

5 S. after Pentecost 6/23/2024
Mark 4:35-41 7B

Our sermon text for this Sunday is our Gospel lesson, from Mark's Gospel, the 4th chapter.

In 1860, an English clergyman named William Whiting was sailing through the Mediterranean when a terrifying storm broke. With a fury the passengers had never before witnessed, the winds became a shrieking hurricane, and the towering waves threatened to crush their helpless craft. Because 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 safely sail to the harbor. 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 strength and guidance which only He can give. Only Jesus can give you calm and quiet in every storm-tossed moment of life.

On this side of heaven, surrounded as we are by the worries of this present age and burdened by the uncertainty of tomorrow, the course of our earthly life could well be pictured as an ocean journey. In fact, the early Christians gave the name "Nave" to this part of their church buildings, the part in which we worship. "Nave" means "ark, boat." Our early Christian brothers and sisters were teaching us an important lesson and giving us

great comfort as well. As we journey towards heaven, we are sailing on a journey, sailing to the harbor of heaven for eternity.

And you know all-too-well how that journey goes. We begin with great hopes. But in the blinking of an eye, the storm clouds gather; the smooth sea is tossed into angry, destructive waves; and winds blow us ever closer to disaster. In these anxious moments, when other helpers fail and comforts flee, may we be given faith to turn to our Savior Christ.

Crossing a lake in a boat was no challenge for the disciples. Remember, before Jesus called them to be "fishers of men," many of them were ... **fishermen**. 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 so quickly did disaster descend upon them, that they were frightened for their lives.

As we sail towards heaven, is your trust in yourself? As quickly as it did in our lesson, adversity can overtake us. None of knows what tomorrow holds; let alone what today may even bring.

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 pitifully powerless against the raging wind and waves. As long as we sail along on smooth seas, our confidence is in ourselves. We pride ourselves in our reason and strength. Yet, when a storm arises, how weak and helpless we are!

God, in His mercy, permits those storms to arise in our lives, so that we see that we are weak, but He is strong. The Rev. Dr. Luther, in a sermon of this text, said it this way: "It is well with those who find water

breaking into their ship, for this moves them to seek help from God.”

How frail and fragile, hopeless and helpless, are our souls 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 bereavement cross our thresholds!

In their fear, the disciples could only cry, “*Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?*” Be comforted and of good cheer, Dear Saint of God, God cares very much that you do not perish.

God cares if you perish, so He allows water to come into our ship to make us understand that we cannot carry on, we cannot endure without Christ. Some are so overconfident in themselves, their resources, their abilities, that the Almighty has to take away every earthly means of rescue, to show that life without God is meaningless.

Look at 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?*” What is our human wisdom compared with God’s? How puny 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.

God allows the wind and waves to come so that we see that we are weak, but He is strong. When the storms of life overtake you; when you have fallen to your knees under the weight of the cross; when the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death overcomes and terrifies you; how blessed are you to have the Holy Spirit direct you to Christ as your only

Hope. Cling to Jesus, and find in Him Heaven's unfailing help.

At first, the desperate disciples were shocked to learn that our Lord continued to sleep soundly. They could not understand how, with destruction so close at hand, their Savior could slumber on. They made a mistake, a grave mistake. They forgot that the Almighty God was in their ship. 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 and does not care about your welfare.

But, Dear Christian Friends, be assured of this: Jesus did not sleep and allow His disciples to perish. So, He will never sleep when perils threaten to destroy your soul. Because He purchased you from sin, death, and the devil with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death; you are so precious in His sight that every moment, you are under His constant protection. Be comforted in this: By day and night, in prosperity and adversity, good times and bad, the Savior will never close His eyes to your cry. He will give you hope in every suffering, and change your sorrow into joy.

Jesus, who conquered our great enemy, death itself, sails with us. Be assured of this one thing: 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!'" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm," Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of the world, quieted those angry waves. Our only comfort is the Lord Christ, who is with us. Be assured of this: the Lord of the Galilean Sea can quiet the uproar and turmoil of this hour and whatever

threatens to engulf and overwhelm you.

The Evangelist Mark records for us that after the Savior spoke, *There was a great calm*. Jesus hears us when we cry to Him when we are in peril on the sea. Jesus quiets the water and brings us to the safe harbor of heaven.