

Stormy waters: Mark 4.35-41

In the church at Magdala, looking out on the Sea of Galilee, the altar is in the shape of a fishing boat. Thanks to Rod for today's TFTD.



The Bible story for today, from Mark's gospel is, on the face of it, a simple story of a storm on the Sea of Galilee (nothing unusual in that, they whip up and die down quite quickly and quite often) and Jesus calming the storm. Is that all there is to it, just an historical narrative?

The title of today's reflection brings two thoughts to my mind immediately. The first relates to a journey from Dar Es Salaam, in Tanzania, to the Spice Island of Zanzibar. We had arrived into Dar es Salaam in the middle of the rainy season. Our first approach to landing had to be aborted because of the weather, but we got down safely at the second attempt and were met by our friends at the airport for the journey to the port of Dar. I thought that I had seen African rain before, but it was nothing compared to this.

By the time we got to the boat we were absolutely soaked to the skin and tired out from an overnight flight from the UK, so we were looking forward to getting warm and dry and a bit of rest on the journey. Dry, we managed, but rest? Not for me. As we sailed out of the harbour it seemed that the storm got even worse. The little boat (a former Greek Islands roll on roll off ferry) was tossing backwards and

forwards and making me feel quite ill. So, I stood in a bit of shelter on the outside deck and watched our progress, getting more and more concerned as sea water kept coming in through the bow doors of the boat. I don't know how Carole managed to sleep, but she did! I was just more and more concerned. How I wished that Jesus was in the boat with us and would just rise up and calm the storm. But I think that he did calm the storm for me, not in the sense that the wind and waves died down (though they did, just a bit before we landed) but that set my mind at rest – if we make it to Zanzibar that will be great Lord, but if not it's OK to be with you.

Yes, I know that it sounds a bit cheesy, but that honestly how I felt.

And the second thought is this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weqgFrL5Zsk>, the Rod Stewart song 'Sailing' as it was the theme song for the TV series, Sailor, which we used to watch as a family. It so reminds me of my teenage years, but the lyrics towards the end of the song bring us back to our reading from Mark:

We are sailing, we are sailing

Home again

'Cross the sea

We are sailing

Stormy waters

To be near you

To be free

Oh, Lord, to be near you, to be free

Oh, my Lord, to be near you, to be free

Oh, my Lord, to be near you, to be free

Oh, Lord

Again, I know it's a bit 'cheesy', but for me those words convey the sense of journeying with God. When we encounter Jesus, as the early disciples did, then our journey begins.

Becoming a Christian is the start of the journey, not the end. Yes, there will be turbulent waters in most of our lives, but there is the continual presence of Jesus with us, both in the ups and downs and in the calmer waters.

May you continue to know the presence of God, whether you are in troubled waters or calmer times. Oh, and by the way, Zanzibar is just fantastic – there is so much to see and so much history, especially of the East African Slave trade, but it might be safer to fly!

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