

Pentecost 5 6/24/18
Mark 4:35-41 7B

OUR SERMON TEXT FOR THIS SUNDAY IS THE APPOINTED GOSPEL READING FROM THE 4TH CHAPTER OF MARK'S GOSPEL

"Flotsam." That's a word that we do not use every day, especially in North Dakota. Flotsam is floating debris, from shipwrecks, from cargo that has fallen overboard. When you are out trolling for walleyes in your Lund or enjoying your pontoon on Beulah Bay {[Lake Tschida](#)}, you don't face a lot of flotsam. But on the ocean, it's a whole different story. There's a lot of flotsam, junk, out there and it poses a real danger to ships.

As we sail through the sea of life, flotsam poses real danger for us, Dear Saints of God. As we sail, we can expect no less than what the disciples experienced even when the Lord Jesus with them. We are storm-tossed on the sea of life. As the wind and the waves threaten to drown us, the great danger for us is to think that our lives are spinning out of control; that we are mere dust blown about in the winds of fate. The weakness of our mortal nature convinces us that God really does not care if we perish.

Crossing a lake in a boat was no challenge for the disciples. Many of them had been fishermen before Jesus called them to be "fishers of men." They were totally at ease with sailing a boat on a lake. They had no concerns that Jesus should fall asleep. They were confident in themselves, trusting in their ability to handle and sail a boat. But when disaster descended upon them, that they were frightened for their very lives.

With the same speed, adversity can overtake us. None of us knows what tomorrow holds. Who knows what may come into our lives before even this day draws to a close?

Where, then, can we find courage? If we look to ourselves, our own

reason and strength, then we will be like those disciples on Galilee. They were seasoned fisherman. Yet, the storm was too much for them; they were helpless against the raging elements. As long as we sail along on smooth seas, our confidence is in ourselves. We pride ourselves in our reason and strength, our accomplishments and resources. Yet, when a storm arises, how weak and helpless we are!

The Rev. Dr. Luther, in a sermon of this text, said this: "It is well with those who find water breaking into their ship, for this moves them to seek help from God." God, in His mercy, permits storms to arise in our lives, so that we see that we are weak, but He is strong.

How frail and fragile, hopeless and helpless, we are apart from God! How completely helpless we all are when storms of sorrow break over us and our homes; when sickness, accident, suffering knock at our doors; when disaster and sadness cross our thresholds!

Be comforted and of good cheer, Dear Saint of God, God cares very much that you do not perish. So, in His mercy, He allows water to come into our ship to make us understand that we cannot endure without Christ.

This is what God did in the life of Job. Job was a wealthy man. Yet, he lost everything, even his sons and daughters. And, Job, in words that echo the sentiment of the disciples in the boat, cried to God, "Do you not care if I perish?"

In the words of our Old Testament lesson, God answers Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth" (38:4)? What is our human wisdom compared with God's? How small is our brain power when, as the old saying goes, we can put a man on the moon, but we can't find a cure for the common cold. God, in His wisdom, knows what is best for us.

The disciples forgot that Almighty God was with them. During heavy

hours of affliction, the devil, the world, and your own flesh will try to convince you that the Lord your God has closed His eyes to your welfare, Dear Child of God.

But, Dear Christian Friends, be assured of this: Just as Jesus could not have slept on and permitted His disciples to perish, so He will never slumber when perils threaten to destroy your soul. You belong to Him. He has redeemed you from sin, death, and the power of the devil not with silver or gold, but with His innocent suffering – when He sweat drops of blood in Gethsemane’s garden, when He was whipped and beaten and crowned with thorns – and His death, when He gave up His soul nailed to the cross of Calvary. This He willingly did to forgive you of the sin that separated you from your Heavenly Father and save you from all the wages of sin.

In your Baptism, God marked you with the sign of the holy cross to mark you as one redeemed and in that washing of water and the Word, claimed you as His own child. As God led righteous Noah and his family into the ark so save them from the waters of the flood, God has brought you into the ark of His Church to save you from all the wages of sin.

The early Christians gave the name "Nave" to this part of their church buildings, the part in which we worship. "Nave" means "ark, ship, boat." Our early Christian brothers and sisters were teaching us an important lesson and giving us great comfort as well. As we sail through earthly life, the wind against us and waves threatening to overtake us, Christ is with us. The very Son of God sails with us. Our emotions and feelings may tell us that God has forsaken us. Our doubt and despair may tell us that Christ Himself does not care if we drown and perish. But led by faith, we know we are sailing to the harbor of heaven for eternity.

In 1860, an English clergyman named William Whiting was sailing through the Mediterranean when a terrifying storm broke. With a fury passengers had never before witnessed, the winds became a shrieking hurricane, and the towering waves threatened to crush their helpless craft. Since it was impossible to launch life boats, the passengers felt doomed, for not even the strongest of ships could withstand such wind or weather. Whiting, however, continued in heart-felt prayer, and, by divine mercy, the storm lost its power, and the ship was able to make port. This remarkable rescue might have been forgotten, had not Whiting, deeply grateful to God, penned the words,

O Christ, whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at Thy Word,
Who walkedst on the foaming deep,
And calm amid its rage didst sleep:
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea [*LSB* 717:2].

With his words, Whiting directs us to Jesus, for the guidance and encouragement which only He can give. Only Jesus can give you calm and quiet in every storm-tossed moment of life.

Be assured of this one thing, Dear Child of God: He who laid the earth's foundation; He who formed us into His own image from the dust and breathed life into us; He who quieted the waves and wind; is with us. As He quieted the storm that assailed the disciples, He quiets the storms that rage in our lives.

“He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ (v. 39). The Evangelist Mark records for us that after the Savior spoke, “The wind ceased, and there was a great calm” (v. 39). Jesus gives us that peace which passes all understanding. As we sail to the safe

harbor of heaven, our Captain Christ is at the helm to give us calm confidence to face every danger, even death, so that we may say, "Take my hand, precious Lord; lead my home" [LSB 739].