I love it when the readings mirror real life…..The storms we have experienced recently have been described by some in the media as ‘of biblical proportions’ …nothing will get in the way of a good headline…words are often used to grab attention…..and the words don’t always have to make sense:

WWJD……are 4 letters which don’t make a word…but they were all over the media and the high street just a few years ago..

Anyone know what those four letters stand for?

What Would Jesus Do.

This is phrase and its 4 letters which denote it, have been for some time a very popular adornment of t shirts, stickers for cars, pens, bracelets…..and just about any other possible religious TAT, as one friend describes it.

I would say I’m a collector….I like ‘things’….but nothing I collect is TAT…..but often something that others may claim to be TAT is the perfect gift for someone….for example, for Martin’s 60th birthday, what do you buy the man who has everything….I mean…he has a beautiful wife…..many push bikes….a motorbike….and the perfect curate colleague….

So what could I buy him for this mile stone of a birthday….I bought him a blow up Jesus!....what else….

But I have always managed to avoid jumping on the band wagon of the WWJD t shirts.

You can see my sophisticated taste….and it doesn’t end there. I am a real fan of Shakespeare. It’s a long time since I sat down to read of his plays, but I love Kenneth Branagh’s movies which use the traditional language. Romeo and Juliet has a timeless quality to it and a story which anyone can at one time in their life relate to….The Baz Lurman take on this famous story, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes is unique in the way it weaves traditional language with a modern day story of love and loss. Amazing!

I digress…… You will no doubt know the much quoted moment when Juliet utters the well-known phrase: “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Here Shakespeare implies that the names of things do not matter; only what things are.

Would we say that about Jesus? the truth is that you can learn a lot about a person from their names and titles.”

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Our reading today tells us of a time when Jesus got in a boat with His disciples. At that moment there arose a great storm on the Sea of Galilee…this wasn’t an unusual weather event. Strong winds often created these impressive storms, but this one was impressive enough that the disciples feared for their lives. In Luke’s retelling, they were yelling to a sound asleep Jesus, saying “Master, Master, we are perishing”.

I love Mark’s version as it goes as far as tell us that Jesus was asleep on a pillow. He was fast asleep and apparently quite comfortable with the raging sea which threatened the boat and the lives of those on it.

What did Jesus do?

He proclaims to the others in the ending of this story, to ‘fear not and have faith’. Jesus was undisturbed by the storm. He wasn’t worried at all….If we look at Matthew 6:34, It directs us; “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.”

Jesus wasn’t worried about the storm or even tomorrow’s woes and hardships…He proclaimed to the others in the boat “O you of little faith”...it does no good to worry!

“What Would Jesus Do?”, He’d live each day by faith, not worrying about tomorrow ...and so should we!

But that is easier said than done…..its easy to say that from the pulpit….but not so easy when life gets hard and the realities bite home……Its easy for Jesus not to worry…he knows that he can calm the storm…..He is Jesus!

Here again we see the importance of a name……because if it had been this Paul on the boat, I would have been sick with worry and thinking What should I do, rather than asking myself what Jesus would do……

This Gospel tells us much more than a story about one stormy day on a lake far away from Richmond…..it shines a light on our human propensity to rely on our own actions rather than putting our trust in God….this gospel tells us that a man named Jesus is with us through the storms of life….a man who is named the prince of peace….bringing peace even into the most stormy of situations…..

A life well lived will bring with it Storms, we can almost guarantee that…storms are inevitable…..these could be…..broken relationships, falling our with our friends, failing a test at school, financial worries, health worries….loss of loved ones….we can try and avoid them, but one will hit us at some point…..but whatever the storm….don’t forget who you have beside you in the boat…. Jesus is in YOUR boat with you….not watching from afar!

so let us finish with a prayer:

Father…we come before you to hear your word and to learn from the examples Jesus…the prince of peace and saviour of all. Help us to not just ask the question; what would Jesus do, but to be more like Jesus day by day. Help us through the storms of temptation….guide us through the troubled waters of relationship breakdowns so that we can love our neighbour, no matter how stormy the relationship….Help us to sleep soundly….just as Jesus did in the boat….help us to sleep in the confidence that you will guide our tomorrow. Amen