

Collect, Readings and Sermon for Sunday 20th June 2021
The Third Sunday after Trinity

Collect

God our saviour,
look on this wounded world
in pity and in power;
hold us fast to your promises of peace
won for us by your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.'

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. In return—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also.

Mark 4:35-41

On that day, when evening had come, [Jesus] said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.' And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

Sermon by Jason Gray

Well hello Church and I hope you are all well today!!

Our journey continues today in Mark with Jesus still in the boat. Last week he was addressing he crowds on the shore from the boat preaching and teaching.

Today we have the well-known account of Jesus taming the storm bringing to attention the power of God to overcome the forces of chaos. We're also left with the problem of the disciples still struggling to understand Jesus' identity.

This passage is very well known, and I've read it numerous times over the years. It amazes me how sometimes certain words just jump off the page and allow you to explore something well known from a completely different angle. It's like you're looking into the same house through a different window and you're left with a different understanding of the house through that view.

Before we explore further it's worth understanding that at least four of the disciples in that boat were all professional fisherman and would have been experienced at encountering storms so it echoes the scale of the problem they were facing.

As the storm escalated Jesus was fast asleep in the bow of the boat and we know he had to be woken. What really got my attention was the question from the disciples in verse 38, "Teacher, do you not care if we are perishing?"

I have to admit I don't think that was particularly fair of the disciples to put that question to Jesus but I guess in the heart of their fear and anxiety in that crucial moment when their lives were in jeopardy that's the sort of human stress and response that comes out in those big dark moments.

"Teacher, do you not care if we are perishing?"

It seems quite counter-cultural as we grow and develop our faith in a loving God that really cares for us but I guess when it gets tough all thoughts are put on the table.

There is no doubt we all experience traumas and events in our lives that:

- give us grief
- give us stress
- create tension
- strain relationships and
- sometimes even set us to breaking point.

It seems to be part of the human course of life but if you've managed to avoid these sorts of situations can you contact me after the service and tell me what your secret to success is!

In my eyes, they are just inevitable and can leave us with the open question, "Teacher, don't you care if we perish?"

God, don't you care if I get out of this one or not?

It's almost the frustration of Lamentations. Don't you care God?? We can start to feel very sorry for ourselves just like these disciples but maybe we are being challenged to work through our problems differently in order to find that peace and place of calmness.

This reading got me thinking about the things that happen to me and how I deal with them and I even had quite a classic case just last week.

For nearly six months I've been trying to recruit a critical role for my team.

I started recruiting for this position in January. Sadly, its June and I'm afraid I'm no closer to onboarding a new person than I was in January.....

It's been soul-destroying and highly frustrating. I've seen 19 candidates and made 2 job offers for the role which has subsequently been turned down.

After I saw the 19th candidate last week which also drew a blank I was almost in tears and at that point of despair. I was at that point of giving up and asking those big dark questions, "doesn't anyone care? I think I'm going to perish....."

In my own despair I was feeling like one of those disciples in the boat. I was down in the dumps full of frustration and high anxiety. What on earth am I going to do? How do I fix this going forward and finally sort it out?

Sometimes it requires a different focus and us to commit to doing something differently. It's no longer about does God care but do we care and what are we going to do about it.

The next morning, I got up and having worked it through I was determined to sort it out and developed a clear strategy to follow which I then discussed with my deputy.

It felt like the weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

I had a clear sense of purpose and direction regarding what to do and I had developed a confidence to go about sorting it out.

It was as if the turbulent storm had been tamed. Calm waters had returned to my working life and I was in a different place. No longer was I asking the dark question, "does anyone care??".

It forced me to look at the issue in another light in order to find that peace.

If I take us back to the disciples and their dark question, I really think God does care.

What God is looking for is us to use our Christian values to help manage and steer our way through the turbulent times.

Sometimes we can get so caught up in the detail of the problem we can't see the bigger picture or what behaviours and actions are really needed to help navigate through the trouble.

Sometimes we need to get in the helicopter and take an overall view to see what is really going on and how we should go about handling it no matter how painful the issue becomes.

Love, forgiveness, generosity, reconciliation and peace are all the values I think God gives us in order to take control and calm the storms that rage in our lives from time to time.

We have a God that loves us dearly, but our challenge is to live out the values that help to calm the waters and mitigate the dark turbulent storms and rocky times that follow us through our human journey and bring about that “peace”.

The question disappears, “Teacher don’t you care if we perish” and is confidently replaced by calmer waters where God’s love prevails if we can live out the values. The world suddenly looks a different place when you look at it through that lens.

Let’s think about that next time it gets hard and difficult over something we are struggling with and I’m sure it will help to calm those turbulent waters we are facing into, bring peace and better sense of stillness in our lives.

In the name of Jesus. **Amen**.