

“You stilled the storm to a whisper
and silenced the waves of the sea.” AMEN!

“Who are you? Who... who... who... who.”

Who are you?

Is it a difficult question to answer?

What do you say when someone asks you,
“Who are you?”

Like me you probably give your name and
maybe your profession.

Would you also give someone the information of
where you were born or where you grew up?

Maybe, what is not very likely is that you
would divulge information to the questioner
about the qualities that make you special
or unique or gifted.

Yet, that’s where we want to stay while
we enter into the familiar story of Jesus
calming the storm.

It is the million dollar question at
the end of this section when

the disciples asked,

“Who then is this, that the wind and
the sea obey him?”

Who is this Jesus we find in Mark’s gospel
going immediately here and immediately there.

Teaching this - debating that and
healing the faithful.

Jesus is able to heal those who are faithful,
aa well as those who have
faithful friends or relatives.

How would Jesus explain who he is?

Also, notice that our gospel today began
with the words from Jesus to his followers,
“Let us go across to the other side.”

Those can be terrifying words for
the disciples and for us, too.

Going across to the other side is anxiety producing,
we don’t always know what to expect
on the other side.

The terrain is unfamiliar, the people are

strangers (are they hurtful or helpful?), and
the comforts of home are
not immediately accessible.

Yet, Jesus goes just as he is.

Traveling light and traveling at
night across a very large lake that
has the tendency to produce violent
storms rather quickly.

One can almost sense the disciples'
vulnerability and worry, but
there is also courage and trust.

They'd be vulnerable on their trip to the other side.
but first they had to get into that boat with Jesus.

And Mark communicated to us that they
took Jesus with them, "Just as he was."

And that "other boats were with him."

I am not sure if I ever noticed that before.

It is not just the boat with Jesus
and the disciples going to the other side.

Others are following Him, too, in different boats. (Pause)

So, this is the setting, Jesus had just told
them what the kingdom of God is like.

A mustard seed that grows and grows
(we don't know how) and this
kingdom of God mustard seed grows
and provides abundant shelter.

Humanity is the fragile birds flying here and
there needing shelter and with revealing
words about who God is we find
Jesus making a proclamation to meet
us in our place.

Especially if we are in the place of chaos and fear,
like a stormy and dangerous sea in the dark.

The disciples heard what Jesus said about
the kingdom of God now they discover
a taste of what Jesus can do.

And what Jesus can do is heal people
with unclean spirits, teach them about God
and show how the reign of God is around us,
and now we find (with the disciples)

that He can even control
the wind and the sea.

The verb “rebuke” used here is the same Greek word used by Mark when Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit that inhabited the man in the synagogue at Capernaum.

The world is full of other spirits.

Questionable authority leaders and other forces that work against life, fulfillment, and joy. (Pause)

One of the fascinating points about this miracle is that it forces us to not keep Jesus small.

The disciples thought Jesus was a military messiah, or at least a really good rabbi.

We often think Jesus to be a personal savior and keep him small just for us, but the exorcism of the unclean spirit and the destructive wind elevates Jesus to a cosmic force that

is working for a world that is out of alignment - broken.

An out of alignment person experiences pain in sometimes disconnected places.

How many of our problems stem from
humanity being out of alignment with God?

Those out-of-alignment spirits work against life,
fulfillment, purpose... plenty of spirits that
keep us from flourishing.

Then today, there's the revelation that Jesus is
cosmic in scope and we find something
about him, about who he is.

The disciples call him, "Teacher," as they
woke him in panic, but Jesus did
not rebuke them.

He wanted to know why they were afraid and
why they still had no faith?

Today, Jesus asks us the same questions,
but on cosmic scales.

Jesus can and does calm the
personal storms that surround us.

The storm of divorce, the storm of unemployment,
the storm of purpose and the storm of cancer,
and even the storm of
the world's misalignment.

A question we can ask ourselves is:
When was the last time we cried?

Cried because life is not always a calm.

Cried because sometimes we feel like
Jesus is asleep and not caring about
the struggles we're going through.

But, we are reminded of the truth today.

With Jesus these storms can be
calmed on cosmic scales.

Jesus is just as faithful today at work
rebuking unclean authorities and
forces working against life.

Those other boats that were with
Jesus and the disciples.

They were all in the same storm but
not all in the same boat.

Yet, the storm was quieted and
calmed for them, too.

Some of us sail in boats better
equipped to deal with life storms than others

and some have better boats than we do.

Yet, no matter what boat we're in,
Jesus is there full of faith and ready
to remind us of God's presence.

Maybe Jesus is waiting for us to cry out?

So that He can ask us: "Why are you afraid?"

Notice he did not say, "Don't be afraid or have no fear."

There aren't any commands here to not be afraid,
just a straight forward question,
"Why are you afraid?"

Gets to the heart of each one of us and
it is the key to this sermon and to knowing
who Jesus is.

Jesus is someone who can turn our fear into faith
and like the disciples we will be in "great awe"

to witness the things God can do
when we follow Christ to the other side and
allow our vulnerabilities to be seen. (Pause)

What we take away from this familiar story,
hopefully seen with new eyes,

is that the world is full of forces
that create danger and we can

get lost at times with the feeling that God
is causing them or absent while they happen to us,

but Jesus and the account from Job,
re-frame our understandings of
why bad things happen to good people.

“Life is a process of expanding and
unfolding and growth, but it also
must include death and receding
and collapsing.”

In God’s mystery to humans we discover that
“for growth to occur, some things must fail.”

In a commentary about Job
by Brennan Breed, it says,

“Moral evil is not denied, God admits
that it exists in the speech he gives to Job.

But chaos and moral evil
are not the same things.

Lightning strikes, hurricanes, and age are
the natural and necessary part of the

world's construction and aren't supposed
to be understood as judgment.

They are all sown into the fabric of
the cosmos on purpose.

A necessary condition of life itself, and
without it none of us would exist.”

It is a mystery and God admits it all
without apology in his dialogue with Job
because the story is bigger than he is.

The same story of God is bigger than we are, too
and none of us are the main characters, but
that does not make us
unimportant or unloved.

It makes us, God's children with a purpose
to care for those in our boat as well as
those in the other boats.

That understanding simply puts us in our place
and God in God's place to do the cosmic things.

Christ there with us and Christ there to bring
calm to anything we might face.

AMEN!