

Sermon 8 o'clock 2 before Lent 20 Feb 2022. Genesis 2: 4b-9, 15-end Luke 8 : 22-25

Hands up who has watched any of David Attenborough's programmes on the natural world, Blue Planet II, Green Planet and gasped in wonder at the diversity of creation?

If we believe that God created the world and all that is in it (through the process of evolution, as most Christians believe), then we surely must marvel at His power and love as the ultimate Creator, and if we stand in awe of creation and its intricacy and the way it slots together despite its diversity, then surely we should bow to creation's power in honour of our God, and not arrogantly try to tame it. Nature has powerful gifts to give us but we must work *with* the natural world for the good of all - rather than exploit it because of humans' power and greed.

The power of the natural world is immense - did anyone get affected by storm Eunice the other day? - in this country we are not used to such high winds that rip roofs off buildings, uproot trees and bring devastation to communities, but many parts of the world are, especially around the equator. So perhaps this latest storm in Britain may wake us up and make us more humble to the needs of others who are facing devastation in their countries by dangerously rising global temperatures leading to the Climate Crisis. As Christians, God calls us to love our neighbour, to show His love to the world, to open our eyes and our hearts to the extinction of species, the appalling destruction of great areas of the world which will soon become uninhabitable and cause millions to be displaced or worse.

So what can we do?

**Well I believe we shouldn't just sit back and let the Climate Crisis worsen - I don't think God wants us to do that** - if he loves us then he is desperate for us to stop destroying the earth and continuing on our path of separating ourselves from Him and his love,

So, campaign against building on floodplains, let them flood, work *with* nature not try to master it. Don't build so many hard concrete flood defences, deeper and straighter channels, but put branches in rivers to slow their flow, create meanders. Plant trees and vegetation on river bank to stop rain running straight into rivers and causing flooding, restore peat bogs - which act as 'carbon sinks' storing huge amounts of carbon, helping the fight against climate change.

Jesus is Lord of all creation. In the gospel reading Jesus stills the physical storm on the lake and the disciples stand in terrified awe - they begin to recognise God's presence among them. Who is this? Are their eyes being opened? Do we begin to get moments like that as our faith develops? Did God make that happen through the Holy Spirit? If it produced something positive then it probably was God!

Jesus's power to transform, empower and protect us is open for anyone who throws themselves on his love and trusts in his presence - sometimes we need a desperate storm to arise in our lives to dare to do this or to know that God has come close to us, sometimes it is the drip, drip of tiny squalls that add up to the feeling of wanting to spend more time with Jesus.

You might feel this suddenly when you are moved by something during worship - the words of a hymn suddenly striking a chord with your own feelings, the music you hear, a phrase from the bible readings, even something in the sermon!, the depth of prayers or the feeling of peace a blessing brings you or the presence of Jesus as you receive Holy Communion, building a little more into that relationship of trust in God to heal and restore you and bring you alive in Christ.

**Where was Jesus in the storm? Right there in the boat with the disciples**

**Where is Jesus when we have a storm in our lives? - He's right there with us** : if only we turned to him more often like the disciples did in the boat, he would be able to help us and still our storms of fear, confusion, pain and anger.

When in difficulties the disciples turned to him, they didn't just plough on - they recognised they needed help. Which do we choose in the storms in our lives- plough on or ask for help?

Don't always try and think out the logical answer in a storm, sometimes we just have to go with our emotions, our instincts, have faith to give it a try ; **pray "Lord Jesus help me"** - perhaps the pure act of turning to Jesus brings a calmness and clarity, back from the brink Pushes back on temptation, the devil, focuses the mind on something good - God is love, with God all things are possible. Praying however short or long is opening up a channel with God.

If you believe and trust in Jesus , it doesn't mean that there won't be any storms, any horrible situations , any pain or accidents in your life , but I think it means you have extra help to be able to face them and come through them: Faith is turning to Christ and trusting him

**Maybe the simple action of asking for God's help in prayer is enough to bring God's overwhelming and merciful love into the situation you are in and transform it and you.**

So when you next face a storm - either a demanding situation,a danger, a health crisis, an argument, stop for a few seconds and send up a prayer to Jesus , asking him to calm you and recentre you, to help you know what to say or whether to keep silent or to walk away, what to do to stop the situation getting worse or have the courage to face it and ask Christ to help you through it.

And if you can do anything to help ease the storms of the Climate Crisis, please do!

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Katrina Nice 20.2.22

For the All Age sermon I included an illustration of how fast water runs through a plastic bottle, compared with one that I had filled with sticks, pebbles, leaves, mud and a miniature tree.

Kids made crosses from pipe cleaners and put in the right bottle - the one with vegetation - to show Christ wants us to take care of God's creation and tackle climate change and extreme weather , storms and floods by working with nature rather than trying to dominate it and build artificial defences.

