**Genesis 2: 4b-9, 15-end; Revelation 4; Luke 8: 22-25**

**May I speak in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

As some of you know, my idea of fun is solitude, a cup of coffee and my Kindle.

These days, I have a bit more self-discipline than I had when I was a child, but back then, I would read the beginning of a book and then succumb to the temptation to sneak a peep at the ending, just to be sure that it all came right eventually. I like a happy ending.

As you are all aware, at 8 o’clock we only have two Bible readings, while at 9.45 we have all three of the ones that are set for the day. That means I sometimes have to tell you what the extra one is about in order to make some sense of my ramblings.

We heard just now, the New Testament reading from the last book of the Bible, Revelation. And obviously we had a gospel reading from Luke – the calming of the storm. The one we missed out on is one from the very first book of the Bible, Genesis, the second of the two creation stories that are told there.

Now, while these two are the first and last books in the library that we call the Bible, we do need to know that the 66 books were not written in the order in which they now appear to us – the Bible is a collection of writings produced by over 40 authors over a period of about 1500 years – but it has been published in the order in which we find them for a long time now..

So: we know the start of our story as a people of faith is in Genesis, when God created everything, and we know that the end of that story, if it can be called an end, is in Revelation, the writer’s vision of heaven, and that gives us a context for everything in between, and the belief that, whatever happens, all things will be right in the end.

If you’ve seen The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, you might remember Sonny the naïve but visionary young owner, who says: Everything will be all right in the end. If it’s not all right, then it’s not yet the end.

Which is not to say that all things will be all right all the time for us. Far from it. Life will bring its storms, and there will be casualties. Sometimes bad things just do happen to good people:

The father of one clergyperson I know in this diocese was a Christian medical missionary, who died when he was just 36, living out the good news of Jesus in challenging places. And as that clergyperson says: That only makes sense to me if I understand that that’s not the end of the story. The Christian story lives on.

I could equally name any number of Christians who have been martyred for the cause: Maximilian Kolbe who died at the hands of the Nazis; Martin Luther King, Oscar Romero, Dietrich Bonhoeffer; people murdered in China, South America, Europe and Africa.

Yes, they died, but in the way that they lived and the way that they died, they bear witness to the hope that they had in God. Hope because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In our Gospel reading, we heard about Jesus calming the storm. As anyone who has been at sea in bad weather will know, we learn things during a storm that we would not learn otherwise - about ourselves and about the people around us. And that is true also if the challenges we face are metaphorical storms rather than physical ones.

Being a Christian isn’t just about getting to Heaven when we die; it’s about how we live our lives here and now, especially when things get rough, as people who were created by God; made in God’s image; people he loved when he made us and goes on loving no matter what.

There is that twee little anecdote called Footsteps in the Sand. I think you might even find it on one of the prayer cards on the table at the main door there. A conversation between a human and God, where the human looks back along the beach, noticing two sets of footprints in the sand, and later only one set, and assumes that that is where they were abandoned by God, and God replies: My child, I never left you; those places with one set of footprints? That’s where I was carrying you – and that long groove over there? That’s where I dragged you, kicking and screaming……

*(the best version concludes: one time I hid you in the little sandhole over there while I got a hotdog – but that’s a bit beside the point)* 😊

Whatever happens, God is in charge. I preached at a funeral the other day and talked a lot about love. About how love is not a word but a whole set of acts and actions. And in Jesus we have the Word of God being acted out; all we know of God is here in Jesus in that boat; Jesus is the Word, the source of all creation and the ongoing process of creation; as we look to him, we learn to be less anxious and more trusting; whatever the storm is, we don’t need to panic**.**

In a sense, it was nothing special for God the Creator of the universe to still the wind and the waves. Yet the disciples had to learn that. We might use the words ‘Jesus is Lord’, but we still need to learn it by experiencing it.

There was a point in that story where the disciples thought they had been left alone to cope. Wake up, Jesus! We’re drowning! We can feel like that today; when the look on the doctor’s face tells us what we didn’t want to hear, or the phone rings with bad news, or people let us down. We can feel that God has left us all alone. In reality, Jesus was with the disciples in their boat, and is with us wherever we walk on that beach.

There’s a dreadful old song that goes: With Jesus in your boat you can smile at the storm. Its message might be valid, but let’s not pretend: sometimes Jesus doesn’t calm the storm. Sometimes in this life the miracle doesn’t come – or not the way we want it to. Not every story has the happy ending we would choose to write for it. John the Baptist was beheaded. Most of the apostles came to a violent end. Maximilian Kolbe, and millions of others, died at the hands of the Nazis.

So what do we do if the miracle we’re praying for doesn’t come? Maybe that’s where the groove in the sand is – even when we are beyond angry, God can haul us along through the darkest and hardest parts. Until we are ready to walk with Him again. I’ve been there and I daresay many of you have too.

We don’t know the end of the story, but the clues along the way – the resurrection of Jesus following the crucifixion, and his promise to take us to himself – In my father’s house there are many rooms – tell us that all will indeed be well.

And if all is not well, maybe it’s because it’s not the end.

**Amen**