

Trinity four

I think we'll all agree that the weather is a great source of conversation. Although we may have conversations about countless other things, the weather is always right up there! In recent months, probably much of this year and even the latter part of last year, we've all had many conversations about the rain and how much of it we've had. And how heavy it has sometimes been. If only we could have some say in the weather and make it a bit better! I have to say I like all sorts of weather as long as there is a bit of a balance to it, and there you go, that's me wanting some say in how I'd like the weather to be. I'm one of those people that likes snow, which we don't seem to get so much of these days. I do like the wildness of weather sometimes and another thing we might agree on is how strong the winds were that we had certainly last year and into this year. There is a limit as to how much you can like something though and we know that all weathers can bring a certain amount of threat with them.

Back in January, Carolyn and I had a few days in Keswick in the Lake District. Often when we're there we walk all round Derwent Water. It's become almost routine. We kind of thought we wouldn't be doing it this time, as we'd had so much rain that we wouldn't be able to get across to the other side at the bottom of the lake. However, a conversation in the pub changed that, when we chatted to another couple who said they had just walked around it with the dog. 'Let's do it tomorrow' we thought. 'It looks like we'll get around after all.' Well, we set off the next morning and once we got down to the lake itself, we discovered not surprisingly how high the water was, with the wooden jetty's fully submerged. The path started off okay for a while, but then it got wetter and in some cases it was under water, at which we had to move further inland to divert away from it. We wanted a walk, not a paddle! This however got more frequent and there was one point where we had to paddle through water to get through this gate. 'What are we doing?' We thought. 'Shall we turn back?' the thought of that wasn't very appealing as we'd gone so far. so we carried on. Well as we got to the bottom of the lake, which can be prone to a little flooding, hence the board walks that come in handy, we were greeted with a massive expanse of water. Derwent Water had grown by about a third! It was almost scary looking. We can't walk on water and we certainly weren't going to swim, or get in a boat if there was one around. Eventually I spotted what looked like a bit of a track, a bit rough but it had potential and it led us on to a good path, which we were reassured by two young women we saw, would lead us into a village in Borrowdale. And it did. All the way round the lake, we never saw another soul until we saw those young women. It was a long walk not seeing any other people. It was also a very wet walk from start to finish as it never stopped raining. It certainly wasn't the walk we usually enjoy and wasn't very relaxing. We were tense and on alert all the time and wished we hadn't done it. Once reaching the village we went in the church and with relief we sat down and ate our sandwiches. Just us in there. I hope it wasn't too disrespectful? It felt good anyway and was perhaps a reminder, that although we felt very lonely going around that ever bigger lake, we weren't alone. God was with us. From there we went into a nearby hotel and called a taxi to take us the rest of the way back to Keswick, looking out on the vast expanse of water where we normally walked. It was scary looking to us.

So yes, nature is very strong and can be threatening, and that's some weather we'll always talk about and remember!

In today's gospel from Mark, we have a weather scene that I'm sure was later a topic of conversation. Jesus says to his companions. 'Let us go across to the other side.' Meaning to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. And so leaving the crowds behind, they get in the boat and off they go. However, as we hear. 'A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.' Scary indeed. No mention of rain, but with the wind and the waves, that's some power battering the boat! I don't think any lover of all weathers, could feel calm and at ease with that. It's life threatening. However the disciples are not alone in the situation. They have Jesus with them. Are the disciples scared though? Yes they are! Is Jesus scared? Well no he isn't. Indeed he is in the stern of the boat asleep on the cushion. Thinking the very worst, they wake Jesus up and say to him. 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' As we then hear. '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.' Jesus says to them. Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith? 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?' We felt relief in just getting into that church and then getting into that taxi. How much more relief would Jesus' companions have felt. But, they are reminded by Jesus that they need to trust him. They need to have the faith that in Jesus we have someone who hears our calls when we are afraid. Whatever is thrown at us in life, which can be all manner of things and however hard we're battered by unfriendly waves, or fazed by difficult crossings; Jesus is there to calm the storm and bring us safely to the other side.

Amen