



WE KNOW WHAT WE LIKE AND WE LIKE WHAT WE KNOW Text: Mark 4: 35 – end.

There are certain topics certain words that are contentious to use in church!

Politics is one of them – even or maybe especially when there's a general election just about to take place. Another dangerous word to use in church is 'change'. Change in church makes us imagine the worst. Churches not liking change has become a bit of a caricature. But really, it's not just a church thing – it's a human thing. It's natural for us to feel anxious and even angry about change.

We are a people who prefer the status quo. As the saying goes, 'we know what we like, and we like what we know.'

But we will have to get used to change here at St. John's. Change is all around us and it will be disastrous if we bury our heads in the sand in the hope that it will go away.

Minster Community formation will affect us directly and actively participating in the development process will I hope enable us to ensure we get the best outcome for our church and by church I don't mean our building, I mean our people, God's people, you and me and those who come after us.

We need to all be involved in the process not just PCC and we will be represented by Norma and Dawn who will report back from various group discussions and meetings that will take place.

But you don't have to be a PCC member to get involved if you want to. Phase 2 is about doing some deeper work, in small working groups, around various aspects of our church life with the aim of pulling together a proposal that would outline what our Minster Community is likely to look like.

There are working Groups on Church Buildings; Discipleship & Mission; Engagement; Finance & Generosity; Geography, Context & Resource; Growing Faith; New Communities; People & Ministry.

Work done by each group will go to a Minster Community Formation Coordinating Group where local engagement with the formation process in Phase 2 is enabled. It's expected to take between 6 to 9 months, so if you want to be involved you need to be in it for the long term. But truly it affects us all not just PCC so let me know if you want more information as to how to get involved.

Another major change comes in September as we embrace 'Village Heart @ St. John's' it sees us step out a bit into the unknown when we start life as a non-profit business organisation still being 'church' with all that entails and all that it means while also providing a 'Building for All' venue for the people of our parish and community to use. Working with volunteers from the community to manage, develop and grow St. John's as a multi-function religious and secular community facility.

Major changes, one imposed on us and one instigated by us; but both of which we are able to effect and influence in practical terms.

Both of which, if you think about it and pray about it, you will be able to discern the hand of God guiding. Our text shows us that Jesus can command the waves into silence, but he also has the power to stir them up. If Jesus can take the chaos of our lives and tame it he can also take what's tame in our lives and make it chaotic. There's a catchy phrase that says that in a slightly different way 'Jesus came to comfort the

afflicted and to afflict the comfortable'. Because as Christians if we get too comfortable we start to stagnate and God doesn't want that so he challenges us, pushes and prods us in all sorts of ways as individuals and as a church, to grow his Kingdom.

And transformation in our lives is impossible without tumult. Change is almost unheard of without a period of spiritual seasickness as the disciples found out that day on Gallilee. Our lives are full of unexpected twists and turns and waves of change.

And change, coping with it, inspiring it, encouraging it, resourcing it, supporting us through it, is nothing new to God; nothing new to Jesus He's been 'doing' change from page one of Genesis through to the last page of St. John's Book of Revelation. He is constant in his support and will not let us down.

We worship a God who changes lives and I guess many of us are well aware and have experienced his changing power in our own lives. I have a book at home called 'On The Anvil' stories on being 'Shaped by God', likening God to a blacksmith who sometimes pounds us into the shape he wants us to be. It's not a particularly comfortable place to be.

So 'we know what we like, and we like what we know.'

How do we square that desire for familiarity, comfort, stability, with actually following Jesus?

Because following Jesus means there is always going to be an element of change.

Don't forget that Jesus' birth was prefaced by Mary singing about the God who would cast down the mighty from their thrones, lift up the lowly, fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. That's quite some change from the status quo!

Later on, Jesus began his earthly ministry by preaching a message that said 'repent' – a word that literally means turn around. Turn your life around, because the kingdom is at hand. Change the way you live.

He called his first disciples with the words 'follow me'. And in the middle of their ordinary, everyday lives, they laid down what they were doing and followed him. Jesus quite literally changed their lives.

As disciples, our lives have been changed too by Jesus' life, death and resurrection. So how do we deal with that very human tension between change and our preference for a comfortable status quo?

We see this tension in our text. It must have been really scary, a horrendous storm at sea, life threatening, something worse than anything the disciples had experienced before and these were seasoned fishermen sailing waters they knew well. They thought it would literally result in the ultimate life changing experience – death, for them all. 'Lord don't you care if we drown'.

Then Jesus calmed the storm and the situation. But that day he changed the disciples in another way too as he revealed a bit more of who he was. They had already witnessed him turning water into wine, healing lots of people with incurable diseases, feeding thousands of people with meagre supplies, they knew I think that he was pretty special but now they must have thought 'who is this person who can control the elements? What does this mean?'

So there's a tension between the change that Jesus brings, versus the comfortable stability of what we prefer, what we hold dear, or even sacred.

As Christians, how should we respond to change? It would be easy to say that we just need to accept it. But we know that life is not that simple, nor is being a follower of Jesus simple.

So our response could be positive and open to possibility.

Open to Jesus changing our lives, our church's life, our community's life, even changing our whole world.

It might make us feel anxious, concerned, scared, and even angry.

But does this get in the way of us following Jesus? The life that Jesus offers begins with an invitation.

Repent, turn your lives around, he says. Big change!

Follow me, he says to his first disciples. Big change!

Come forward, he says to the folk who need healing in the gospels. Big change!

Jesus is calling us to follow him too, knowing it will be a big change.

Let's be open to where he might lead us next.

Blessings to you All. **Derek Tomlin**

JULY – SERVICES & EVENTS ACROSS THE WOODFIELD TEAM of CHURCHES.

Tuesday July 2 nd	Coffee & Chat at 9.30am at Winnie Meadow's home
Saturday July 6 th	St John's Prayer Group at Winnie Meadow's home at 10am
Sunday July 7 th	Measham (HC), Normanton (HC with Archdeacon Claire), Swepstone (HC) Packington (Breakfast Church)
Sunday July 14 th	Donisthorpe (HC) at the Halfway House , Appleby, (HC), Measham (MP),
Sunday July 21 st	Donisthorpe (Lay Led Worship at the Halfway House) Measham (Breakfast Church), Normanton, Swepstone & Packington, (MP) Appleby (Sunday People), Snarestone (Baptism) and Norton (HC - BCP),
Wednesday July 24 th	Mid-week Holy Communion at Edwina Wallace's home.
Friday July 26 th	Lunch Light at The Woodlands, Bath Lane, Moira (12- 30 – 2.00)
Sunday July 28 th	Donisthorpe (MP) at the Halfway House , Measham & Packington (HC) Appleby (MP),

(all starting at 10am unless otherwise stated).

FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

Meeting this month of **LUNCH LIGHT** our group that supports those who are bereaved will take place on **Friday July 26th from 12.30pm – 2.00pm.** at Woodlands, Bath Lane, Moira.

Maybe you are grieving the loss of someone special and would like some company, a chat and a bite to eat, why not just drop in or telephone Janet if you wish, on 01283 215000 to find out 'if it is what you are looking for'. There is a charge of £3.

COFFEEANDCHAT@CHURCH will meet, on **Tuesday 2nd July** at **Joan & Lomas Smith's home** between 9.30 and 11.00am.

The Shepherd Boy Who Wasn't – The story of David, in 8 parts. PART 1 JORDAN K. MONSON

We like imagining that a young, hopeless David killed Goliath. We need the fuller story.

Six hundred years ago, the leaders of Florence, Italy, gazed upon their magnificent cathedral and felt something was lacking. They decided to commission a dozen statues to line the roof's buttresses. These were to be among the finest statues in the world.

The first commission went to Donatello, the most influential sculptor of the early Renaissance. Other commissions followed. Eventually, a colossal block of marble that came to be nicknamed "the giant" was hauled to Florence for what would be the most ambitious of the statues: a towering likeness of David, the Old Testament king.

But the project stalled. One artist and then another quit. The task was immense, the marble mediocre.

Finally, nearly four decades after chisel had first been put to stone, another



sculptor agreed to finish the piece. A 26-year-old named Michelangelo worked the block day and night, removing multiple tons of marble. Characteristically, Michelangelo often neglected to eat or change clothes. Three years later, Michelangelo's *David* was unveiled. The 17-foot-tall colossus stood for centuries outside the entrance of Florence's town hall as an unmistakable symbol of the city-state's strength and resistance against outside invaders. In the art museum where *David* resides today, the Galleria dell'Accademia, millions of visitors pass under the gaze of what remains the world's most famous statue.

Florentines lauded *David* immediately. But the sculpture was not without controversy. For the same reason you may have giggled at it in middle school, authorities had it clad with a fig leaf off and on for centuries. Also startling was the choice of scene: Instead of sculpting David standing triumphant over the severed head of Goliath, Michelangelo depicted David before the fight, full of rage and fury and the knowledge of what he must do.

Michelangelo's most unusual artistic decision, though, was possibly David's age. The sculptor chose not to depict his subject as a sleek prepubescent boy the way Donatello had a couple of decades earlier in bronze, or the way other Renaissance artists had. Michelangelo's *David* looks like a fully grown Olympic decathlete. Like a young man who might pursue a lion on foot and kill it with oversized hands.

If Michelangelo's brawny statue is the world's most recognizable likeness of Israel's most famous king, why do we continue to think of David battling Goliath as a child?

On my son's bookshelf sit half a dozen children's Bibles. Some are hand-me-downs from the 1980s and '90s; others are from this millennium. In all of them, David is a boy between the ages of 8 and 12—an innocent Sunday school cartoon.

Chances are, you grew up with the same puny David as I did: hopelessly small, draped in Saul's armour as in a drooping bedsheet, eyes covered comically by Saul's helmet.

This version of David is not confined to children's Bibles. He has appeared in countless sermons. Billy Graham referred to "little David." Jewish commentaries and translations, too, have often treated David as a little guy.

Certainly, David the child preaches well: *Dare to be a David! You too can defeat giants if only you believe!* And he has an important theological role to play: A small David helps us emphasize a great God.

But the boyish picture of David obscures the reality of a much more nuanced character. Many of us formed that picture likely because of the ambiguity of a single Hebrew word and the ways Bible translators chose to render it in English. To see who David really was—to understand why he was ordained as a king, why he fell from grace, and why that matters for us today—we need to learn to see David a little more like Michelangelo did.

On the field of battle that fateful day, Goliath met not a child, but a man.

Saints of the Day for July 26

Saints Joachim and Anne's Story - The Parents of Virgin Mary

In the Scriptures, Matthew and Luke furnish a legal family history of Jesus, tracing ancestry to show that Jesus is the culmination of great promises.

Not only is his mother's family neglected, we also know nothing factual about them except that they existed. Even the names "Joachim" and "Anne" come from a legendary source written more than a century after Jesus died.

The heroism and holiness of these people however, is inferred from the whole family atmosphere around Mary in the Scriptures. Whether we rely on the legends about Mary's childhood or make guesses from the information in the Bible, we see in her a fulfilment of many generations of prayerful persons, herself steeped in the religious traditions of her people.

The strong character of Mary in making decisions, her continuous practice of prayer, her devotion to the laws of her faith, her steadiness at moments of crisis, and her devotion to her relatives—all indicate a close-knit, loving family that looked forward to the next generation even while retaining the best of the past. Joachim and Anne—whether these are their real names or not—represent that entire quiet series of generations who faithfully perform their duties, practice their faith, and establish an atmosphere for the coming of the Messiah, but remain obscure.