

Weekly Bible Study for Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

Creation Disrupted – Matthew 8: 23-27 by Diana Middleditch w/c Sunday 13th September 2020

The Calming of the Storm.

This picture is from the Methodist Collection of Modern Christian Art

We are fortunate to live by the sea and it makes us appreciate that it is totally untameable. We know to respect the sea at all times as it is a mighty force and ever changing. Sometimes you can look out over the sea and it is like a mill pound and other times it is wild, or what my 4-year-old granddaughter refers to as “bubbly” sea. When the sea is really wild you just have to appreciate the power it has and how life threatening it can be.

The Jews were not really seafaring people they much more concentrated on the land, the land that was their inheritance.

The Phoenicians and the Egyptians were maritime people trading across the Mediterranean and the world beyond but the Jews felt the sea was a place of power and darkness. They would have been aware of the stories of how the sea was tamed at the Exodus by God and was also used to stop Jonah in his tracks when he was running away from a particularly unpleasant task, God used the sea to show Jonah his displeasure and to send him back to do the task that had been given to him. The story of Jonah would have been known to Matthew and he is trying to illustrate how like, yet unlike Jonah, Jesus is. The storm had not come up because Jesus was doing something wrong, but rather because it enabled him to demonstrate further his own power. When the disciples woke Jesus up he does not have to call on his Father to still the waves but neither does he have to throw himself overboard. He simply rebukes the waves and they obey him and the storm abates.

If Jesus is a prophet, he is a far greater one than Jonah. Jonah’s story tells of just how much God loves everyone as Jonah’s commission was to save the pagan town of Nineveh from judgement while in this story of Jesus calming the storm, it was to illustrate that what God was doing through him and in him was indeed nothing short of a new creation.

Here we see “faith” in action. A normal response to a great storm would be awe and terror but here we see trust and faith that Jesus was indeed the sovereign one who had great authority over the elements. The disciples were still wrestling with this faith but now they are starting to ask questions. What does it mean? What sort of man is this?

This prompts us to ask ourselves 2 questions:

How do we regard Jesus? Do we treat him as if he’s got authority over every part of our lives and our world?

Do we show faith in such a way that other people say of us, “What sort of people can they be”?

