

Moravian Women's Association

Devotional Paper October 2026

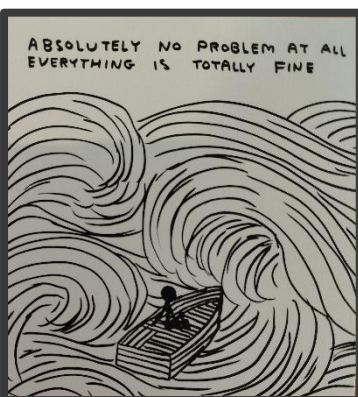
Be still and know

Mark 4:35-41 (Good News) ³⁵ On the evening of that same day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." ³⁶ So they left the crowd; the disciples got into the boat in which Jesus was already sitting, and they took him with them. Other boats were there too. ³⁷ Suddenly a strong wind blew up, and the waves began to spill over into the boat, so that it was about to fill with water. ³⁸ Jesus was in the back of the boat, sleeping with his head on a pillow. The disciples woke him up and said, "Teacher, don't you care that we are about to die?"

³⁹ Jesus stood up and commanded the wind, "Be quiet!" and he said to the waves, "Be still!" The wind died down, and there was a great calm.

The storm must have been a terrifying event. The disciples are experienced fishermen and therefore realise that this storm is enough to sink the boat. The Greek words used by Mark describe the storm as a sudden tornado-like whirlwind coming down from the sky. There was a deep-seated fear of the sea in Jewish belief, the sea could be a place where sea monsters lived. Storms were seen as being representative of evil forces in the world and the trials and tribulations of people's personal lives. The ability to control the sea was seen as belonging to God.

Although we probably don't hold to some of the more mythological beliefs about the sea, we recognise that the sea can be a very dangerous place to be. We still use words about the sea and storms to describe difficulties in our lives.



Whilst out shopping recently, I came across and bought a postcard (see left) with a drawing on of a very small boat on a very stormy looking sea. There are no oars or sail on the boat, just a person sitting there. Above the picture are the words: 'Absolutely no problem at all, everything is absolutely fine.'



It clearly isn't. The boat is way too flimsy to survive a storm. Without any means to steer the boat, the person in it is just going to be blown to wherever the storm takes him or her.

Perhaps the postcard was designed to make us smile, I don't know, but the more I have looked at this postcard, the more I have begun to see the image as a statement of faith. The person in the boat, doesn't look alarmed at all, they are sitting there, trustingly it seems to me, waiting to see what will happen. Perhaps the person in the boat believes that despite appearances, God is in all of this somewhere and can be trusted to bring him or her through the storm. (I doubt this was the intention of the original artist!)

In the story from Mark's Gospel, once the storm has been stilled and there is great calm, Jesus speaks to his disciples asking them: 'Why are you frightened? Do you still have no faith?' (v40). I often feel sorry for the disciples when Jesus asks them questions like this – they thought they were going to drown! Surely that is reason enough to be afraid!

It is easy enough for us to read these stories hundreds of years later with perhaps a slight sense of superiority – we would have been different, we would have had faith. But I'm not so sure we would have been any different. We all have stormy times, times when we feel the bottom has fallen or is falling out of our world, times when we feel afraid. But this story can give us some comfort, it is an anchor that we can hold onto when times are tough. This story tells us that we can be still in the storms that assail us because we have faith. Faith in the one who has power even over those things which threaten us. It is a story which encourages us to be like the person in the flimsy boat on the postcard.

Discussion

What Bible stories or hymns can you think of which speak of stormy seas and God's power over them?

Have you ever had any times in your life when you felt that a 'storm' was going to overwhelm you but you felt the presence and power of God?

How easy do you find it to 'be still' in times of trouble? Are there any hymns, pieces of scripture, music or art which you turn to?