

SERMON AT GELORUP: 24/6/2018: SUNDAY BETWEEN 19 -25 JUNE (OS 12)
GEOFF CHADWICK: Mk 4:35-41: "THE GREAT STORM"

One of the things I'm fond of saying is:

We need winter, but I'd rather have it without the storms. Please.

Perhaps Jesus' disciples felt this way on that fateful trip across lake Galilee when a storm sprung up from nowhere and threatened to drown them all. They would have been thankful for a bit of wind to drive their primitive sail-boat, but a storm, that's another matter.

Whilst looking at this story in the Original Greek one of words jumped out at me:

anemos – meaning *wind*.

anemos has caught my attention because the similar word in Latin, *animos* (spelt with an *i* rather than an *e* refers to the breath of life. In the Latin form, someone who is near to death needs to be *reanimated* with the breath of life. Although word origins are often uncertain, I think there is a link between the Greek and Latin forms of the word. In ancient times the words for *breath life* and *spirit* were almost synonymous. This is true for Greek, Latin and Hebrew. In these ancient worlds, the presence of breath was the indication of life. Breath meant life, and the absence of breath meant you were dead, or in the case of an object, non-living. Such is the power of this idea that even today we talk on non-living things as inanimate or, quite literally *without-wind*.

In today's reading, the storm which descends upon the boat is described as a *megale anemos* or a *big wind*. Our translation calls it a *great gale*, a good translation but I like the idea of *big wind*.

(Curiously, I am reminded of the episode of the *Vicar of Dibley* where the church window is destroyed in *The Great Storm*. Or was it *The Great Wind* or the *The Tempest* of '66, or *The Quite Great Storm* or the *Storm With No Name* ... I digress...)

Anyway, what we have in the text is the *big wind* and if, I'm not stretching the text too far we could call it the *big breath of life*. This storm, is not just a physical gale on a lake, it is an overwhelming blowing of the breath of new life into the lives of the disciples. Mark, the Gospel writer, has placed this story between the calm of Jesus' parables and three *storms* of healing (the Gerasene Demoniac, Jairus Daughter and the woman with a haemorrhage). If my interpretation is correct, this *megale anemos (big wind)* is a pre-cursor of what is to come in the Gospel story. There's a storm brewing. If you read on you will be swamped by betrayal, crucifixion and death. But the greatest storm is the powerful new wind (life) of resurrection. The idea of resurrection will overwhelm you- it will swamp all your ideas about God and it might just be too much for you to handle. But then, in a moment of calm reflection, the question will come:

Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? (Mk 4:40b, NRSV).

The *megale anemou* is not just an external storm, it is also an internal wind. This *big wind*, this *breath of life* will animate the disciples' very being in ways never before imagined. *The Great Storm Of all Great Storms*, the *mega anemos* of all *megoi anemoi* is the resurrection. Jesus is totally *re-animated* by God into a way we will never fully understand. Such life, such resurrected life, is too much to manage – the first disciples are swamped by its power and by its ramifications.

Yes, winter is a good idea – but without the storms please!

Well maybe we are those disciples too. Maybe the great storms of God's possibilities can overwhelm us. Maybe new life is just a bit too scary for us – who needs a life full of storms... But then again, a storm might just be what we require. The excitement of refreshing wind, the adrenaline of uncertainty, and the rousing of a comfortably sleeping Jesus hidden in the sterns of our lives.

Yes, winter is a good idea – but with the odd storm of new life... but not too many please!

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.