**Calming of the storm** Talk by Pam Rosewarne on 20th February 2022

Who would have ever thought our theme this week about calming storms would have coincided with the weather we have experience this weekend!

Our gospel reading today is familiar to most people. It is recorded not only in Luke but also in Matthew and Mark, emphasising the importance of the message, although Luke takes a ‘softer’ approach than his fellow disciples to the story. It is one of the first stories or parables that Jesus uses as he tries to convey his message to the disciples and his followers.

 It is a story about having faith in God.. that he will save us and help us. God wants us to live a life of faith, a life that is calm, trusting in God no matter what storms come our way.

The sea of Galilee or more appropriately lake of Galilee, is the lowest freshwater lake in the world. It is 682 feet below sea level, situated in a bowl shaped valley. The lake is 14 kilometres wide, supplied by snow melt from Mount Hermon 9,200 feet above sea level. It is perfect for experiencing strong winds! Winds come from the west from the hills of Galilee, from the north come cold winds off the Lebanese mountains and winds from the east come from the desert. Perfect also for Jesus to use as the basis for his teaching about having faith in him. He couldn’t have found a better place to illustrate our need to have faith in him than the sea of Galiliee.

Throughout the gospel readings from the last few Sundays Luke has been building up an image that Jesus is more than another Moses, more than a good teacher and now in this story he shows that Jesus **is** the Son of God, all powerful and in control, and we can share in this if we just have faith in him.

The disciples and Jesus set sail in quite a substantial sized boat after a busy day teaching the crowds. Jesus was tired and slept. The storm came suddenly and with strong winds. The disciples were scared. Jesus commands the winds to drop and the storm to cease,.. and all goes calm. The disciples are amazed and say ‘ who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?’ The answer can be found in Psalm 65, the psalm chosen for our readings today and which Judith has just read. In verse 7 we read’ you still the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the clamour of the peoples.’ The only answer to the question ‘who then is this ?’ is of course God. As God, Jesus is able to control the chaotic elements of our world and to help us survive amid the chaos and dangers that life sends to us. Jesus reveals to us that in him light conquers darkness, order conquers chaos, love conquers hatred and life is stronger than death. In the power of Jesus we are able to survive whatever the world throws at us. We are given strength by having him as our constant companion.

Our lives are never plain sailing and totally calm. I hazard to say if they were we might become a bit bored! And certainly the past two years for us all have been a rocky road to travel. Currently there are rumours of wars and other challenges confronting us. We are all asking ourselves…**Why** isn’t the God who through Jesus stilled the storm **more obvious** in the world today? The very fact that Jesus was **in** the boat with the disciples indicates thathe doesn’t take away the stresses and strains of life, he doesn’t remove the challenges which help to change us; but it tells us he **will** be there **with** us as we cope with the ups and downs of life.

And this goes for Jesus himself. He had to face challenges too, not least death itself. And just as Jesus leant on God for his strength, we see how he too at times doubted him, like when he said from the Cross’ my God why have you forsaken me?’ We too must learn to lean on God our father to cope with our challenges of life.

In the gospel reading the disciples were rebuked by Jesus for their lack of faith, **not** for calling out in their need. So when our lives are in danger of being swamped by chaos or suffering its far worse to turn away from God than to cry out in faith. It reminds me of the words of the famous poem ‘Footprints’ where God reminds us that when there was only one set of prints in the sand it was because God was carrying us. He was still with us, he had not forsaken us. God **is** at work in the world, we **do** see miracles, signs happening, and we **can feel** the presence of God in our lives leaving us calmer in the midst of the challenges. We must never forget either that it isn’t plain sailing for God…He has to work with us and around us, human beings who do not always follow his will. He can only rule the world with **our** help, if we work with him. ‘Where is your faith?’, he says to the disciples in the boat. We need to have faith in him to be able to respond to his will. We need to work to follow God’s will, to build up this trust in God. We need to work on our relationship with him, read our bibles, try to do his will and follow his guidance. Maybe this coming Lent we can put aside some time to try to better our relationship with God and see how our trust and faith in him can develop. We might surprise ourselves!

Let us end with a prayer:

Lord our God, when the storms come over us and the way is dark, help us to know that we have a loving Saviour who is with us always.