

A lot can happen in a week.

Revd Huw Davies. 18/4/20

The storms of life are many and various and they often come unexpectedly and suddenly. They rock our world and sometimes change it beyond recognition. What the consequences of this virus and the unprecedented changes to our lives will be no-one can fully predict but we know that afterwards it will not be quite the same as before. Let us choose faith above fear and hope rather than despair. One thing we do know is that Jesus has travelled this way before and will walk it with us today.

You remember, don't you, how quick and often times uncontrollably our world can change. One day you get up as normal, have your tea and toast and go to work as usual and then you receive a call on your mobile to say that your wife has gone into labour and delivered a baby girl in double quick time. Your world has changed forever - at least so far as sleep patterns, finances, free time and relationships are concerned.

One day you get up as normal, have your tea and toast and go to work as usual and then you receive a call on your mobile to say that you have won the lottery for a £7 million payout. Or perhaps your boss calls you to say the business is bad and she must reluctantly let you go. Or your daughter calls in tears having had a diagnosis of cancer.

How quick our world can change. The world as we knew it, and which we thought was dependable has suddenly changed and it is disturbing and distressing. It is not destroyed but it is different, and it needs time to right itself like a boat hit by a freak wave in a storm.

When the disciples of Jesus found themselves in that exact situation in the middle of a freak storm in the middle of the sea of Galilee in the middle of the night, they did not abandon ship but they did cry out to Jesus. (Matthew ch.8:24 Luke ch.8:24)

He was sound asleep can you believe it!

"Don't you realise the situation we are in!" they shouted above the noise and fury of the wind.

"If nothing else get up and helpers bail-out."

"Don't you realise the danger we are in. We are going to die if something doesn't change."

"Don't you care what happens to us. God help us! Do something!"

Wiping the sleep from his eyes Jesus stood up and commanded the waves and the wind

"Be still. Be at peace."

The storm passed, they survived, and Jesus encouraged them, as us, to choose faith over fear.

What is the storm that is assailing your life? That has shattered your peace? That has rocked your world? The virus and the lockdown is affecting us all in so many ways.

A single parent in a small flat with no garden, 3 lively children and a full-time job to hold down.

"God help us!" "Please God do something." "Peace, be still."

See the rainbow in the storm. Lean on your friends, communicate with the others in the same boat."

"But my daughter is sick, she is close to death" cried Jairus to Jesus. (Luke ch.8:41)

"She has tried to weather the storm but now she is overwhelmed by the fever. The doctors can do nothing more for her. Come quick and save her, please!"

At that moment an old lady, bent double with pain, who has suffered at the hands of many incompetent doctors approaches Jesus and reaches out to touch him. Immediately the blood flow that has blighted her life for 12 years begins to clot and she turns away only to be called back by Jesus. He lifts her head and restores her dignity and in that moment as the old lady is healed the young girl dies.

Such is the inherent unfairness of life, one lives and one dies.

Jairus despairs, and Jesus says "Have faith in me. Trust me."

And we, like the father struggling with the little boy having epileptic seizures find our hearts reply,

"Yes Lord we do believe, help us overcome as we wrestle with our fear and unbelief."

Like Martha and Mary who begged Jesus to come when their brother was in intensive care.
"Come now, please Jesus! Lazarus, your very dear friend is dying."
But he delayed for three days and by the time he arrived it was too late.
Lazarus had died, was dead and buried. Jesus hadn't even attended the funeral.
How could they make sense of that?
Martha came out to meet him when he finally turned up. "Jesus! Where have you been?"
Mary was so angry, so upset, with the death of her brother and the apparent lack of care and compassion shown by Jesus that she didn't even want to come out and greet him.
"You promised! You said that you would be there for us! You care for everyone else but you don't seem to care for us, even though we have been your friends all these years."
Jesus said "Martha, Mary, trust me. I will never leave you nor forsake you. I am the resurrection and I am the life whoever believes in me will live. Whoever comes to me I will not abandon."

It is as though Jesus wants to say that there is a bigger picture which cannot be explained but only experienced. In two weeks time they would begin to see things from a different perspective.
But for now in the confusion and pain it just hurts.
Jesus weeps with them. He stands at the entrance of the tomb and feels the pain and the loss and the devastation that death brings to hope, to dreams, to friendship, to relationships, to life.
He weeps from the very depths of his being until it erupts in a cry and a loud command
"Lazarus, come out of there! Come back to life!"

Three days after being laid there Lazarus walks out the tomb still wrapped in the grave clothes.
Within two weeks Jesus will also leave his borrowed tomb three days after being laid there and leave behind the grave clothes he was wrapped in, perhaps the ones borrowed from Lazarus?

Jesus' death was not expected.
Only a week ago he had been hailed as a hero, riding down the Mount of Olives from Bethany to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Martha and Mary and Lazarus cheering among the crowds.
Now by Friday this healthy fit young man was broken and bruised fighting for every breath.
The cross was designed so that the victim died of asphyxiation, every breath being fought for.
As Martha and Mary and Lazarus and others of his friends watched him struggle to breathe it was as if time stood still, the sky darkened, the birds stopped singing and life ebbed away.

But Jesus' death was so extraordinary.
With every painful breath came a deeper revelation of this extraordinary, unexpected life.
"Father forgive them" he whispered to the soldiers who had tortured him and spat on him.
"John take care of my mother" he called out to his friend as he watched his mother weeping.
"Today you will be with me in paradise" he said to the thief who had spoken kind words to him.
As his breathing became more laboured and he became exhausted he began to slip away.
"Father into your hands I commend my spirit" he prayed the night-time prayer learned as a child

And then with his final breath recorded by John, the eyewitness to these extraordinary events
A final defiant, explosive cry "It is finished!"
Not a whimper or a whisper, not "It is ended" nor "At last it is over"
Rather "It is finished!" "It is accomplished!" "I have done it!"

The storms of life are many and various and they often come unexpectedly and suddenly.
They rock our world and sometimes change it beyond recognition but we can choose faith over fear.
Because one thing we do know is that Jesus has travelled this way before and will walk it with us today.

Romans ch.8. 1 Corinthians 15:55 1 Thessalonians 4:13 Hebrews ch.2:15. ch.4:12-16

*Romans 15:13. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*