

**Luke 8:22-25**     **WHO IS THIS who calms the storm?** Storm Sunday, St Marks, 21.9.25

You are either a mission field or you are a missionary! Which are you? Are you a missionary? Are you a mission field? Are you going out from the church to **make disciples of all nations**? Or are you glued to a church pew or a mobile phone as a mission field? These might seem strange questions on this Storm Sunday when we are focussed on weather and wind. But have you read Jonah lately? Jonah was sent as a missionary to Nineveh. **But Jonah ran away from the Lord. Jonah** didn't want to go and caught a ship in the opposite direction. Again it says **Jonah sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.** Not a good move Jonah. Not a good move to flee from your missionary calling. The same is true for the church. Not a good move for the church to flee from its missionary calling. The same is true for you. Not a good move to flee from your missionary calling.

**Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm the ship threatened to break up.** Meanwhile Jonah is asleep in the bottom of the boat, just as the church is too often asleep to her missionary task. The Lord has to use drastic measures to wake up Jonah and us. He sends a violent storm, and the terrified sailors pray to their heathen Gods, while Jonah sleeps on as does the church as it fails to grasp its missionary task. Finally, the sailors discern that Jonah is the problem and they throw him over board **and the raging sea grew calm.** Just as the Lord had sent the violent wind and then calmed it so now **The Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God.**

Doesn't this sound like Jesus **asleep in the boat**, as the sea raged around him and his disciples panicked and woke him **and he rebuked the wind and the raging waters and the storm subsided and all was calm.** Both these stories tell us the same thing. The storms seem like they've come from Hell, but God is always in charge, whether it is a wind storm, or a hail storm, or a thunderstorm, or a fire storm, or a storm in a Tea-cup. When we come to the end of our resources we need to throw ourselves on the mercy of God. Either we trust the Lord of the storm, or we are left at the mercy of the storm. This leads us to seek to answer the question the disciples ask: **WHO IS THIS? Who is this who calms the storm?**

**1. THE BLESSING OF WINDS/STORMS.** I'm not so enthused about this SEASON OF CREATION we're on. But I'm coming to appreciate it. I just want to preach **Christ and him crucified**, but this season has helped me see that throughout Scripture we are taught aspects of Creation. From the actual story of creation in Genesis 1, and in countless Psalms; to the story of the Flood where God both drowns sinners and saves the righteous Noah; to the droughts Abraham and his descendants faced, and led them to settle in Egypt; to the crossing of the Red Sea as God led his people to safety. How did God do this? **Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove back the sea with a strong East wind and turned it into dry land.** What a blessing the wind is!

What a blessing the wind is! **On Pentecost Day, suddenly a sound like the blowing of a mighty wind came and filled the whole house – and all of them were filled with the HS.** But there is more. The sound gathered a great crowd, and Peter preached **Christ and him crucified and raised**, and 3,000 were baptised and saved through Water and the Word.

2.THE FEAR OF STORMS. Storms seem like a curse. How can we not call a Tsunami a curse; or a raging fire or flood or wind which destroys thousands of homes? In 1837 my family were part of the first boat load of Lutherans to come to Australia. After unloading us on KI the ship sailed on to Encounter Bay and sunk in a horrific storm. I have travelled to KI over 50 times to lead worship. Many times the storms were so bad I wish I'd stayed home. I've flown in planes that have dropped out of the sky in storms, and in small planes flying through thunder storms, and I wished I was home in bed. Creation is a wild place, and often it might appear to us as a cursed place. At times like this we need to ask: do I fear the storm, or do I trust in God? **Who is this** who sends the storm, but also calms it?

We live in a world where climate seems to be changing, a world where climate is warming and sea levels are rising. Where will we go for help in these turbulent times? Will we go to scientists who seem to be the gods of our age, or will we go to God the creator and sustainer of all that he has made? Do we trust ourselves to fix these frightening crises, or do we go to God in prayer? Do we force people to change the way they live, or do we call people to repent of their greed, and godlessness? Do we keep running away from God and our Mission calling as Jonah did, or do we cry out to Jesus for mercy, as the disciples did?

Of course the storms are not just out there in creation. The storms are also in the peak of creation, in our own hearts. I don't remember a time when our society has been more broken – children, youth, relationships, marriages. The evening news is so bad that people are giving up watching it. But this is not the time to hide away on the bottom bunk with Jonah. Surely this is the time to fulfil our missionary calling, and to bring the love and forgiveness and hope of Jesus Christ to people. The time for falling asleep in the pew is over. The time for waking up and bringing the love of Jesus to people is here and now!

3.THE FEAR OF/FAITH IN JESUS. The book of Jonah helps us lots. The sailors first fear the storm, but when they cry out to the Lord, and he calms the storm, they fear the Lord. It's the same with the disciples in the boat. First they are filled with fear of the storm. Then they cry out to Jesus, and when Jesus calms the storm they are filled with **fear and amazement and ask: WHO IS THIS, who commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?** Luther says it so well. *We are to fear, love and trust in God above anything else.* We are not to fear the storms of life, but to fear the Lord of the storms above everything else! We are not to love the things of this passing world, but to love the Lord above everything else. We are not to trust in all the ideas of this world, but to trust in the Lord above everything else. In the midst of the countless storms of life listed in Ps. 29, go into the house of the Lord, and learn who runs the world: **in his temple all shout GLORY!** *Glory to God in the Highest and peace to his people on earth.* Jonah had to go into the belly of the fish to discover his mission calling, and he became the most successful missionary ever. Every time you come to worship to give GLORY TO GOD, the wind of the Spirit is here like a giant bellows to stir your missionary calling to life. Following Jesus is not all about you coming to church. It is really about you joining Jonah to go out in mission to the world. This story is followed by Jesus healing the **demon-possessed** man. Fear of this man turns to fear of Jesus and they tell him to go away. But the healed man wants to follow Jesus. And Jesus says: **Go home and tell how much Jesus has done for you.** Go and do thou likewise! Amen.