

Trintiy 4

23rd June 2024, Eucharist

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Growing up in Belfast it is nearly impossible to be ignorant of the story of a particular ship, the compelling story that captivated hearts and minds worldwide with it was made into a movie starring Leo and Kate. Today as Belfast continues to grow as a tourist attraction a whole district of the city has grown around the story of this ship. I'm pretty sure my great grandfather would have worked on this ship as many family members would have, Harland Wolf would have been biggest employer in Belfast did represent the pinnacle of ship building technology and industrial prowess in the early 20th century. Although as you probably know, it always strikes me as a little ironic that one of our central ways of developing a city is based on the Titanic which is essentially the story of a large-scale tragic disaster and destruction!

Ships and the sea were also part of the cultural and religious heritage of the Israelites in the Old and New Testament. For those who followed Jesus and found themselves in a boat with him, as we heard in our Gospel reading, in these prescientific days would have understood creation as by the creator God who held back the chaotic waters that were all around the earth, and that were endlessly moving against the created order in threatening ways. For their safety and wellbeing, they needed an attentive creator. The psalm's expressed this heritage and wisdom when they can psalm 107 which partly is concerned with those who 'go down in ships'.

Some went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters.

They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away ²⁷ They reeled and staggered like drunkards; they were at their wits' end.

²⁸ Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress.

²⁹ He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea^[b] were hushed.

YHWH presides over the threat. In Psalm 29 also talk of the creator's capacity to subdue and order the chaos. The Psalm describes a mighty storm, but then concludes with the dramatic affirmation that YHWH is "enthroned over the waters" (v.10). That is, YHWH has made the waters so stable in their submissiveness to YHWH that God can use the chaotic waters for the base of the divine throne. God has not vanquished them, but they are fully subdued and robbed of their threatening power.

This heritage continues into our Gospel reading today with story of danger on the waters. Great winds have risen. Waves beat into the boats, the disciples are terrified, as fishermen they know the danger, they are in. their only recourse is awaken Jesus. Here we get Jesus as his royal and Lordly best. When he announces "Peace, be still". That is all; the wind stops, the waves are subdued. He offers no explanation. But he leaves his disciples in wonderment: **Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him (v. 41)?**

Peace, be still. Who says this and it happens? They know the answer to their question. The answer is old and established within the heritage of Israel. The one who governs the waters is the creator God. Psalm 21 tells us that God neither sleeps nor slumbers. Although Jesus goes one better, the incarnate God, being human, does sleep but he sleeps in the confidence that of his mastery of the chaos.

Water can be an allusion to the reality of chaos that surrounds us and our world. The displacement of many peoples, who make dangerous journeys by boat. The reality of climate change which causes people to flee for higher ground, the brutality of war and forces of economics that require people find safety elsewhere. Chaos is the reality that many people this morning are facing.

The Church must be alert to these threats of chaos and seek to be communities that offer peace, order and wellbeing to those who caught up in chaos.

Where we are positioned, this morning is symbolically seen as a place of safety, the word nave comes from the latin word '*navid*' meaning ship, and draws parallels with the church and a ship, and that the church was and is to be considered a safe place from the chaos of the sea. We are to be communities that know the creator who orders the chaos with words of Peace be still.

As the Disciples inherited answers over who has mastery over chaos so do we also inherit this ultimate message of peace as we read the new testament in the book of revelation Which is eventually an act of hope. The most audacious claim voiced is where the bible tells us that there is a new vision for heaven and earth. And we are told in chapter 21 that The sea is more.

A breath-taking hope in which can imagine a future reality where chaos is no more. Chaos is overcome by the decree of the creator God who is in solidarity with all of his good creation.