

4 S. after Pentecost      6/20/21  
Mark 4:35-41              7B

“WHY ARE YOU SO AFRAID? HAVE YOU STILL NO FAITH?”

What are you afraid of? In every stage of life, fear has it constricting, unyielding grip on us. When you're a kid, you fear the monster under your bed or the one that lives in the closet of your bedroom. How about this one: fear of walking down the stairs into the dark basement? Come on, be honest, how many of you sprinted up the stairs two, or even three at a time, not even daring to look back, to escape that dark dungeon? The fear of heights may keep you grounded; or you may fear spiders or snakes, or speaking in public.

As we get older, we're not afraid of the things that made us skittish in our youth. But, as we get 60 or even older, we have fears and they are much more concrete. Will this tumor continue to grow? Will I be able to stay in my own home? What will happen if my spouse dies, and I am left all alone? These are the big ones – you know – the real, grown-up fears; the ones that rob joy from your day and peace from your heart and sleep from your eyes.

These are the fears of the future that paralyze the present. Do you see why you have fears? Fear is all about control. And, fear means that you think, believe, feel that you are not in control. And when you have no control, there is uncertainty -- uncertainty about whether the past is really the past; uncertainty about what might happen in the future; uncertainty whether we can really trust someone or something.

Just look at the disciples in our lesson today. They had heard Jesus' words drive out demons. They had witnessed him touching the unclean -- healing the sick, give sight to the blind, make the lamb walk. When the

disciples were on dry land, listening to Jesus teach about how God protects and provides in every situation, it was easy to be bold and brash. But now, as the angry Sea of Galilee filled their boat, the disciples succumbed to the fear that tops the list of all fears – **death**.

Mark tells us,

When evening had come, He said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” And leaving the crowd, they took Him with them in the boat, just as He was...And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing (vv. 35-38)?”

Well, it happened and it wasn't pretty. You will recall that several of the disciples had been ... {wait for it} ... fishermen. They grew up on water, some of them of this very lake. But just like that, they went from seasoned sailors to petrified passengers. The wind was howling, the waves were pounding, the rain was pelting, they faced the prospect of a watery grave...and Jesus was asleep.

But before we beat up on the disciples too much, I invite you to look in the mirror. When solid ground gave way to wind and watery ride, it seemed only natural that the disciples would fear rather than trust. What about you? Have you ever been there, done that? When life is smooth sailing and the warm sun is shining on us, life is good. But then, life ... well, life is life -- the clouds darken, the thunder rolls, our little boat starts taking on water, and our sinful flesh gets in the way of our faith, and fear fills us to the very marrow of our bones. Because we are not in control, and there is uncertainty -- “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing (v. 38)?”

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.

Which brings me to a question for you this morning. Jesus was with them in the boat, right? When the great windstorm arose and the waves were breaking into their boat, and the water was filling it, Jesus was with them, asleep. Ready for the question: How long did they allow Jesus to sleep before crying out to Him?

Those storms, the wind and the waves, have a way of reminding us how feeble our trust in ourselves is. Cross your fingers all you want; rub your rabbit’s foot till your fingers hurt, they can help you none. And those false gods we have designed for ourselves – your money, your health, your booze, your secret girlfriend no one knows about but who makes you feel so special about yourself -- they, they cannot deliver you in the hour of trial.

It was only when they cried to Jesus, that their fears were answered. For this Jesus that sailed with them was no ordinary man. This true man and very God of very God made the wind and the sea obey Him. He was there when God laid the foundation of the earth; when He determined its measurements; when he shut in the seas with doors; and set limits for it (cf. Job 38:4-11).

The Good News of the Gospel is that God did care. He cared so much that when we were drowning in the sea of our sin, He gave His only-begotten Son. The very Son of God was born of human mother and became a man. And upon His human body, He carried all the times when your faith gave way to fear; all the false gods in which you loved and trusted; all the times you forgot Jesus was with you; all your sins. For those sins, Jesus was nailed to the cross, where He suffered, died, and

rose the 3<sup>rd</sup> day to give you the forgiveness, life, and salvation He had won for you.

One of the things that I appreciate about *Lutheran Service Book* is that it restored Luther's Baptism prayer in the order of Baptism. It goes like this,

“According to Your strict judgment You condemned the unbelieving world through the flood, yet according to Your great mercy You preserved believing Noah and his family...

Grant that {we} be kept safe and secure in the holy ark of the Christian Church (*Lutheran Service Book: Agenda, 6-7*).

Luther makes the connection between the ark and our baptism. The ark kept righteous Noah and his family safe in the rage of the flood waters. In that same way, the ark of Christ's holy church, in which you and I sail this day on our journey to the safe harbor of heaven, keeps us safe.

Take a look at Noah in that ark. Did he drown in the flood waters? Did the disciples our lesson perish in the deep? Did the fiery furnace consume Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Did the lions eat Daniel? Did our Lord Christ stay dead and buried in the tomb's dark portal? No, He lives, and because He lives, we shall live (cf. Jn 14:19).

Here, in the ark of Christ's holy Church, our Lord Jesus, who even the wind and the sea obey; who conquered our greatest enemy death itself, sails with us. In the Word and in the eating and drinking of His holy body and blood, God is at work in us forgiving us our sins and preserving us in our faith that we may have peace and calm as the storms rage around us, and strengthening us in our faith, that we may not give in to our fears of perishing in the deep.

Why are you so afraid? Jesus is in the boat!

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.