

## **Bennochty Church 24<sup>th</sup> June 2012**

I can think of some of my experiences of being in rough water. When I did white water kayaking on the river Tay, it was by choice. In the firth of Clyde, on friend's boats, I remember the boat leaning over on a good breeze and the time when coming into Rhu marina, in the spring, with hail stones hitting the deck. Or that time on a cruise with my parents when we ran into a Mediterranean storm... or between Orkney and Shetland... or a holiday to Islay with the boat pitching all over the place. Fortunately, I don't suffer from sea sickness.

I always made the assumption that fishermen were good sailors! So it must have been some storm to disturb them! Now I know not all the disciples in the boat would have been fishermen, but the story contains no calm voices. The only cry heard is, "teacher, don't you care that we are about to die?" Is this a voice of reproach? After all, this journey was instigated by Jesus himself. It is almost as if he is saying, how could you have brought us here, into this dangerous situation? Over reaction, or was the situation really that bad? The storm had come quickly, as could happen on Lake Galilee, so they were obviously

taken unawares; maybe they are further out in the lake than normal, and we are told that water was coming over the side and so the boat is in danger of sinking. This is a frightening place to be. There is nowhere else to go!

In the midst of the noise of wind and waves, among the clamour of frightened voices, one man is sleeping. It must have been a hard day, to be able to sleep in that situation. Someone described it as a 'sleep of faith in the midst of fear'. The story has a nice little detail. He had brought a pillow with him. He was prepared. The question is, would he have continued to sleep? We do not know, for Jesus is wakened up. "Teacher, don't you care that we are about to die?"

You can imagine what happens next. Calmly standing up and commanding the wind to be quiet, and the waves to be still. [Pause] The wind dies down and there is a great calm. Feel the contrast, marvel at the miracle and wonder what is going through the minds of the disciples? Maybe as their anxiety levels drop, other questions come to mind. What's happened? How did he do that? But before they can relax, Jesus hits them right between the eyes

with this question, 'why are you frightened, have you still no faith?' Is Jesus being unfair to them?

It is interesting to note that their reaction is one of fear. But fearful of what; the actions of Jesus in miracle and power, the words addressed to them about lack of faith or the possibility of who Jesus is? Is it not only God himself who could do this? What is going on in their minds, we will never know. The story abruptly ends, and they arrive on the other side of the lake.

What if you had been on one of the other boats caught up in the storm, at the mercy of its violence but without the presence of Jesus? Preoccupied with your own survival and suddenly it all goes calm. What has happened? You only find out later on, the full story. It is interesting that this miracle is wider than the disciple's boat. It is witnessed and experienced by others.

At face value this is a story about power, the power of Christ over creation. He can break the natural laws, since with God, he created them. He creates the wind and the waves, so he can still them and make them quiet. But sitting alongside power, is peace and faith. As the

presence of Jesus created stillness and quiet on the lake, is Jesus saying to us that he can create that same peace in our lives, in spite of all that is going on round about us, the storms of life?

And do these words challenge our faith? If we are 'in the boat with Christ', what do we have to fear? The pain and tears of life are never removed, we know that, but Jesus says the load will be easier because I am helping you to carry it.

Fear not, he says, for I am with you, in the 'boat' that is life and even to the end of the age. Amen.