St Peter the Fisherman – Whitianga
Sea Sunday 2022

E te Atua aroha, e te Atua atawhai, kia whakapainga koe.
(God of love, God of grace, we give you thanks.

I had planned just to provide videos related to Sea Sunday, but the Lectionary readings for this Sunday have made very sure we don’t miss the point of the assorted Bible writers’ views on the importance and power of the sea in our faith lives. Consequently, I find I have a bit more to say on the subject.

Firstly, I do feel sorry for Job. He had a really bad time of it, the way God tested his faith. Just about every awful thing that could happen to him, did. Then, any time Job tried to question God’s actions, he got a real blast in return. Today’s reading is typical of God’s rebuttal to Job’s attempt to justify himself. Job had insisted that God bring answers to **his** questions. God turned the matter around and told Job that before He would answer questions for Job, Job had some questions to answer before God.

*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?*

*Who shut in the sea with doors … and prescribed bounds for it …and said thus far you shall come, and no farther; and here shall your proud waves be stopped.*

Oh dear. A few thousand years later and we can see that isn’t the case any longer. We have really messed up with a lot of God’s creation, and the sea is a very clear example of the flow-on consequences of our carelessness. The questions God had for Job were simply unanswerable and I think we too may have difficulty facing our Creator if questioned now on what we have done with what we were given.

(Storm image)

Then in Psalm 107 David clearly had a bit of an inkling about the power of the sea when unleashed, and man’s impotence in the face of that.

*… the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths, their courage melted away in their calamity …and were at their wits end.*

Then like Job, Paul had a memorable example of the power of the sea when he was being transported as a prisoner to Rome. He was caught in a violent storm, and in spite of the crew’s efforts, the ship ran aground on a reef and was broken up by the force of the waves.

(Jesus calms the storm)

However, Jesus, as God incarnate was able to still a storm, that threatened to drown his disciples, although the lesson he gave then was a reminder they needed to have more faith and trust in him than they demonstrated in that instance. Helpful; but later in in the New Testament, the letter the Apostle James wrote, delivered the message we need to heed in the 21st Century.

***14****What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?*

*…faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

He goes on to write -

*Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.*

Sitting back as the sea comes closer and closer with every storm to overwhelm our world, and yes, our own little community here, thinking that faith in God to fix the mess we have made of the world we have been gifted, will be enough, is as dead as James pointed out.

Here is what we are encountering, combinations of a variety of factors in an upset world that are threatening our very existence.

(TV3 video clip)

<https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2022/05/alarming-new-statistics-reveal-new-zealand-s-sea-level-could-rise-30cm-in-next-10-to-20-years.html>

The climate is changing and the world is warming. The oceans have taken up most of the additional heat so far, and as the water warms up, it expands. In combination with water from the melting of land-based ice, this causes rising sea levels.

We already know how Whitianga and its nearby coastal areas are becoming more vulnerable when we have storms and King tides.

A reminder of a couple of years ago.

(Kuaotunu River, and Buffalo Beach floods)

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1797960873838551>

When this kind of prediction is combined with land subsidence, the implications are even more severe.

<https://searise.takiwa.co/map/6233f47872b8190018373db9/embed>

As noted, the source of our problem is climate change, which happens in cycles anyway, but is exacerbated by our behaviour.

Yes, we expect our Council to address ways of protecting our coastline, and are really happy continually to accept rates rises so it can do that.

We can also individually help to hold back the speed of climate change and reduce the flow on effect to our sea levels. If we each only chose one thing we would absolutely commit to, (that means not just every so often but all the time) that would slow down the climate change process. Thus, we can make a difference to our lives and potentially that of millions of others. It’s called faith in action.

For instance ……?

At the very least we can be part of putting the brakes on to the response an upset world is making to our irresponsible and selfish behaviour. We are not demonstrating the guardianship God expected when we were placed here. Nore do we have any Planet B for escaping the wreckage we have created.

We were created as guardians of all that God created. We are running out of time to be that, and the sea is a very clear indicator of how close we are to losing an environment which is precious to all of us. Let us make Sea Sunday the day when we commit to being the true guardians God intended.