



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

Mark: 35-41 'Jesus Stills a Storm'

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.'³⁶ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. ³⁷ A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸ 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?' ³⁹ 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. ⁴⁰ He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' ⁴¹ 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?'



At the close of another busy day teaching, with crowds clamouring for his attention, Jesus suggests to his disciples that go to find a quiet spot on the far side of Lake Galilee. He must have been exhausted as he was asleep when one of the violent storms – which arise without warning on Galilee – threatened to overturn the boat. Some of the disciples were hardened fishermen used to bad weather, but they feared for their lives. When Jesus calmed the storm 'Peace! Be still!' were they words as much to the disciples as to the elements? After months of being with Jesus, listening to his teaching, witnessing his amazing deeds, still they lacked trust.

All around the world now, many are fearful, wondering what future holds for them and those whom they hold dear. But if we know that Jesus is with us in this dark situation, we need not be afraid: God is with us as we self-isolate, as we wonder how to cope with loss of freedom, short supplies, loneliness. Let us rest assured that whoever we are, wherever we are, God is close to each of us. We may know that as we meditate and pray: apart yet together. We are the people of Emmanuel: 'God with us'. Rather than being fearful, can we use this time as 'breathing space' doing things often neglected? Perhaps we can spring-clean; give the garden more attention; pick up a neglected hobby; join in dance or exercise online; write a letter; phone someone you know to be alone?

Above all may each of us, whether in isolation or able to get out a little, that God is 'indeed not far from each one of us' (Acts 17:27) - or as Charles Wesley would have us sing: (StF 459)

'as far from danger as from fear, while love, almighty love is near'

Prayer: Loving God, we bring before you all those who are fearful, anxious for themselves or loved ones at this difficult time.

We pray for those working to find a vaccine;

for all facing hard decisions as they care for those affected by sickness.

May they find new depths of compassion as they tend the sick or dying.

We commit to your loving care those who mourn the loss of their loved-ones.

Speak your word of peace and calm to all who feel threatened.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen

