

June 20th 2021

Jesus on the boat in the storm said: 'Peace! Be still!'...and there was a great calm.

We come to God, just as we are. Sometimes at ease.

Sometimes confused by life's storms. Let us trust God with our big questions, and listen for God's still small word to restore us to a sense of peace.

Sing or Read

- 1 As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after you.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.
*You alone are my strength, my shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.*
- 2 I want you more than gold or silver,
only you can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy-giver
and the apple of my eye.
- 3 You're my friend and you are my brother,
even though you are a king.
I love you more than any other,
so much more than anything.

Martin J. Nystrom (b. 1956) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 544 Words and Music: © 1983 Restoration Music Ltd / Sovereign Music UK

A prayer of confession and an Assurance of forgiveness

God of our questions and our struggles,

when we too quickly mistake silence for indifference: forgive and help us.

When the voice of our own needs silences the voices of others: forgive and help us.

When we abandon others in their storm and watch safely from the shore: forgive and help us.

When we lose faith because things get tough: forgive and help us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Lord, you do not let us sink when our faith is going under.

You do not let our boats overturn when the seas of our life get rough.

You do not let our questions swamp us or our failures destroy us.

Rather, you forgive us, you save us, you encourage, challenge and calm us –
and for this we are thankful. Amen.

Job 38:1-11 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

“Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?—
when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band,
and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors,
and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be
stopped’?”

Reflection on the read: Throughout the book Job has responded to his misfortunes by protesting that he does not deserve them and by calling on God to admit that he is innocent and to put things right for him. Until now God has, as it were, been silent. But here God answers Job 'out of the whirlwind' (v. 1). At one level it is a devastating answer, which puts Job firmly in his place. How dare he, a mere mortal, question the decisions of Almighty God? What can Job possibly understand of the great scheme of things? Many have found this is a deeply unsatisfactory answer at some levels, but for the present purposes that may not matter too much. The point is that God's 'answer' describes the things that, so far as Job was concerned, only God can do. One of these is to control the activities of the sea (vv. 8-11). The reason for this being chosen as an Old Testament lection related to today's Gospel now becomes clear. However, a further reflection is necessary, though it takes us beyond today's reading in more than one sense. Many of the things which between 38.1 and the end of the book are claimed as being solely God's prerogative are so no longer. Scientific research (not least astronomy) has uncovered what in Job's day were secrets indeed. Us Christians will want to say that God works through science as through other things, and if we now know some of the secrets of the universe which were hidden from Job, that is because through the work of scientists God is sharing them with us. Properly understood this makes God more wonderful, not less.

Mark 4:35-41: On that day, when evening had come, he 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 windstorm 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?” It is interesting that on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus was asleep, the disciples didn't wake him and yell, 'Save us!' but 'do you not care that we are perishing'?

Reflection: Maybe we know that given the way the world is, difficult things will happen to us and to those we love, and we can't avoid them. We know there is disease, accident, natural disaster, redundancy, failure and more. Our first instinct might be to say: 'Take it away, God!' But we will probably accept that this is not always possible, because that doesn't seem to be how the world works. So, our next urgent question to God might be: 'Don't you care that this is unbelievably hard?'

In the Old Testament we can read that Job had lived his life as an upstanding clean-living sort of guy. And then he lost his health, wealth and family. His big question to God was not to take all his troubles away. His desire was to be able to have conversation with God again; to move beyond the terrible silence that was between them. He wanted God to hear him in his distress.

In this week's passage, God finally speaks to him. And, although he doesn't get a straight answer, the desire of Job's heart is met. God has heard him and is speaking again to him. And eventually he does get his health, wealth and family back again – with, we might imagine, new appreciation.

All of us at some point in our spiritual journey will have difficult questions to ask of God. There will be shouts, protests, denial. We may know that God can't rescue us. But if our faith is true, we will want assurance that God cares for us in our troubles, that God has heard us!

Knowing we have been heard can make all the difference.

It can give us strength for the challenges.

It can give us new ways of opening ourselves up to love and joy.

It can help us know the really important things in life, and how distracted we have been.

It can bring us to a new and deeper life.

We can also know how Jesus in his own life, death and resurrection points us to this Way.

Recall a difficult period in your life. What questions did you have of God? Did you keep on asking, even though at first there only seemed to be silence? Did you eventually find any sort of answer?

Take time either now or after you finish this worship sheet to consider this question.

Intercessory prayer: Compassionate God, whose care holds us, we pray for all those who feel overwhelmed, for those who are struggling in their personal lives, overwhelmed by pain, disability, loss or grief, anxious and fearful about the future, struggling to find meaning and sense in a chaotic world; for all those who are under pressure at work, those facing redundancy or unemployment, those who feel they have no say in their workplace, those who must make difficult decisions affecting others; for those who are threatened by risk and danger, facing the loss of homes, livelihood, friends and family in war, those at risk of violence and abuse in the home; for those who are in despair, feeling that their desperate cries are unheard, that you God and your world have abandoned them. We pray for ourselves, when we are indifferent, fearful, or feeling helpless; give us the courage to face our fears, and to take risks to carry your message of hope and power. Amen.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

Sing or read:

- 1 Jesus calls us ! O'er the tumult
of our life's wild restless sea,
day by day his voice is sounding,
saying : 'Christian, follow me.'
- 2 As of old apostles heard it
by the Galilean lake,
turned from home and toil and kindred,
leaving all for his dear sake.
- 3 Jesus calls us from the worship
of the vain world's golden store,
from each idol that would keep us,
saying : 'Christian, love me more.'
- 4 In our joys and in our sorrows,
days of toil and hours of ease,
still he calls, in cares and pleasures :
'Christian, love me more than these.'
- 5 Jesus calls us ! By your mercies,
Saviour, may we hear your call,
give our hearts to your obedience,
serve and love you best of all.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818–1895) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 250

**God, who cares for all,
give us the courage to face our fears,
and to go on our way in faith and trust,
for your love keeps us safe and brings us home.
Amen.**

The Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love and with those you ought to love this day and forever more. Amen

