

Thought for the Day 27th May 2020 from Peter Hemming

Numbers 23:13-end and Luke 8:16-25

What are you afraid of?

The unknown, the unexpected, the future ...? The dark, being left alone and chaos ...? In Luke 8:22-25 we read of Jesus calming the storm on the lake.

To the Jews, who feared 'the sea' and its unpredictability, Jesus quietens the storm, [though I rather guess that the disciples woke him to help with baling the boat out and getting rid of the water splashing over the sides!] 'Where is your faith', Jesus asks.

Is fear incompatible with faith? Fear may quash faith, or it may encourage it. In this pandemic, we must behave sensibly – not fearfully. When God puts us in difficult or strange situations, we can be sure of His help.

We are told, 'don't be afraid'. This is hard. We fear the unknown, virus, and isolation from family and friends, who are often 'in the same boat'. We long for certainty and don't usually get it. The disciples were not the first to be afraid. In the Numbers 23 reading, Balack had called Balaam to curse the Israelite hordes, only Balaam blessed them: and Balack became increasingly afraid. Elijah was afraid after he'd defeated the 'Prophets of Baal' in 1 Kings 18. In his oratorio, "Elijah", Mendelssohn set words, from Isaiah 41 and Psalm 91. [If you play the video, the words are there: if not they're printed below; you might feel it sounds like overkill – except that we do not need to fear when God is with us.]

"Be not afraid!" saith God the Lord, "Be not afraid: thy help is near!" God the Lord, thy God, saith unto thee: "Be not afraid!" Though thousands languish and fall beside thee, and tens of thousands around thee perish, yet still it shall not come nigh thee. "Be not afraid!" saith God the Lord, "Be not afraid: thy help is near!" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQnBvRGPhSo>

And for anyone reading the full Old and New Testament readings, you'll see that the paragraph before the stilling of the storm narrative includes reference to Jesus being 'our brother'. Thus, he is both 'family member' and 'all powerful'. And as a good family member, he is available to us. All the time. Think about that!