

St James' Church, Weybridge

Trinity 10, Sunday 9th August 2026

Introduction and Call to Worship

Today we hear how Jesus walks on the waters of Galilee to be with his disciples, facing the battering winds of a storm. We worship God and thank him for his calming presence alongside us in all the difficulties we encounter in our daily lives – our own storms in which he stills the waves.

Today's Readings

First Reading 1 Kings 19:9-18

Elijah encounters God in the absolute silence and calm that follow storms of mighty winds, earthquake and fire.

Gospel Matthew 14:22-33

In a powerful storm Jesus walks on the waters of the lake to reach his disciples. The calming of the storm as Jesus gets into the boat compels the disciples to worship Jesus as the Son of God.

HOMILY

"Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." (Matthew 14:27)

At St James' our small music committee spend a lot of time reflecting upon our bible readings and choosing the most appropriate music and hymns to echo their themes and meaning. During August we are singing as our Gradual Hymn, Calm me Lord as you calmed the storm, save me Lord, keep me for harm. Let all the tumult within me cease, hold me Lord, in your peace. Words sung to Margaret Rizza's haunting and beautiful harmony.

Calm me Lord as you calmed the storm. Have you ever felt like the storms of life have rushed in, as if you are on the sea in a small boat with giant waves throwing you about so that you are afraid of falling overboard, of being overwhelmed, even God forbid drowning? You just long for peace and calm. Jesus' disciples know exactly what that feels like too.

In today's dramatic Gospel reading we are told their boat is being battered by wind and waves and they're making no headway towards land. They've been in a storm on the lake before (Matthew 8:23-27), when they feared for their lives. That time Jesus was with them in the boat. He was sleeping, but when they woke him up he commanded the wind and the sea to be calm and they obeyed him. This time, they're on their own; but then early in the morning, while it's still dark, they think they see Jesus coming towards them – except that he can't be because that would mean he was walking on the water. They're terrified, not so much by the weather conditions, this time, but by the sight of what they believe must be a ghost.

Then they hear a familiar voice saying calmly, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." The wind is every bit as strong and the waves still threaten to turn them over, but somehow that voice saying those words makes all the difference. Peter, as always, wants to take things a step further. He wants to walk on the water himself to get to Jesus. He steps forward and does indeed make progress, until he realises that the wind and the waves are still a very real danger and allows that fear to overwhelm the faith he had shown in Jesus.

The storm continues until Jesus and Peter are in the boat with the others, when the wind ceases, calm is restored and the disciples are left in no doubt that Jesus is indeed the Son of God.

Likewise, in the Old Testament reading from the first book of Kings, we read how God made himself known to the great prophet Elijah in the wilderness. Elijah had worked hard for God, but the people had turned to their own ways. The wind, the earthquake and the fire all suggest a turbulent time, yet in the same place that God revealed himself to Moses he has a new message for Elijah, for life goes on – self pity is dealt with, a sense of proportion restored and the path for the future is revealed and more than that, mapped out.

Elijah had felt himself all alone with his work finished and no end in sight – the turbulence of the world surrounded him. But in the stillness God reveals his truth, his love, his Word. Just as in the calming of the storm, God is revealed after the storm has ceased, in a place of stillness. God brings calm and peace amidst the turbulence of creation and the world around us. But we need to be willing to call out to God in faith, and then to listen and to trust.

Sometimes we may feel that specific situations, or even life itself is stormy, even beyond our control, and that is scary. We may even have moments in life, past, present or future, when we feel as if we are drowning, or we watch others we love as they struggle and we long to cry out, “Lord, save me!” “Save them!”

The world around us feels a bit like that at times, with troubled waters continuing, and costs rising, fears of war and so much more that challenges us, our families, friends those whom we love. And in the Church of England, the challenges of relevance, attendances, finances, technology, tradition and so much more too can leave us feeling lost or struggling to hold on in the face of change.

In all the chaos and busyness of life, it important that we do trust God, who longs to bring calm and peace to our lives, who longs to anchor us in worship, the love of the Trinity, who speaks to us out of the chaos, sometimes in utter silence and calls us by name. For with the Lord and in the name of Jesus and him alone, we can if needed cry out in distress, “Lord, save me.” Just like the Gradual hymn reminds us, Calm me Lord as you calmed the storm, we pray for that peace which only God, through Jesus and the Holy Spirit can give. In the face of many and varied storms, we pray that God will continue to guide us in peace and calm.

Indeed, our Lord of life and love does reach out to catch us through the presence of friends offering love and support, practical help and a reassurance that we can get through the storm, whatever that may be. This very building is a place many people come to find that peace, and place of prayer and what a gift this is to Weybridge and each of us who have the joy of worshipping here. Yet more than that, if we let God, the Lord will use us to reach out to others who have cried out to him in distress, as we walk alongside others in love and faith. Whether we hear them for ourselves, or in courage and faith speak them for others, the words “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid” can make all the difference when someone cries out, “Lord, save me.”

So, like Peter, when we or others we love feel thrown about by the storms of life, may we too have the confidence to pray: Calm me Lord as you calmed the storm, save me Lord, keep me for harm. Let all the tumult within me cease, hold me Lord, in your peace. Amen.

Father Damian Harrison-Miles, August 2026