

## Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2018 – Trinity 4 Proper 7

Dick France, a lecturer and author, who has produced a commentary on Mark's Gospel, wrote the following.

*'In 1986, the complete hull of a cedar-wood fishing boat from about the first century AD was discovered buried in the mud by the shore of Lake Galilee. It is probably typical of the boats in use in Jesus' time.*

*It is just over 8 metres long by 2.35 metres wide and is quite shallow, being 1.25 metres in depth. There is a slightly raised area at one end. A dozen or so men would fit into it with not much room to spare.*

*To see that boat in the kibbutz at Ginosar, is to gain a vivid insight into the several stories which Mark tells which are set on or beside the lake. Such a boat would not be a comfortable place to be in a storm.'*

When we visited Israel in March 1997, with a party from the Diocese, led by John Gladwin, who was Bishop of the Diocese at that time, some 21 years ago, we were unable to view this boat, which may

have been in a different position from that when the writer saw it.

***Mark 4 v 37 -***

***‘A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.’***

Those words taken from our Gospel reading, seem to be both prophetic and apposite in the light of the situation in which the Anglican Church of which we are part, finds itself today. For with the election by the Episcopal Church of America, of Katherine Schori, Bishop of Nevada, as the first female Presiding Bishop within the Anglican Communion, on November 1st 2006, which is the equivalent of an Archbishop within the 38 provinces, which make up the World Wide Anglican Communion, insurmountable problems for the ‘Communion’ now seem to exist as certain Provinces in the Anglican Communion still will not ordain women to the priesthood, let alone make them bishops, presiding or otherwise.

For like the Tsunami of 2004, the ripples which took place in the Anglican Church in the USA have over the years touched the Church of England, and other parts of the Anglican Communion with varying degrees of impact. For we here in the Guildford Diocese, now have Bishop Jo Wells as our Suffragen Bishop of Dorking, and in May, the Rt Revd. Dame Sarah Mullally, was installed as the Bishop of London, the third most senior Bishop in the Church of England, following the retirement of Bishop Richard Chartres,

The Church over recent years has based much of what we are today on the three ‘hooks’ of Scripture, Reason and Tradition.

Tradition has been that which has been handed over, not something handed down. For it is the accumulated wisdom of the church, which has enabled the Church of England to evolve, over these past 500 years or so, and become and hopefully remain, relevant for the lives of many people who choose to be part of it.

Of course, the Church must continue to evolve and explore the way forward, if it is to encourage more to become part of it. It has to continually reappraise its position on certain issues in the light of what is acceptable. But that does not necessarily mean being conformed to the world. For we as Christians are called to be in the World but not of the World.

The passage taken from the Book of Job today, and other passages in the Old Testament together with the Gospel reading set for today, emphasise that it is only God who has the power to control the elements in the World.

The story of the ‘stilling of the storm’ by Jesus, shows how vulnerable the occupants of the boat, the disciples, were in at this stage of their mission.

Let me share a quote with you by Woody Allen – ‘If you want to make God laugh, tell him your future plans.’

For whatever faith the disciples had built up in Jesus over the time that they had first been called by him,

was quickly evaporating in that boat on the storm tossed waters of the Sea of Galilee.

So, when Jesus, woken from his sleep by the anxious disciples, who say to him – ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ Jesus, quickly rebukes the wind and says to the sea – ***‘Peace, be still’***.

The disciples quite rightly ask the question about Jesus – ***‘Who, then is this?’***

Jesus then says to the disciples –

***‘Why are you afraid, have you still no faith?’***

In this story we now see Jesus exercising his authority over the very elements of the world itself in a ‘God-like’ way. Coming so early in their discipleship, this rebuke of the disciples appears to be a little harsh.

But Jesus has a mission to fulfil, and the disciples are required to be an integral part of it. There is not a lot of time for Jesus to establish his Gospel, and we can see that throughout the Gospels, there is often a note of urgency in his words. They are literally all in the same boat, and it is essential that they all move

together in the same direction if Jesus is to achieve that for which he came into the world. So, consensus, despite the difficulties within the Anglican Communion, is important for the body as a whole. And perhaps the big question for the church is where does authority in the church reside today – Internationally, Nationally or perhaps even locally? In the church today, because of their mobility, people are able to ‘jump ship’ from time to time as they seek to find a church in which they can be comfortable. To be part of a church, which perhaps offers a particular style of worship, leadership, musical tradition or theology, with which they are comfortable. And that is a good thing, because we all need to be ‘comfortable’ in our worship of Almighty God so that we are able to respond positively when the priest says – *‘The Lord is here’* with the words – *‘His spirit is with us’* and know that, as our own experience. Also, we need to be able to feel the presence of Jesus in our lives, and be assured that

those words of Jesus, taken from the end of Matthew's Gospel, and included on an Icon which Barry Preece commissioned some years ago is also our experience and belief. –

***'Lo I am with you always to the end of time'***

The presence of Jesus in the boat with the disciples, did nothing however to allay their fear of the storm, which suddenly hit them on the Lake of Galilee.

Jesus was with them – but not in them so to speak.

It is in acknowledging that the Holy Spirit is truly with us and in us, that 'fear' can be overcome.

It is in acknowledging that in the storms of life, especially when the unexpected occurs, that we do have an anchor that will hold firm and not drift, and so perhaps learn from the experience of the disciples on that storm-tossed Sea of Galilee.

In commenting on today's Gospel reading, Martin Percy, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, quoted a Scottish Philosopher, John Macmurray, who said that the maxim of illusory religion runs like this -

***‘Fear not, trust in God and he will see that none of the things you fear will happen to you’.***

But Martin Percy says that real religion is quite contrary: ***‘Fear not; the things you are afraid of are quite likely to happen to you – but they are nothing to be afraid of.’ Peace be with you.***

It is as we here at St. Andrew’s, awaiting our new Priest in Charge – Michael and his family, collectively share our experiences as Christians, as we give support and proclaim the Gospel to each other in times of difficulties, hardships, even pain and suffering, with that same love and concern of Jesus, that we can also weather the storms of life. For in the words of the chorus of one of those great old hymns – ***‘We have an anchor that keeps the soul, steadfast and sure while the billows roll, fastened to the Rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Saviour’s love.’***

***Peter G. Vickers - (24 / 06 / 18)***