Last week we spoke about God the Father and how he is Sovereign, Eternal and Unchanging, to name but three characteristics.

This week we will look at God the Son – Jesus and how we can rely on Him to support us through all of life’s challenges.

We depend on the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for our strength and we should always be looking towards them at all times for guidance, knowing they will be faithful to us as we seek God’s way for our lives.

**PRAY**

This account of Jesus showing His power and authority to His disciples comes relatively early in His ministry. It comes before many of His miracles that would show to His disciples, followers and enemies that He was the Messiah they were all searching for.

In Mark’s gospel, Jesus has just described what the kingdom of heaven will be like, whilst in Matthew’s gospel Jesus has just spoken about the cost of following Him – the need to put Him first, always.

So, Mark tells us that the evening had come and along with His disciples, He gets in a boat to cross over the lake – this is Lake Galilee. This isn’t the only boat with them and we can presume there weren’t newcomers to the lake present – everyone was either a fisherman (people didn’t have boats for the fun of having one), or someone who was used to living near the lake.

People were used to the lake – day and night they would have been out on it, to earn their livings.

**SLIDE** But this wasn’t to be any ordinary night, **v24** tells us **A furious storm came up, and the waves swept over the boat.** Mark’s account says the boat was being swamped – Mark is believed to have written his gospel as a record of what Simon Peter told him.

The Sea of Galilee is well known for its sudden, violent storms and Peter would have known what storms were like on the Lake, but here is one of such ferocity that experienced fishermen were scared for their safety.

The language used suggests the waves rose high above the boat, broke over it and gradually filled it with water.

However, in all that was going on, Jesus is described as being asleep. Mark’s account adds He is **in the stern** (the back of the boat), **asleep on a cushion**.

It must have seemed strange to the disciples that He could sleep in such circumstances. Yet, His mind and heart were peaceful enough, trusting in the love and care of His Father in heaven – Jesus was able to sleep in the storm.

Not surprisingly, the disciples woke Jesus up, but not to make Him aware of the situation, or maybe to ask Him to help bail out the boat. Instead, they say, **Lord save us. We’re going to drown.**

How can Jesus be asleep at a time like this when the lives of those around Him were in danger? Does He not care? Is He not interested? Maybe He has not grasped the urgency of the situation.

Is that how you feel at the moment? It is probably the way that many think God feels at this time – detached, uninterested and not in control.

Yet Jesus is at peace with the situation – He knew what was going on and He knew He was in control. He knew the outcome would bring glory to His Heavenly Father.

**SLIDE** **v26** tells us, Jesus **replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.**

It was so simple and easy – there was total and immediate obedience. Jesus calmed the storm, so He could speak to His disciples.

He didn’t have to, He could have spoken through the noise of the wind, but He chose to stop the storm on this occasion. That is important for us to remember – just because you are in one of life’s storms, it doesn’t mean that Jesus is not with you. He could stop the problem at any moment, but He uses times such as those to develop our faith and enable us to grow in faith and dependency on Him.

Jesus rebuked their fear and unbelief, not their request or waking Him. We shouldn’t think that Jesus was in a bad mood from being awakened. He was upset at their fear, because fear and unbelief go together. When we trust God as we should trust Him, there is little room left for fear.

They actually had many reasons to have faith, even great faith.

* They had just seen Jesus do significant miracles, showing great power and authority.
* They had seen an example of great faith with the centurion who trusted Jesus to heal his servant.
* They had Jesus with them in the boat. And, they saw Jesus sleep; His peace should have given them peace.

Do the storms of life build us or drive our faith away? Faith is the antidote to fear. No matter what your circumstances, if you have placed your trust in Jesus for your salvation, He will always be in the boat with you.

The disciples in response **were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”** Mark’s gospel says they were terrified. They had completely transferred their attention from the storm, to their Saviour.

Jesus didn’t merely quiet the wind and the sea; He **rebuked the winds and the sea**. This, together with the disciples’ great fear and what Jesus would encounter at His destination, leads some to believe that there was some type of spiritual attack in the storm.

**SLIDE** The disciples had asked **what kind of man is this?** **Psalm 89:8-9** tells us – it could only be the LORD, Jehovah, who only has this power and authority: **Who is like you, Lord God Almighty? You, Lord, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you. You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them.**

No matter how long you have been a follower of Jesus, we all, like the disciples, have a great deal to learn from and about Jesus.

He is someone who has the authority to command the wind and waves – He can also tell us to have faith in him.

Having faith in Him allows us to change how we live our lives.

Suppose those disciples had been around Jesus longer and their understanding and faith in Him was deeper, maybe this incident would have happened differently.

The storm would still have arisen and they would have said this was worse than they had ever seen before and they were scared. But as they looked at Jesus asleep in the stern of the boat, they would have taken reassurance.

They could see Jesus was relaxed and seemingly unconcerned with the storm going on around Him, so the disciples could have the same attitude. We can and should have that attitude now – no matter what life is throwing your way and that includes covid – Jesus remains God, He will protect His friends, His followers. God is unchanging and that promise of protection will remain unchanged for ever too.

Maybe with increased faith, the disciples would have woken Jesus to show Him what was going on. They would have told Him that they were scared, but we know that You are the Creator, so ‘what shall we do?’

Again, that should be our attitude – to honestly come before God and express how we are feeling.

In that case, Jesus would have replied, ‘it’s okay, continue to have faith in me, don’t fear the storm.’

With Jesus in the boat – in your life – you will stay afloat. Jesus is in control of His creation and you are one of His creations.

Control is the key. If we lose control of the situation that we find ourselves in, at best it is infuriating and disruptive, at worst it can challenge the very values that previously we thought were so secure. Someone or something else, has taken control and we feel helpless.

But Jesus’ response is the same today as it was back on Lake Galilee - **Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?**

The Bible says the One who is in control is good and doing good things, but we may not understand or appreciate it at the time. Consider...

**SLIDE**

**Micah 2:7**

**‘Do not my words do good to the one whose ways are upright?**

**Romans 8:28**

**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**

**Psalm 119:65-68**

**Do good to your servant according to your word, Lord. 66Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I trust your commands. 67Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. 68You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees.**

God is telling us through His Word to see His bigger picture – for us, that may mean we just need to reaffirm our faith in Him at this time and trust in Him that He is good.

That trust will be different for different people – for some it will be that the delay in the queue may actually be protecting you from something else. For others it may be after failing to get that job you were really wanting – because God sees the bigger picture and knows He wants you elsewhere for His glory, or that job will not actually be beneficial to you for your long term walk with Him.

Jesus is in control, even in the bad things – consider the invasion of the Babylonians of Judah around 600BC. It appeared to be a national disaster and it was, but out of that came the faith of Daniel and his friends, the prophecy of the Israelites’ return and their ongoing history, including the birth of Jesus and looking further to His Second Coming.

That deportation may have been the time when all the Jewish Scriptures entered Babylon – enabling the Magi to travel many centuries later to worship the Messiah’s birth.

I am not saying there is not hardship in suffering, but with faith in God, we may be able to grasp something of His bigger picture.

The proof to that is back in the boat on Lake Galilee. Jesus was not going to die an insignificant death in a small boat, on a small lake, no matter how fierce the storm.

His destiny was to die a very significant death, on a Roman cross, just outside the capital city of the people whom God had chosen as His people – to live lives set apart for Him, as a witness to everyone else.

Jesus suffered more than any one of us will ever do. He died separated from His Heavenly Father, yet He was calm, He was in control and He knew He was doing good for every single one of us.

His death wasn’t random, it was to deal with the problem of evil in the world – a problem that humans had allowed in. His ministry led to the cross, to enable Him to defeat death, so that we can attain eternal life to be spent with God.

In all the storms on Lake Galilee, storms in our life, viruses and wickedness of the world, Jesus has a plan to restore the world.

In His first coming and His death, Jesus took our punishment for wickedness. He rose and ascended and He is coming back.

At that time, the chaos of this world will finally stop – it will be stopped just by His Word, as He destroys the amassed armies of Satan.

We should be grateful that we live in the storms of life and Jesus hasn’t already returned. His delay enabled you to be saved, if you are a believer. If you haven’t trusted on Him for Salvation, His delay gives you a little more time to make that decision – but do not delay.

The Jesus who was relaxed, asleep in the stern of the boat is still doing good.

Any of your problems can bring about good too. If we allow it, our own faith can be given new life as we trust in God. At the same time, others around us will see our faith and it may build theirs too.

Whatever you face, remain calm, trust in Jesus and pray – but do not fear.

The joy is, we are not meant to be in control – God has already taken that role.

We may not be immune from fear, because it is a human (and sometimes useful) trait. But we should not be fearful of the storm.

Faith in Jesus is the vaccine that will eradicate fear.

That is Jesus – our Saviour, our protector. One who will never leave you, whatever boat you may find yourself in.

**READ Psalm 23 – Emphasis v6**

**OFFER / PRAY**

**8 When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. 2A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”**

**3Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. 4Then Jesus said to him, “See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”**

**5When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. 6“Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.”**

**7Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”**

**8The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”**

**10When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. 11I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. 12But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”**

**13Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.**

**14When Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. 15He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.**

**16When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. 17This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.”**

**18When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. 19Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”**

**20Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”**

**21Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”**

**22But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”**

**23Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!”**

**26He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.**

**27The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”**

**28When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes,two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. 29“What do you want with us, Son of God?” they shouted. “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?”**

**30Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. 31The demons begged Jesus, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.”**

**32He said to them, “Go!” So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. 33Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. 34Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.**