

Eye of the Storm



As I write, enjoying this unseasonable September heat, I was reflecting on what I was doing this time last year, partly because, like many of us, I'm feeling the need for a change of scene. What a contrast! We were in Spain witnessing horrendous floods which devastated our local area, with loss of life, human & animal, loss of the precious harvest, loss of homes and their contents. One year on, the community is still reeling from this 'once in a generation' event. I have never experienced storms of such ferocity. It was truly frightening to see the powerful forces of nature unleashed.

Extreme weather events appear to be on the increase, with scenes of devastation and traumatized people appearing daily in the media. It would be foolish to suggest that disasters of this magnitude are a relatively recent phenomenon – but on this scale and frequency? The full horror of the aftermath is brought to us with stark immediacy, courtesy of global internet connections: it is not an option for us to plead ignorance or deny knowledge.

As a child, I had a very ambivalent relationship with thunderstorms. I recall the tingle of excitement as lightning streaked the glowering sky, but it was tinged with terror, because I was convinced the huge lime tree that was positioned in our garden which was atop a big hill, would be struck and crash through into my bedroom.

Ominous clouds are gathering as we approach Autumn. “What if”? “How will we be affected?” “We’ve managed on furlough money, but what will happen now?” “Will I still have a job?” “I’m taking one step forward and two steps back!” “We seem to be descending into chaos!”

‘Then {Jesus} got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!”

He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and waves, and it was completely calm.

The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the wind and waves obey him?”

Matthew 8: 23-27

A short passage, simply told, recording an event in Jesus’s life, but so significant. The more you read it, the more layers are peeled back to reveal its truth about Jesus – who he was and how he revealed his identity to those he was mentoring.

There was an ancient belief (intimated throughout the Old Testament), that the restless sea, displaying a chaotic and unpredictable nature, was to be feared. Chaos – a word of Greek derivation – is defined as ‘utter confusion’ – mayhem, if you like – so Jesus is standing amid the chaos of the storm, taking control and subduing the chaotic forces at work. He stands amid the eye of the storm, an oasis of calm. He is saying to his disciples, “You shouldn’t be afraid because I’ve got everything in hand. I’m here with you and if you believe and trust in me, I will keep you safe”.

It is human instinct to react like the disciples did – blind panic and fear. Is that how you are reacting to the daily torrent of bad news?

The view of a tropical storm from space is a good analogy of the times we find ourselves in. Where are you in the picture? Are you spinning about uncontrollably in the enveloping maelstrom? Can you locate in your mind that place of calm – the eye of the storm – when suddenly everything becomes calm: you are not sinking or being tossed about like flotsam, but ‘held’.



“Be still and know that I am God”

Ps 46: 10

Be assured – God is in control, just as Jesus knew his loving Father was in control on the boat. Jesus is saying “trust me, have faith and I will guide you through the storm to a place of rest and peace”.

In her Tuesday reflection, Charlie wrote about retreating to a ‘place’ where we can listen to what God has to say to us – to reflect on the way things are and the way things could be.

“If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves (ie descend into chaos);

But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed”.

Proverbs 29: 18 (The Message)

Author of ‘Workship’, Kara Martin, writes these inspiring words:

“Evidence of the presence of the Kingdom of God is thick wherever and whenever people stand on the promise of God that there is more to this world – more to this life – than what we see. There is more than the getting over, getting by, or getting mine. There is more than the brokenness, the destruction and the despair that threatens to wash over us like waters of the deep. There is a vision of a world where God cuts through the chaos, where God speaks and there is light. There is a vision where there is protection and where love is binding every relationship together. There is a call for humanity to exercise dominion over self and the rest of creation in a way that serves all, not just self. And there is a promise that as long as we follow God’s way, there will be life, healing, and love. There will come a day when all the world stands before God in Shalom.....

Come, Lord Jesus, in us and through us, and ultimately bring about the New Earth”.