

Coach House Church BEACONS

HOLD ON TIGHT!

11TH AUGUST 2020

I love being on the coast any time of year. It's obviously better in great Summer weather – a gentle breeze and clear blue skies, with uninterrupted views across the sea to the horizon. However, this is Britain and I also know that you have to savour every drop of good weather available as the perfect setting is not guaranteed for any length of time. It's what makes the country so interesting! Sometimes anyway. Earlier this week I enjoyed a warm, sunny day where everything was idyllic- but with one eye on the weather forecast - and sure enough, 12 hours later we were experiencing a constant strong wind with 40-50 mph gusts. As a seasoned visitor to our camping site on Anglesey, this was no surprise, and you batten down the hatches, stow away objects that can be blown across the field and secure everything down. It will pass and change again. The wind makes you realise your own limitations. You can plan as much as you like but there are times when nature takes over. Sophisticated human beings are still subject to the powerful influences of creation. In Luke 8, it describes how the frightened disciples, hardy fishermen who were experienced in sea conditions called out for Jesus help when they were caught in a sudden storm. When Jesus calmed the storm they remarked in verse 25: Who is this man? When he gives a command even the wind and waves obey him.

In the Old Testament, Elijah had just had an amazing experience with the prophets of Baal, totally humiliating them whilst demonstrating the absolute power of Almighty God on an altar on top of a mountain. Following this, God used the wind as an example of his power and might:

1 Kings 19:11 The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord,

The creator is in control of his creation and the elements display the awesome power of God. Yet God had a greater message for Elijah. 1 Kings 19 continues: But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire was a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Elijah had to learn that God is Sovereign, that he can use whatever method he wants to communicate with us. Sometimes this is mighty and makes you go 'wow' and yet at other times, this is a personal and quiet message, a gentle whisper of encouragement at just the right time. Elijah was feeling low after the previous dramatic events, the lull after the excitement and he needed to know that he was not insignificant or forgotten and God knew this about him so arranged the reassuring message.

In contrast, in Acts 2 it says

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

This event, known as Pentecost, was the dramatic beginning of the Christian Church with the believers, not fearful of this display of power, but full of God's Spirit. 1 John 4:18 explains that if we live in God, trusting and relying on him fully then there is no fear because the perfect Love of God expels all fear.

Back at the campsite. The people who had arrived the previous day in glorious weather, and successfully set their tent on the headland did not expect a sudden change in conditions. 24 hours after arriving they were hastily hanging onto their guy ropes, in a desperate attempt to pull their sorry looking tent back into shape as the wind battered it into a crumpled heap. And shortly after, they gave up the battle, admitted defeat and packed everything away and left. It was a sad time and the end of their holiday.

The guy rope is a tensioned rope that adds stability to a free standing structure. Now, if your tent was sitting in your garden with not a drop of breeze, you may get away without the guy ropes. The poles and canvas sheet will be enough to provide structure. However, it will not stand up against any force put upon it. This reminds me that as humans, we can manage for a certain amount of time, independently. We can use our common sense, our God given abilities to solve

problems and to make our way through life. However, this is a short term measure. Life's journey seldom takes a straight, flat route for long and often resembles more of a rollercoaster ride, with ups and downs, twists and turns – some jaw dropping moments and some white knuckles experiences. In this case, isn't it much better so have support, strength and stability. Much like a guy rope, God provides the necessary support and stability. We hold onto God and He holds onto us.

Psalm 37 says:

The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will never fall. For the Lord holds them by hand. And in Ecclesiastes 4:12 it says A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated but two can stand back to back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple braided cord is not easily broken.

This tells me that we need each other, and more importantly we need a relationship with our creator, through his son Jesus, and with his Holy Spirit. It is no use looking at just a short term plan for life. We have to look long term, to a future beyond our current life time on earth. In John 14:6 Jesus tells us that he is the way to his Father God in heaven. Only by believing and trusting in him, asking for forgiveness for sins and allowing him to guide our life, can we enter heaven itself. While we are here on earth we need the support of the Holy Spirit to ensure we can stand strong and continue this journey successfully. Without this support we are just like a tent flapping in the wind, subject to the elements and eventually we will struggle and fail to function effectively.

Ephesians 4 warns us not to be tossed around by opinions and arguments but to put our trust in the certainty of life that Jesus has made available, as described in the bible and accessible through his acceptable sacrifice on the cross. As humans we are not naturally consistent, but subject to changing emotions and attitudes and fighting a constant battle to do the right thing against a background of changing world values.

An old hymn uses the analogy of a ship and its anchor, rather than a tent and guy ropes but to the same effect - as an image of strength and stability, of a picture of

hope. This sums up our reliance on Jesus, our Saviour, the only one we can trust our future hope.

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift and the cables strain,
will your anchor drift or firm remain?

Refrain:

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!

Verse 3 sums up the great long term hope we have for the future, safe and secure in Jesus.

3. Will your eyes behold through the morning light
the city of gold and the harbour bright?
Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore,
when life's storms are past forever more?

Refrain:

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!



MELANIE JACKSON



Coach House Church

leadership@coachhousechurch.org // 0161 432 5604
the coach house church, 222 wellington road north, stockport sk4 2qn

