**Morning Praise @ Home 23 February 2025**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Luke 8:22 – 25

### Reflection from John Jesus the storm calmer

How many of you here are good at DIY? What have you done in terms of DIY in the past year?

I heard recently of someone who openly admitted that he was useless at DIY and said that for him the letters meant Destroy It Yourself.

He explained that years ago he tried with his wife to renovate an old house. He had some professional help but one day decided to *help out*, including nailing down a few loose floorboards upstairs.

Well, he thought he had done a good job – the floor was level and no floorboards were squeaking. Then …..next morning, he was having breakfast when one of his children came down and said, “Dad, should there be water coming out of the light fitting in the living room?”

He’d driven nails right through the upstairs heating pipes! Water was pouring through the light fitting and a sinister bulge appeared in the brand new ceiling which then needed to be replaced along with a new carpet that had been laid just two days previously needing to come up.

Water can do a lot of damage. If you’ve ever had a flooded washing machine or broken pipework, you will know the horror of it all. If you’ve ever experienced torrential rain, you will know the power of water: it is a formidable force and can cause deep chaos…

And in the reading we’ve just heard from Luke’s Gospel, we know that the disciples of Jesus knew all about the force of water when they were caught up in this storm.

Jesus and the disciples were in the boat on Lake Galilee.

Galilee is big – very big – about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide and it’s also in a valley so, when the wind whips up the storms arrive even before you know it. It is very easy indeed to get caught out in a storm on Lake Galilee.

These were experienced fishermen – they knew the Lake very well and so they wouldn’t have gone out on it if they had thought for one moment that they would get caught out. But the ferocity of a storm on Galilee comes out of nowhere. And that, of course, is what happened to the disciples.

There they were, sailing happily across the Lake when a gale whips up without warning. They are seriously scared and think they are about to sink. And, in the midst of all the problems, Jesus stays asleep in the back of the boat. He was exhausted!

There were so many demands on Jesus to teach, to heal, to show compassion and loving-kindness with every person he met, hour after hour, minute after minute. So much was demanded of Jesus it is not surprising that, when he eventually did get some rest he would fall into a very deep sleep.

But this, of course, was lost on the disciples. In their fear and anxiety, they shook Jesus hard and shouted, *“Master! Master! We are going to drown!”* So Jesus gets up and orders the wind and immediately, it dies down. A great calm comes upon the waters.

Can you believe it? A storm calmed with a word sounds too much yet teaches us through an incredible miracle a great deal about Jesus and a great deal about our relationship with him.

There’s something fascinating about the sea in the Bible. It’s mentioned loads of times. In the Book of Job in the Old Testament, God determines the course of the sea. In the Book of Revelation in the New Testament, there is a description of heaven, the New Jerusalem, where the sea will be no more. Many other references too. But what is particularly interesting is that when the sea is mentioned in the Bible more often than not it is a metaphor.

In the Bible, the sea is used as a metaphor, representing chaos and disorder. So in the Book of Revelation, for example, when it says that there will be no sea in heaven, it is a metaphor to say that there will be no chaos in heaven but that everything will be beautifully peaceful and ordered.

So, in this story from Luke’s Gospel when Jesus calms the storm and the sea is stilled, it is a symbol for us that God can still the chaos and disorder in our lives.

The film ‘Forrest Gump’ is about a young man with learning difficulties who comes out with pearls of wisdom – one of his great catchphrases was:

*“Mama always used to say. ‘Life is like a box of chocolates – you never know what you’re gonna get.”*

His point? Life is so unpredictable, we don’t know what surprises lie in store for us from day to day, even from hour to hour…Good things in life take us by surprise and we celebrate those moments. But, sadly, negative and difficult times creep up on us and impact us when we least expect it.

There are times in our lives when we feel at the mercy of the storm, when we feel as if our lives are as chaotic as the buffeting ocean. Perhaps a financial crisis, an illness, a bereavement, a breakdown of relationship. And we pray and pray and pray but sometimes it is as if Jesus is asleep; no matter how loud we shout…

Doesn’t it seem, sometimes in life, as if Jesus is asleep in the back of the boat?

The disciples were desperate; their lives were in danger, they thought they would perish. Their faith was weak but, in their weakness, they called out to Jesus and he heard them and rescued them. And so it is with us. In the weakness of our faith, in the chaos of our lives, in the midst of our anxieties and fear, we have to call out to Christ in confidence that he will hear us and will meet us in the storms of our lives.

The words of God to us in Isaiah 43 are so beautiful. His promise is this:

“Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you.

I have called you by name; you are mine.

When you go through deep waters,

I will be with you.

When you go through rivers of difficulty,

you will not drown.”

For those of us who are currently in the storms and chaos of life, the promise of God holds good for us today. In life the storms will still come but we can encounter God in the midst of it all. **Amen**

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**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Ron**

*I would like to start these intercessions by reminding us all of the letter from The Archbishops of Canterbury and York to continue our prayers for Ukraine:*

*Dear Sisters and Brothers,
We write to you as the world is in turmoil following the events in Eastern Europe. We are sure that you will agree that the horrific and unprovoked attack on Ukraine was an act of great evil.
Now, more than ever, we need to place our trust in Jesus Christ, as we remember that God is not the author of confusion but of peace; and so we urge you all to pray for a ceasefire, a withdrawal of Russian forces and for peace to prevail. Pray for the innocent – the women, men and children who are displaced, whose lives are in turmoil, and who live in fear of the atrocities of war. Pray for those with power – that they may make a resolute and public decision to never again use force, to actively work for peace and seek peaceful solutions to disputes and disagreements. Pray that there may be recognition of common and shared humanity and God’s promise of flourishing life for all people.*

*The Bishop in Europe has asked that we join them in prayer for the chaplaincy in Kyiv and the churches that serve Ukraine.*

*At this time of great uncertainty, we place our hope and trust in God, whose love never fails.*

*Lord, have mercy.*

Holy God, sometimes our lives are so full of worries that we forget how you look after us - through every aspect of our lives. When our worries begin to spiral out of control, help us turn them into a conversation with YOU, confident that you will calm our anxiety and give us hope for the future.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light which no darkness can ever quench.

Gracious God, we pray for your church and the churches in our local community asking that there will be a growing desire to get together. We give you thanks for those who come up with fresh ways of making your name known to the wider community. We remember the General Synod, which met recently in London and for all those who work so hard to make important and often difficult decisions regarding the ongoing direction of our Church.

Everlasting God, we ask you to lead us into the coming week, help us to believe that you are close by us, keep us from making mistakes and help us never to disappoint you through our words and actions.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**