-21 suggests Jesus had followed a heavy round of peripatetic teaching in Galilee with throngs of people demanding attention, so that His mother & brothers “were not able to get near Him because of the crowd.” Luke 8: 19b. He must have been exhausted & drained of energy by the press of people. He needed to get away for a break-hence He fell asleep so quickly after they set off. This reminds us of His humanity. He knows what it’s like to be pressured, tired & completely done in.

The Sea of Galilee has hills around it, for example, the Golan Heights with one valley leading North West to the Mediterranean Sea down which the wind is funnelled, so that it is notorious for its unexpected & violent squalls.

The boat they used was like a very large dingy-a bigger version of those mentioned in Swallows & Amazons-quite low in the water without any decking. There would be little protection to keep water out, should the lake be choppy-especially if the wind was coming from one side.

The disciples did obey Jesus’ wish to “go over to the other side of the lake.” Luke 8:22. They were experienced fishermen. They knew these waters, the signs of impending trouble & the hazards of such a crossing.

EVENTS. Suddenly a prolonged, noisy, violent squall roared down the lake. White horses were whipped up & the boat took on water. Despite frantic baling it was being swamped. There was a very real danger of sinking. If so, could they swim? Would their heavy garments absorbing water drag them down? How far were they from the shore? Would they cope with the buffeting of the waves, whose noise heightened by the wind, increased a real feeling of panic.

In this crisis, they did the right thing & turned to Jesus. They told it as it was. “Master, Master, we’re going to drown.” In the three versions of this miracle the disciples’ cry suggests different expectations. In the Luke passage, there’s the prospect of death by drowning. In Mark 4: 38 comes a note of reproach to Jesus’ as He lay asleep on a cushion “Don’t you care if we drown?” In Matthew 8: 25 the cry is for help-“Lord, save us we’re going to drown.”

Jesus’ answer is to rebuke “the wind & the raging waters .The storm subsided & there was calm.” Luke 8: 24b. Imagine what that was like for the disciples, still shaking with protracted tension & terror, when they were asked the question “Where is your faith?” Luke 25a. What could it mean? They had followed Him at some cost-they were inspired by His teaching, His presence, & guiding. They were typical of the contemporary followers of a wandering teacher or Rabbi. This much they had seen. What they had not realised was the depth of His commitment to them. He was really asking them “Don’t you trust Me to care for you & to save you?” At the critical moment, they were too alarmed, as they saw the dangers, based on their previous experiences of the lake, bearing down on them. This blotted out what they knew of Him. Therefore, it was a vital question to bring them to the reality of His care & His power. Later, at another crisis in John 6: 68-70 when many disciples left Jesus, He asked Peter, almost plaintively, “You don’t want to leave me, do you? To which Simon Peter replied “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”, showing Peter grasped the further reality of the power & care of Jesus & His teaching.

The disciples’ reaction to the calming of the storm was amazement-“Who is this? He commands even the winds & the water& they obey ” Luke 8: 25b They saw Jesus in a new light-there was a new dimension added to their faith-He was more than just a teacher-He had power over nature. No wonder they were amazed & felt fear or respect-they must, also have felt gratitude.

I have been, specially struck by the signs of Jesus’ humanity-he felt exhausted & fell asleep. As we’re reminded in Hebrews 4: 15 we “don’t have a High Priest, who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but…one who was tempted (tested) in every way just as we are, yet without sin.” And there is that question He must often ask us “don’t you trust me to care for you?”

APPLICATION. The disciples obeyed His call to cross the lake & yet disaster nearly overtook them!

This episode is a reminder of what to do when there is a sudden, unexpected turn of events outside us-whether in our family, our nation or internationally. We only have to think of the moral impurity, violence & wickedness seen in our society, or, further afield in Gaza or the Ukraine. Within us there are the gusts of fear, anxiety, anger or resentment that threaten to swamp us completely.

The right response is to turn from our fears or dangers to Jesus –“Lord, save us” & trust Him for the answer. The change from the “storm” to “calm” may be sudden & dramatic. I know someone who had 18 months in which to find a different job-it was only by the 15th month that the search was over-a sudden & dramatic change! Or it may be a slow change in our circumstances or in us in the way we respond to them . This could add a new dimension to our trust & gratitude, as we turn to Him. In Hebrews 12: 1-2 we are encouraged to “throw off everything that hinders & the sin that so easily entangles us & let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author & perfecter of our faith.” May that be, increasingly, true for all of us!