

**Thursday February 25**

**Mark 4:25-31 – have you no faith?**

**35** That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.”

**36** Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.

**37** A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

**38** Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

**39** He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

**40** He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

**41** They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

I’ve been on three scary boat journeys in my time. In 1966 it was days on end in a stormy North Atlantic in a 100-ton Norwegian seal-hunting boat; in 1981 it was a 15-hour crossing of the Irish Sea on a car ferry in a Force 11 (that’s Violent Storm Force on the Beaufort wind scale); in 2016 it was a mercifully short but violent ride in a tiny ferry boat from the Lanzarote port of Orzola to the offshore island of La Graciosa. Some people around me were screaming and I felt like joining them! So in Mark’s Gospel chapter 4 I understand a little of how the fishermen-disciples of Jesus were feeling, in a storm-tossed fishing boat far smaller than that.

Living through this pandemic feels a bit like being in a storm; but this one doesn’t blow itself out after a few hours or even days. This storm has been buffeting us for nearly a year now, and we aren’t through it yet. I hope you found some comfort in the 23rd Psalm that we looked at yesterday, where the divine companion in the valley of the shadow of death was wide awake and armed. The trouble here is that Jesus is not only unarmed, but he’s asleep! Listen to the fear in their voices: “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

Then he gets up, tells the storm to go – and it does. End of story? Well, no. You might expect Jesus to say, “There, there, chaps, everything’s OK now. I’m going back to sleep!” Instead, he dresses them down: “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” And the disciples realize they’ve seen something awesome: “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Go back to the Old Testament and you find that stilling storms is something only God could do. And now they’ve seen Jesus do it. Awesome indeed!

It’s one thing to sit and read about this in the comfort of your armchair. It’s another thing to see how true it is when you’re in the middle of a storm like this one. Sometimes people think that if you’re afraid it means you’re a coward. Not so. Fear is something everyone suffers from, and it’s a matter of learning to face it. So when Jesus says to his disciples “Why are you so afraid?”, we need to let Him ask us the same question, as we’re opened up to the fact that faith in Him is *not* going to mean peace and quiet all our days. Christian discipleship is always going to mean more than that.