

**Who then is this, that he commands even the wind and the water, and they obey him?**

**We have just listened to an account of the disciples on a stormy boat trip, and the miracle performed by Jesus which calmed the waves.**

**Some scholars consider the account of the calming of the storm to be allegorical, a story representing the journey of discipleship. The early church fathers saw “the little ship” as a symbol for the church. The storm becomes a sign of the trials and tribulations of the community to which Luke is writing. The lack of faith, for which Jesus rebukes the disciples, depicts the church whose faith**

**is not strong enough to withstand the tribulations through which it is passing. Many have found this sort of interpretation helpful, and ponder the words of Julian of Norwich when she said He did not say “You shall not be tempested, you shall not be weary, you shall not be discomforted” but he said you shall not be overcome. David Adam writing about this passage said “Once we believe in Jesus, we do not escape the storms and troubles of this life. In fact, in some strange sense more storms than ever seem to come our way. Perhaps we should expect this. If there is any power of evil in the world we should expect it to oppose any thing or any one that is trying to do what is right and good”.<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Tides and Seasons by David Adam © Triangle SPCK 1989

**However, I would like this morning to put the allegorical interpretation to one side and look at the passage from a different perspective.**

**To begin with, it is important to understand what Luke's narrative is doing.**

**This particular account draws heavily on Old Testament symbolism. In Biblical terms the sea was a symbol of chaos and evil. It was portrayed as a hostile dangerous force, which only God could overcome. In the creation story we are encouraged to see that at creation God brings order out of chaos and has control over nature.**

**Following through the idea that the sea was believed to be the abode of evil forces, and a sudden storm was viewed by many as**

**the work of demons, the miracle of stilling the storm on the lake could be interpreted as one of exorcism. It is most certainly what is classified as a nature miracle.**

**The God who created all things who made order out of chaos, who is all powerful, all knowing, always present, is in control of all things, and Luke puts his message across in a very vivid and powerful way because he wants his readers to be in no doubt that Jesus is the Son of God.**

**This event is about perceiving who Jesus really is and recognising His power and authority. His control of the natural world establishes his creative power with God the Father from before the world began.**

**Listen to the words from this mornings Psalm, Psalm 65 *You are to be praised, O God in Zion....by awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation;....You still the roaring of the sea, the roaring of their waves, and the clamour of the people”***

**The sovereignty of God over the whole-created order is demonstrated in the sea’s obedience.**

**Is it co-incidental that some elements of the story have a familiar ring not only with the creation narrative but with other Old Testament stories?**

**Do you remember for instance the account of Jonah. God calls him to prophesy to Ninevah, whose inhabitants belonged to a**

**nation renowned for their fierce persecution of Israel. Jonah thought that God must have got it wrong, and anyway, if he did do what God wanted, the Ninivites might just repent and then God would be merciful, and Jonah wasn't too keen on that idea, and so refused to go and instead tried to runaway He was making a journey by ship when suddenly a great storm blew up. While the rest of the ship's company was terrified for their lives, God's prophet Jonah was in the bowels of the ship asleep. The pagan sailors went down and woke Jonah and call on him to pray to His God. They ask him who he was, and where he had come from, and he replied "I am a Hebrew, I worship the God of Heaven who made the sea and the dry land", and the pagan sailors recognised the power of God over his creation, and turned to Him in prayer.**

**The story of Jonah is not about a disobedient man, who is miraculously saved by a large fish, it is about divine power and human freedom to choose to go God's way or our own.**

**The stilling of the storm compels us to acknowledge Jesus unique personal authority as master of the created order.**

**In the calming of the storm we encounter both the human Jesus asleep in the boat and the Divine Word who was there when order was brought out of chaos and whose command stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee.**

**“Who then is this” his disciples ask “that he commands even the wind and the water, and they obey him?”**

**Herod asks the identical question in the next chapter just before Jesus makes the very same enquiry of his disciples “Who do you say that I am?”**

**And Peter declares “You are the Christ”**

**And we discover that God is not ONLY out there - but also with us here.**



