



Worship at home'

Sunday June 23rd 2024



As we come to worship, we affirm the ongoing presence of the Spirit of God in every aspect of our lives, bringing courage, bringing comfort, bringing peace. You might bring with you a **black pencil, some coloured pencils** and a **piece of blank paper** to aid your prayer time.

Opening (based on Psalm 9)

The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,

a place of safety in times of trouble.

Those who know you, Lord, will trust you;

you do not abandon anyone who comes to you.

Sing praise to the Lord, who rules in Zion!

Tell every nation what he has done!

In God we find courage and strength in the storms of life

In God we find peace.

Life is not always 'smooth sailing'. Sometimes we feel we are being buffeted by erratic winds or swamped by the waves going on around us. Black clouds can make our lives seem dark or uncertain. We feel like things are beyond our control.

When have you been through a stormy patch in your life?

What helped you through?

Reflect on any black clouds or threatening storms in your life at the moment.



Are there fears and uncertainties?

Use your black pencil to write these on your paper, and draw black clouds around them as you name them before God. Ask for the reassurance of God's presence with you in the storms of your life.

Mark 4:35-41

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke

him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

New International Version

"Quiet! Be still!" I wonder if this is as much a rebuke for the disciples as it is for the wind and the waves. Like the disciples, we want God to calm the storms in our lives. Sometimes we feel like God is asleep at the back of the boat while we are being tossed up and down, scared we are about to go under.



Jesus Calms the Storm Daniel Bonnell

We feel like shouting at God, *"don't you care if we drown?"* We want God to perform a miracle, to show God's power and might over the forces of nature, and to calm the seas around us.

David Roberts writes... *"But if you notice, Jesus only reluctantly uses his power. He doesn't seem to want to do anything. He wants to keep sleeping! He goes so far as to rebuke the disciples for even asking for his help. He calls them faithless. This storm-calming power isn't the kind of power Jesus came to demonstrate. Rather, it is the exact kind of power Jesus came in order to give up, to empty himself of. It is the same power he rejects when he refuses to throw himself from the pinnacle when he is tempted in the desert, the same power he turns down when he refuses to kneel before the Adversary, that same superficial power that controls earthly things."*

Though we might like it to be, this isn't a story, I don't think, about Jesus' ability to control the weather. He is bothered to perform the miracle and is annoyed, it seems, that his disciples even asked. This is a story, rather, about how little we believe God to be with us in the midst of an overwhelming storm. It's about how, deep down, maybe we really don't believe that a God-with-is is actually enough." <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/davidhenson/2015/06/1804/>

**When have you found it difficult to trust God
in the storms of your life?**

**When have you felt God was asleep
out the back, rather than dealing
with the storm for you?**

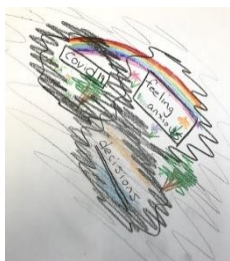


<https://www.dreamstime.com>

Life is not always 'smooth sailing.' God doesn't promise that we will never face hard times, and stormy patches will always be a part of our existence. However, God does promise to be with us in those storms. *"Quiet! Be still!"* Jesus says to us, and in the midst of the storm we find peace, and courage to ride the next wave.

Faith is not the opposite of fear; rather, faith is what gives us courage and peace in the midst of our fear.

The power of God isn't always revealed in miraculous interventions or by controlling the events of nature. The power of God is about relationship, and covenant. The power of God is the presence of God's Spirit with us, in all the ups and downs of life. The power of God is revealed in the ordinary things of life, journeying with us in the storms and in the sunshine. The power of God is not in obliterating all the bad things of this world, but in transforming it into that which is good.



Reflect again on the storms you have written on your page. Use your pencil to underline or outline them, then decorate them with colour, reminding you of God's power which gives you strength to not only get through these times, but which can bring transformation and renewal even in the midst of our difficulties.

When dangers invade our sense of safety
and we wonder if our Saviour cares,
we hear the invitation: **“Quiet! Be still!”**

When we face job loss and financial downturns,
and our sense of security is shaky,
we hear the invitation: **“Quiet! Be still!”**

When our communities experience distress, conflict,
and loss of significant leadership,
we hear the invitation: **“Quiet! Be still!”**

When controversial issues and rigidity of spirit
threaten to tear at the very fabric of our society,
we hear the invitation: **“Quiet! Be still!”**

When our lives feel chaotic and desolate
because of illness or sorrow,
we hear the invitation: **“Quiet! Be still!”**

Help us to know, O God, that the one who calmed the dangerous
sea is present with us, cares for us, and can calm the stormy
waters of our lives. Help us to trust more fully and more deeply in
you. We pray in the name of Jesus, who invites us to be at peace.
Amen.

— adapted from Connie R. Burkholder

Monitor Church of the Brethren <http://rockhay.tripod.com/>

Closing

Mighty God,
 who speaks a word of peace to calm our troubled sea;
Caring God,
 who nudges us away from fear and toward faith;
Ever-present God,
 who fills us with awe
 but also raises many questions
 without easy answers;
Open our eyes to see you in our boat - today,
 Strengthen our hearts for the challenges that lie ahead,
 Open our ears to hear the word you speak.
This we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen

— Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren
<http://rockhay.tripod.com/>

