

Reflection for Wednesday July 1

Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

O God,
Who for our redemption
gave your only-begotten Son to suffer death upon a cross,
and by his glorious resurrection
delivered us from the power of the enemy:
grant us so to die daily to sin
that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Matthew 8.23-27

²³ And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. ²⁴ A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵ And they went and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" ²⁶ And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. ²⁷ They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

Reflection

There are lots of reasons to be afraid! The Covid19 pandemic is perhaps the one of which we are most aware at the moment but there are many others too, losing our health, our mobility, our mental capacities, our loved ones, our own lives.

Life can often be stormy, and sometimes those storms spring up from the calmest of blue skies, just when we least expect them, making us afraid. I have read that the most common commandment in the Bible, in one form or another is, *Don't be afraid!* Perhaps it is repeated so often because God knows that we human beings are often afraid.

Fear is a powerful emotion. There is nothing wrong with feeling fear, it can be a protective and helpful emotion, but God does not want us to live our lives controlled by fear. God is present with us always, inviting us to live in God's realm of life. In that realm we know joy, hope, freedom and wholeness, the opposite of fear. God wants us to live lives that are ruled by God's perfect love. When we allow fear to control us, we allow it to take the place of God's love in our lives.

However, in the boat, in the storm, the disciples are afraid! Jesus is with them, they know and love him but still the storm comes and still they are afraid. How very encouraging for the rest of us! We will have storms in our lives and at times we will be afraid, even though Jesus is with us.

For the disciples, some of their fear was probably because, although Jesus was with them, he was asleep! The waters were crashing against the boat, lightening was flashing, thunder was roaring, and Jesus was fast asleep.

I think that is sometimes how life feels for us too. The storms of life are threatening to overwhelm us and it seems as though we are alone, helpless, that there is no-one to save us, that no-one sees our distress, that even God is asleep. But despite how it feels at those times, God loves us and God is with us. God doesn't save us by taking us out of the storms of life, God saves us by being with us in the midst of the storms.

Jesus' trust in God's presence with him enabled him to rest while the storm was raging. I don't know about you but I'm much better at trusting God once the storm has passed. Once I see that I have survived, that's when I start to be able to see that God was with me through the whole thing. In the midst of the storm, I find it far harder to rest in God, trusting in God's love. I am far more likely to be found, running around, trying to bail out the ship and save myself!

Fearing for their lives, the disciples called to Jesus, *Lord, save us! We are perishing!* Jesus woke up and calmed the storm around them and they were amazed. But calming the storm was not the first thing Jesus did when he awoke. First he said, *Why are you afraid, you of little faith?* He reminded the disciples to trust in the presence of God with them, even in the midst of their fear, and then he rebuked the wind and the waves and stilled the storm. No matter what our circumstances are, the first thing for us to do is to focus on God and ask for God's help.

Life will always bring us storms and there are times when we will be afraid of being swamped by them. At those times, we need to remember that God saves us by being with us in the midst of whatever comes and that as we focus on God's presence, rather than on our fear, we will be able to find rest in God, trusting that he will always keep us in his love.

The Lord be with you.