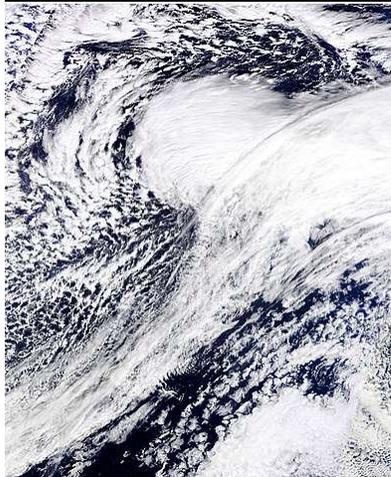


SERMON – 20 FEBRUARY 2022 – GEN 2, REV 4, LUKE 8



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

We've had enough of storms this week – even if here in Derby we managed to miss the worst of Eunice. Felt a bit of an anti-climax really – as someone said, you can tell it was London that got the red warning. If it had been “the north” no one would really have cared, there certainly wouldn't have been 24 hour news. People were comparing it to the Great Storm of 1987 – then we were living in Huntingdon, and we slept through it. I cycled to the station for my normal morning train to London, and was quite surprised when I found there were no trains running! I suppose that says something about how the world has changed in 35 years. In 1987 I got up, cycled to the station, and had to return home. Now I looked at the weather on the phone, rolled back over and had another hour in bed! Modern technology has its uses.



Christ in the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Rembrandt

I wonder if Jesus was around now and asked the disciples to go and sail across the Lake, whether Peter would check his phone and said “there's a storm forecast, we're not going anywhere”. Fishermen and “they that go down to the sea in ships” have always been experienced in checking the weather – after all, a lot depends on it. On the occasion Luke records, there seems to be no reason to delay your sailing.

Jesus gets into a boat with his disciples – which one assumes was a normal occurrence. They lived beside the Sea of Galilee, they criss-crossed the Lake quite regularly and, as several of the disciples were fishermen, no doubt a boat was the first century equivalent of a bus. (I do wonder whether all the disciples were good sailors – perhaps Matthew the tax collector hated it every time they got in the boat).

No doubt they hated it even more when “a gale swept down on the lake”. Cold, wet, horrible – then the boat starts filling with water – and they were in danger. The thought of being in danger in a small boat does me nothing for me – as I’m sure I’ve said before, the worse three hours of my life was trapped on the Isle of Man ferry when the sea wasn’t flat calm. Never again! Even my desire to spend a few days on the Isle of Man railways and trams is not enough to get me back on that boat.

Jesus is asleep – lucky him. The disciples are so frightened, they wake him up. (He may only be a carpenter, and some of them are experienced fishermen, but they recognise his power, he is their leader, their Lord, so they need him). “Master, master, we are perishing”.

He wakes up and rebukes the wind and the raging waves – I wonder what words he used – but they cease, there is calm. No, I can’t explain it – humans cannot control the winds and the waves – so either it’s a story that’s made up, or Jesus really has incredible power. I will go with the latter – although the logic in me says no one can control the winds and the waves.

“Where is your faith?” he asks them. Not “are you OK? ... wow, that was quite some storm” – or perhaps he did ask that, and no one bother to record it. “Where is your faith?” – you’ve seen me at work, you’ve seen me heal, and yet you struggle with believing I can calm the storm.



It’s all part of the same thing. God created a perfect world – the Old Testament reading which goes with these is Genesis 2 – we’ll look at it at Choral Evensong later - when God has created a world he has described as “good”, each day “God saw that it was good” – then God created humanity, and it was “very good”. Later that all gets spoiled – evil destroys that relationship between

humans and God. Creation is out of kilter, everything wrong is caused by sin – sickness, death, the anger of creation, everything that stops earth being heaven, evil destroys paradise.

Disease – dis-ease – the world is not at ease with itself – and Jesus can heal, he can put this right. He can calm the storm, put that to rights.

“Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?”



In Revelation we have an image of heaven. “There in heaven, a door stood open.” And what a vision. Jasper, carnelian, a rainbow that looks like an emerald, white robes and gold crowns. I’m sure most of us have been to the Tower of London and seen the crown jewels – even though it’s full of tourists, even though Julie arriving in a wheelchair always causes chaos in the queue – it is still wonderful. Jasper and carnelian – and I haven’t got a clue exactly what they colours they are – but I have that vision, a vision of something amazing.



Lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder – actually things we are frightened of. We’re frightened in the 21st century, when we live in nice solid houses, when we know it’s hot air meeting cold air – imagine if you didn’t know, if you didn’t have protection – you would be so afraid. But in heaven, there is no fear.

Just think about that for a moment, in heaven there is no fear. I’m sure I can say that none of us really live in fear, all of us have enough security that fear is not very high on our agenda. We cannot imagine the fear of some people in our City who do not know if they can afford to eat this week. We cannot imagine the fear of those who sleep on the streets, will they be safe, or will they be attacked – we cannot imagine the fear of those caught in a cycle of drugs or crime, or who

owe money to people who demand it back with violence – or those whose are frightened for their children, or their partners, or whoever.

We cannot imagine the fear of thousands of people in refugee camps across this world, or those caught in the middle of the power play of various different regimes, those fighting to survive as the climate changes and the storms (or the drought) rages around them.



Our Christian faith says that every human being is made in the image of God, every human being is loved by God, and every human being can be forgiven and make a new start because of the cross of Christ. We have to hold that together – I want people to know forgiveness, to know and experience the love of Christ, to be part of the wonderful adventure that it is to be a Christian, to know the peace, and the joy, the worship, the friendship, the love.

On Friday I went to see one of the baptism families we are welcoming in a few weeks time – and they were so upbeat about it. Really looking forward to coming to church, coming to their church – the church where the grandparents got married, where big brother was baptised, where they will come and celebrate again. I've got wedding couples who have postponed from last year, and they are so excited that this year they will get to walk down the aisle. We've had funerals recently where, despite the grief and the pain, we've seen people loving, caring, celebrating, supporting, praying – I even had a daughter who wrote to me after her mum's funeral telling me I was "wise, humorous and kind" which is rather nice – though my wife thinks they must have got the wrong Vicar!

We must love and serve and enjoy and share this wonderful life that God has given all humanity, and show that love of God is there in so much of this wonderful life. We must see this love in all sorts of wonderful people, and celebrate and build up this love.



I know this world is evil, I know human beings can be horrendous to each other, I know that the storms rage around us. But we know that even in the storm there are marvellous people – did you see the news story about the ambulance carrying a child to hospital in Aberdeen that got caught in the snow on Friday, and immediately there were people also stuck in the traffic jam who were out of their cars, pushing the ambulance out, clearing the way ahead – making sure it could get through. That’s just one example.

In this life, and into the life to come, we have nothing to fear, because God “is worthy to receive glory and honour and power”. He will accept us all, and our song will join the eternal song of heaven. Amen.

Peter Barham
19 February 2022