

Reading: Matthew 8: 23-27

²³ Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴ Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵ The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We're going to drown!' ²⁶ He replied, 'You of little faith, why are you so afraid?' Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. ²⁷ The men were amazed and asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!'

New International version UK (NIV-UK).

Preaching notes:

The coming of God to earth in human form -the incarnation- was "the world's most significant event on a parallel with the creation itself". The birth of Jesus (note the repetition of "Born" in the hymn) disrupts the old sinful and fallen creation, bringing the key Christian teaching of rebirth (second birth). Wesley's hymns always came directly from the truth contained within the Bible. "Light and life to all" and the promise of "second birth" are truths for every season, not just at Christmas time.

John Piper, author and pastor, gives a helpful link between the miracles of Jesus pre-crucifixion such as our passage for today and the miraculous healings of body and mind, and our own invitation from Jesus today concerning new birth. "In the new birth, the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ in a living union. Christ is life. Christ is the vine where life flows and we are the branches (John 15: 1-11) What happens in the new birth is the supernatural creation of new spiritual life, and it is created through union with Jesus Christ". The birth of Christ as a baby in Bethlehem 2,000 or so years ago is the genesis of the new life that is available to us today, it is miraculous when we remember our sinful human nature.

To remind ourselves of the "bursting in" of God in human form to disrupt our sinful ways and to show us a "new path" is to remind ourselves of the power and love of our creator. The gift of new birth and the acceptance of "Christ in you", changing your mind, heart, attitude and views is a miracle of God to be likened with raising the dead: "just as in baptism you shared in his death, and in him are sharing the miracle of rising again to new life—and all this because you have faith in the tremendous power of God, who raised Christ from the dead" Colossians 2:13 Phillips.

"What kind of man is this?" was the exclamation from the disciples on the boat. When people ask you the same question about Jesus how do you respond? Are you like many in today's church, "Christians on mute", unwilling or unable to believe the supernatural miracles that Jesus, through us, still performs today? John Wesley refused to accept spiritual apathy or denial of God's supernatural power of those who joined the Methodist movement. What is your response to God's disruptive entry onto the sinful stage of humanity with the offer of a new, forgiven life in Him?

Amen.