

Morningside

24-06-2018

Mark 4: 35-41. The stilling of a storm.

Walk round Morningside and discover the gospel. Walk round Morningside and remember four things Jesus did.

Start at South Morningside School. What Jesus did was he taught. He taught people because he knew it was what they needed. They needed to understand about God and they needed to understand about themselves. People needed to know that God loved them so Jesus taught. It was from Jesus they learned that the poor in spirit are given the kingdom of heaven; from him they learned that those who mourn will be comforted. Jesus taught them about God so he told them a story: a story about a man who had two sons. The young one was a waster and took what he could get and left home and ruined everything. Later he dragged himself homewards to throw himself on his father's mercy and then – Jesus said “While he was a great way off his father saw him and ran to meet him and threw his arms around him and kissed him and organised a party. Jesus taught them about the love of God. Still he lives, and still he teaches.

So his church ever since. Teaching its children: the work done here in Sunday club, across the world in Scripture Union and Boys' Brigade. Teaching its members with Autumn lectures and with recommended books and with training classes for tasks within the church: the Church of Scotland has always put emphasis on theological education for its ministers and leaders. But as you stand outside South Morningside School remember that the church has recognised the importance of schools and of education generally. Famously John Knox planned a school in every parish at the Reformation: and when the Scottish missionaries established churches in Africa and in India they nearly always built a school at the same time. Schools are having a difficult time in Scotland: from where should teachers and pupils expect support if not from the church of Jesus? Who should cherish schools and pray for them more than Christian people, followers of Jesus the Teacher?

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Come down the hill to Morningside Parish Church. You are just in time to hear this morning's Bible reading. Jesus calmed a storm. Jesus calmed. The storm-tossed waves on the raging deep are the enemy but Jesus is their master. He says to the wind *Peace, Be still* and the wind ceased and there was a dead calm. Still he lives and still he calms. Whether your enemies can be seen or not, Jesus is their master. His words to his friends – to you – are *Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom*

This is a beautiful building: but that is not its purpose. Look around Morningside Church, stand in the pavement and gaze up at its lovely lines, sit inside and hear its great organ, and know the message of the building about the calming of fear. Bereavement and funerals is an obvious example. Over the years how often has the victory of the risen Christ over death been proclaimed in this place; how often have desperate mourners sought shelter in its corners and in its peace. Marriages too: on one level Morningside church has calmed the trembling of many a bride: but on a deeper level it has surrounded two people on the beginning of a journey with the peace of God which the world cannot give and cannot take away. Think of the prayers said here every Sunday: prayers for those buffeted by storms: literally in the Caribbean or in Sri Lanka and for those tormented by tempests within. Think of the reading and the preaching of the Word of God here every Sunday: over and over again the most repeated command in the Bible *Do not be afraid*. Every time you see a church building let it speak to you of the calming of fear. Let it say to you *Cast your cares on him, for he cares for you*.

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Walk north along Morningside Road – towards the city centre – until you come to Waitrose. It's now the story of the five thousand – Jesus feeding. I suppose he was often hungry himself. Not knowing where he would find his next meal. One of the very few stories outside the crucifixion story recorded in all four gospels is the story of the feeding of the five thousand. Obviously

they thought is said something important about Jesus. Jesus fed. We are better at eating than we are at feeding: better at shopping than sharing. But Jesus fed the people. I'm glad that Morningside Parish church takes Christian Aid seriously. Christian Aid is the churches in action with the world's poor. When you think of the tragedy of refugee ships turned away from Italy, and the crime of the prison camps for children on the American border with Mexico, it is poignant to remember that Christian Aid began in response to the needs of refugees in Europe after the Second world War. The needs seem greater than ever: and the command of Jesus, who fed hungry people, as clear as ever.

Jesus also fed inner hunger: giving spiritual food to those of us who are spiritually empty. It was of nourishment in the deep places of your soul he was speaking when he said *Ask. Seek. Knock*. When he told a story of a few scattered seeds yielding a great harvest it was of the harvest of the Kingdom of God that he was speaking. When we come to the communion table and the bread of life is broken and placed in our hands we are being fed with such good things as pass our understanding by Jesus who invites us to that joyful feast. Jesus who once fed five thousand and who feeds us still.

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Cross the road from Waitrose and walk up Morningside Park until you come to the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. What Jesus did was he healed. It is everywhere in the gospel story. Healing the blind, healing the deaf, healing the lame. Healing the heart and healing the spirit. Jesus the healer. Jesus and the illnesses of women. Jesus and the illnesses of the mind. As you stand outside the Royal Edinburgh think especially of those with mental illness and remember Jesus the healer. Jesus whose will is the you should be well and clean and whole and strong. Think of the patients within, the doctors and nurses and porters and cooks. Is all that not still the work of Jesus the healer?

Do you remember I said that the first Scottish missionaries in Africa built a school beside the church? The other thing they built was a hospital. The first

hospital in the world was a church scheme. Last Friday was the centenary of the birth of Dame Cicely Saunders. She set up the first modern hospice and so started the hospice movement. It was during her daily Bible-reading in the summer of 1959 that a verse from Psalm 37 gave her the courage she needed for her great project. She read *Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass*. It was the inspiration of her Christian faith which brought the whole thing to pass. The church and healing go hand in hand. The voice of the church must always be loud in the cry for an adequately funded National Health Service. All in the name of Jesus the healer.

Four marks of Jesus in the New Testament. He taught, he calmed, he fed, he healed.

Four marks of the church. The church in Morningside will be judged by these four marks.

To help you remember, day by day as you walk or cycle or drive by bus or car through Morningside, keep your eyes open for School, church, supermarket, hospital.
Remember Jesus, who taught and calmed and fed and healed.
And be the church.