

I love the words of CS Lewis in the Screwtape Letters: “Don’t tell me **what** you believe: tell me **what difference it makes** that you believe”.

Today’s Gospel reading – the unquestionable power of God. Jesus stilling the storm: the unpredictable forces of nature suddenly respond like obedient children to the voice of Jesus. The disciples are terrified by the storm, but were equally terrified by the obvious presence of God in their midst – Jesus intervening in the forces of nature. “Why are you afraid?” Jesus asks them, with the Gospel seeming to be deliberately unclear about which fear Jesus means – the storm itself or the stilling. Then Saint Paul in today’s epistle speaking about the power of God at work in his ministers (that’s now you and me) as they go through different sufferings. The power of the ‘God of love’ who both stills the storm – and, out of love for you and me, submits to the cross.

So – what difference does it make that you believe in this God of power and love? asks CS Lewis.

This last year has given us as Christians and churches plenty of opportunities for playing our part in making a difference across communities – here for instance your extraordinary support for cooking meals for the homeless or helping with foodbanks – and we can name others beyond our walls like pop-up shops in parishes to augment the work of foodbanks. Connecting with the community, being a healing presence. And doing our best, even by zoom and virtually, to be churches that continue to try to be places of love, affirmation, connectedness, forgiveness.

And what will I or can I do to respond the four big questions now facing our world and society: that’s the climate crisis, racial injustice, gender inequality and the growing and pernicious wealth gap which we see in sharpest relief amongst refugees and asylum seekers. It can feel overwhelming, daunting! So here’s a simple, practical current example: and I ask myself this: what difference will my Christian faith make to respond to the knowledge that right now, food standards, animal welfare and farmers’ futures are now imperilled because of a desperation for new trading partners, with our MPs not even being consulted. And I ask myself the question, this dilemma surely you share with me: my belief in our wonderful, gracious, powerful ‘God of love’ tells me that these things are wrong, and that they will cause harm and hurt to God’s beautiful planet and its creatures.

Am I asleep in the back of the boat? God can only act and be prophetic and protest through you and me, his ministers on earth. You know the prayer of Teresa of Avila, that Jesus has no body but yours; no hands but yours, no eyes but yours to look in compassion. What or who will awaken us to act? – not just to know what I believe, but to demonstrate what difference my faith will make?

So may we pray for each other as we grapple with these basic questions of our faith in the God of Power and Love. The God who blesses you, transforms you, cherishes you, and calls us to bless and transform and cherish the world and all its children.

“Don’t tell me **what** you believe: tell me **what difference it makes**”.