

## Psalm 65 – meditation

What a great psalm of praise – speaking of people in harmony with their God and creator; people confident that their God answers prayer. And when you experience answers to prayer it encourages you to pray more!

Is it really possible that ordinary people can be in harmony with God when they fail so much, are often so self-centred and go against God's will and purposes? Yes – it's possible because our God is a God of grace, mercy and forgiveness. The psalmist said - when we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions. Perhaps the psalmist could only experience it partially as in Old Testament times he was forever bringing offerings to God – but we can know it fully through Jesus' death which has brought about total forgiveness and we can know freedom from guilt and live in that freedom knowing that the only thing – or person - that stands between us and God is Jesus – and his love and his forgiveness.

We too are filled with good things when we spend time in God's presence. Don't you love coming into this building to worship God, to pray and to read his word? But how much do we really know this God in all we do when we leave here?

God is certainly all powerful. We look around creation and see so much demonstrating God's power and creativity. I share the Psalmist's passion for mountains. I was chatting to a friend during the week who was telling about her wish to celebrate a big birthday in New York. I've never been excited by tall skyscrapers that give you a neck ache, noisy cities, hustle and bustle. But give me a view of mountains, and I'm happy. That's what I loved when I was able to ski - bright crisp winters' day with jet blue skies and white glistening snow-capped mountain ranges as far as you could see and in every direction you turn. That's when I'm ecstatic and overwhelmed... praising God. Everything I see speaks to me about the creator who I haven't seen.

The psalmist also describes God stilling the roaring of the seas, bringing calm to waves and compares this with how he brings calm to the turmoil of the nations – how much we need that now!

With this amazing freakish weather this week the weather I'm sure we've all enjoyed our first glimpses of Spring – so refreshing and inspiring after the dark, dismal winter days. Now I can wake up with the morning sky ever brightening and even enjoy a little bit of early evening light before watching a sunset.

On Thursday I went to visit someone in West Kirby late afternoon/early evening and they nearly didn't get a visit because the sun was going down and part of me wanted to see that glorious sunset over the Welsh hills and sandy banks. However even after the sun had set and I was driving past the marina it was an awesome evening; slightly hazy, but so very still with distinct shadows being cast across the lake. I felt an overwhelming sense of peace and serenity – and just like the psalmist – I felt songs of joy and praise rising up within me.

And isn't it great when we see evidence of God in the countryside and in the seasons? What beautiful pictures the psalmist paints of God caring for creation and enriching it – not somehow but abundantly; God blessing it and crowning it with bounty. Even the grasslands of the wilderness - which almost sounds a contradiction – overflow – and creation sings for joy. How criminal it is that we so often mess up God's abundant creation.

When we know a God like this – and we are in harmony with him – surely we can face anything – or can we? It's great when we're able to enjoy the wonder of creation – or when we're together praising God in church – but what are we like when storms hit us? When you're told, just as you're hitting the prime of life that you might be paralysed for the rest of it? Or when it's confirmed that you've got the big C? Or when someone you love and thought you'd be with the rest of your life is suddenly no longer wants to be with you?

Storms have a unique way of revealing truth about God .... while at the same time revealing how little we know about him. Somehow we need to learn how to bring that awareness of the Almighty God of creation into the tough times of life...

Luke 8: 22-25

Prayer: Father – continue to speak to us, open our ears, eyes and heart to Your Living Word. Amen

There didn't seem anything unusual about Jesus' request to the disciples to cross the Lake. After all they had done it numerous times throughout their life and were seasoned fishermen, hardy sailors who knew the Lake well. And so they set out.

On such a beautiful calm day with clear blue skies - what better place is there to be! The sea, or lake, nestled some 700 feet below sea level surrounded by the hills of Galilee some 1400 feet above sea level. From the boat they would have enjoyed views of the surrounding countryside – fields overflowing with crops in front of the beautiful eastern mountains of the Golan Heights. Perhaps they even acknowledged and worshipped the Creator God behind it.

And as they sailed Jesus fell asleep – hardly surprising after a busy day, teaching the people, interacting with so many. He was at peace, doing His Father's will, confident of His Father's presence.

But the features that gave the Lake its beauty also were a cause of danger. A cool wind from the eastern mountains could suddenly blow across the lake displacing its warm air and producing unexpected and devastating turbulence. Maybe this is what happened that day as the peace and clam didn't last long. Suddenly a squall broke out as the winds whipped across the Lake.

Terror gripped the disciples. This was no ordinary storm! Wave upon wave crashed over against and into the boat. No matter how fast they bailed the water out the boat kept filling up. Now it was getting desperate. The wind continuously screeching and howling as it slammed across the vessel, lurching themselves and all its contents from one end to another. Fear engrossed them totally– but amazingly Jesus was still sleeping. Can you feel the frustration rising? Sleeping!! Not helping them bale out the water – but sleeping – in such a dire situation. Didn't he care?

They had to wake him - 'Master, Master, we're going to drown!' We're all doomed.

Jesus calmly got up, rebuked the wind and the raging waters and the storm subsided, and all was once again calm – he was totally in control. He didn't rebuke the disciples – he had rebuked the storm – but he had one significant question for them - 'Where is your faith?'

Well if their faith had been in their sailing abilities and their years of experience on the Lake it had totally let them down that day. They may have set out confidently but now they were at the end of themselves.

But was their faith in Jesus? Who exactly was he? A great teacher, a miracle worker, a prophet... but was that all he was? Perhaps one of them recalled the words of Psalm 65 -

You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds, God our Saviour, the hope of all the ends of the earth of the farthest seas, who stilled the roaring of the seas, roaring of their waves.

The only person who could command the winds and the water such that they obeyed him was the Creator God. But that was an outrageous thought! Could Jesus really be the Creator God – God

incarnate - there with them? Awesome! Unbelievable! Was it true that all the time they were panicking and fearing for their lives – the Creator was alongside them – sleeping – but definitely in control?

Storms have a unique way of revealing truth about God .... while at the same time revealing how little we know about him. This was their God – the same God they worshipped and acknowledged in creation – there with them. He hadn't deserted them. Maybe he was waiting for them to call out in their desperation. He was definitely longing for them to trust him in a deeper way – to let their faith grow deeper in the changeless God – who doesn't abandon you in the times of trouble.

So as we hear that question again this morning – where is your faith –will we have the courage to bring God into those difficult and challenging situations that we all face? The choice of faith is absolute. Either we trust him or we are left in the mercy of the storm.

I'll end with the words of a song -

FAITHFUL ONE, so unchanging,  
Ageless One, You're my Rock of peace.  
Lord of all, I depend on You,  
I call out to You again and again.  
I call out to You again and again.  
You are my rock in times of trouble.  
You lift me up when I fall down.  
All through the storm Your love is the anchor,  
My hope is in You alone. Amen

E. Blackmore