

St Marc Grenoble  
Sunday 20th February, 2022  
2nd Before Lent  
**Genesis 1 - 2:3**  
**Luke 8: 22 -25**  
**'Who is this?'**

Good morning everybody, those here in church & those 'out there' on Zoom

Well, what fascinating readings today! I cannot wait to hear what you picked up out of them. What did you notice? What spoke to you? What left you scratching your head?? (By the way, thanks to our readers for doing something slightly different - I think it really helped.)

Perhaps surprisingly, I want to focus mainly on our Gospel reading today - all three verses of it. But, I think the reading from Genesis will help us to have more understanding of what is going on.

First, another question: I wonder if you have ever been in a situation where, at that moment, you seriously feared for your life?

Is anyone willing to share one of those times, and particularly to describe how you felt, at that moment, with us?

[I can think of two occasions in my life, when I've been seriously scared for my own skin, once when I wasn't a Christian and once when I was.

The first, in 1985 – I was promised a ride in a small plane – a Cessna, at an Airfield near Manchester. Something I'd always wanted to try. On the ground I remember thinking how small and flimsy it was, and how long it took to get ready.

When we finally took off from the grass strip, I was thinking how fast we were climbing and how exciting it was.

But, suddenly, the engine began to cough and judder. I didn't worry at first, but when the pilot said "There's something wrong" I paid attention very quickly; his face had gone white as a sheet, he looked extremely worried.

I began to notice how high we were. It was definitely a long way down!  
Next, I started thinking about my family and wondering how they could manage without me. Would there be enough money for them to live on?

I was really scared because the pilot seemed very worried, I knew he hadn't

had a pilot's licence very long. Fortunately, we managed to do one circuit of the airfield, and landed safely. That ended my flying for a while! Those days I'd no-one to turn to or pray to - it was a very, lonely experience!

The second, really frightening occasion, was in Cuba in 2019, when Julia and I were involved in the bad bus crash, which I've mentioned before. As the bus was sliding, out of control, down a long hill, I managed to keep quite calm and prayed a silent prayer.

After the crash, when I returned to consciousness there was blood all around me, and I had to crawl through a window, past a lady who was quite obviously dead. I rejoiced to find Julia, more or less OK, already outside. We were both very shaken, shocked and sore - all Julia could say was 'Lord have mercy', which was actually very reassuring.

We remembered later, a lovely Cuban Christian, at the hotel where we'd been staying, had said he felt moved to pray for us, for safe travel, before we left. God works in remarkable ways to this day.]

Let's come back to today's Gospel story; these men taking Jesus by boat across the Sea of Galilee were very experienced sailors – fishing on the 'Sea' of Galilee had been their livelihood for years.

Even now, the Sea of Galilee – which is a large, landlocked lake – is notorious for its vicious, squally storms. These days anyone taking passengers on it needs a special licence.

There are scientific reasons for this – it is 600 feet *below* sea level, and surrounded by mountains with steep sided valleys, which in certain weather conditions direct sharp air currents at the lake.

The sudden changes in temperature create squally winds, the lake quickly becomes extremely rough, and the waves are often several metres high.

Their boat was small, around 10 metres long and narrow – not much bigger than a rowing boat.

They had real reasons to be scared; we're told "the boat began to fill with water," they were very wet and cold, and a long way from the shore.

Also, it must have really upset them that Jesus was fast asleep in the back of the boat, apparently quite oblivious to their predicament! In their fear, and panic, they woke Jesus up, saying: "Master, Master! We are about to drown!"

Unlike that pilot in my aeroplane, Jesus was not the slightest bit ruffled.

We're told, He got to His feet and simply ordered the wind: 'Silence!' and the stormy waves 'Quiet'; they died down and the lake became 'smooth as glass'

That's very unusual, because it's a landlocked lake and, normally, when the wind stops, it takes several hours to become calm again.

His disciples were in awe, staggered and stammering (like me when I crawled out of that bus); their question says it all: 'Who is this? He calls out to the winds and sea, and they do what he tells them.'

In modern parlance we'd say: 'Awesome'; this was another "Epiphany moment" [One that reveals who Jesus is] For the disciples it was a penny dropping moment - things suddenly became clearer.

We shouldn't be surprised; and this story has an important sub text: it's important to understand there's a lot of contextual stuff going on, which we might easily miss! In the Old Testament world, the sea was considered a place of real danger – the Hebrews were desert people, not seafarers.

Declarations of God's power over the sea hark back to the exodus from Egypt, when God parted the Red Sea allowing the Israelites to escape – and closed it up again to destroy the pursuing Egyptians.

These are acclamations of God's unique power to preserve and protect His people. So, Jewish people like the disciples – who knew their scriptures by heart – would make immediate connections: By calming the wind and the waves, at His command, Jesus does what they know only God can do.

You may say the stormy sea was a challenge to Jesus' sovereignty... But if so, we have a clear illustration that Jesus not only has the power to calm a storm, He also has the power to deliver His people from forces of evil beyond their own control.

But there's still more than that - let's go back to our Old Testament story from Genesis - the wonderful story of creation - how God created the earth and everything in it.

Right at the beginning we're told 'God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss - The Holy Spirit was there. And, in our opening sentence this morning, from John's Gospel chapter 1, we heard these words:

'In the beginning was the Word (Jesus). The Word was close beside God and the Word was God, All things came into existence through Him; not one thing that exists came into existence without Him.

God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit were present together as they created the world. So, if Jesus helped create the wind and waves, It's no surprise that they obey Him, when He speaks to them.

This story is an epiphany moment – a clear demonstration of Jesus' power, and his true identity. The Son of God - our Saviour and our redeemer, was in that boat with His disciples on the Sea of Galilee.

That story gives me great encouragement, hope for our time; for our society and, more importantly, for our community. We all experience storms and squalls in our lives - if we have Jesus with us, He will deal with them.

We're surrounded by people facing storms in their lives. People locked in bondage by forces of evil: oppression, despair, rejection, unemployment, needing documents, debt, depression, loneliness, alcohol and substance abuse. People who have lost hope – who are hopeless! Yet, we know our saviour – Jesus, is able to overcome these powers of domination and chaos in people's lives.

In Hebrews 13: 8 we're told: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever!" We have a Saviour who did, and still does, overcome the powers of evil, chaos and domination in people's lives ... We have a Saviour who sets people free from the bondage of sin.

So, as I close, I want to ask –

"What are we, that's me, that's you, that's us – **What are we doing about it?**

Will we allow ourselves to be overcome by these forces? Or will we get locked in prayer, for Jesus to calm the crazy storms of our lives?

Jesus will help all of us, but we need to invite Him into our lives!

Then, when He's calmed our storms ... will we watch people around us be overcome by these powers of evil too? Or are we going to lead them to Jesus and allow Him to calm their storms and change their lives too??

**Let's pray:** *Come Lord Jesus, thank you for revealing yourself and your power to us. Help us welcome your power into our lives, and show us how we can introduce other people to you. In Your Name we pray. Amen*