

Grace, mercy & peace from God our Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Sometimes the power of nature becomes all too obvious in our lives. It can be hurricane, blizzard, hail or flood that makes us feel completely at the mercy of the elements. During my first call it was a storm in particular that turned Gettysburg, PA upside down with torrential rain and flooding. The Little Tiber Creek which is usually nothing more than a trickle surged out of control as 11 inches of rain fell in three hours. Just three blocks from my house motor boats were going down what the day before had been a main thoroughfare. Buildings were destroyed, homes flooded, cars washed away.

I for one was not comfortably waiting out the storm. You know it's bad when your new roof is leaking. I went up into the attic to discover that water was trickling in in three or four places. So I went down to the basement to get buckets to catch the falling water, only to discover that the basement was beginning to flood and the sump pump hadn't come on because it had a faulty float switch. I quickly bypassed the float switch, which meant that the pump would run continuously when plugged in. Then it was up to the attic with the buckets. No sooner had I placed the buckets, I had to run downstairs to the basement to check on the sump pump which was running dry, and would burnout if it did that for too long. So I unplugged the sump pump, and ran back upstairs to the attic to check the buckets which were $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Fortunately, my attic had a window I could open; so I just threw the buckets of water out the window. Then I headed down to the basement to plug the sump pump back in because the walls were spewing water. Plug the sump pump in, and head back up to the attic. "*Stop raining,*" I said, but it made no difference to Mother Nature, and the water kept coming. Iran my little

marathon for nearly three hours until I was completely exhausted when the rain started to lighten up. *I can't recall too many other times that I felt completely at the mercy of the power of nature; I felt small and powerless.*

The disciples sitting helplessly in their little boat in the middle of the vast Galilean Sea in the midst of a violent storm of winds and waves no doubt knew this same sense of smallness. As Jesus lay sleeping in the back of the boat, the boat was already being swamped by the waves crashing into it. *The storm was huge and powerful, and they were small and powerless. Knowing that they could not save themselves from certain death in the turbulent waters they wake Jesus saying, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"*

Jesus simply rebukes the wind and the waves and says to the sea, *"Peace. Be Still!"* And suddenly it's all over; there is a dead calm. *Three bare words stop the bullying forces of wind and waves in their place.*

Awed by this display of Jesus authority and command over even the brutal power of the wind and the sea those in the boat *are left confused and bewildered, with only questions about Jesus.*

"Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

Imagine hurricane force winds being silenced by just three words – silenced like an unruly child being by a single word or glance from a parent. *Picture the forces of nature – wind rain, sea, waves, storms, tornadoes – quickly obeying and responding to a few words. It's no wonder that Jesus disciples were confused and bewildered.* They have never seen – *no one has ever seen* – someone so powerful that even wind and sea obey their commands.

Certainly in the week before this miracle those who follow Jesus have *already seen withered hands and broken bodies responding*

obediently to Jesus' words; they have seen ***unclean spirits that fear Jesus obey His commands***; they have *witnessed the power and authority of Jesus words to cleans the body ravaged by leprosy*. But ***now they have seen that even the disobedient, bullying forces of nature obey Jesus commands***.

You may not recall the film, ***Renaissance Man***, but in it there's a scene that's relevant to our gospel reading. In the movie little Danny Devito is assigned to teach the DOUBLE D's, a classroom full of the United States Army's worst class clowns. Each day, Bernard, , the detail leader, a huge 6' 8" - 275 pound man, marches the DOUBLE D's into the classroom only to have them break into sarcasm, put downs and a constant stream of disruptive comments. A room full of people trying to draw attention to themselves, but not paying attention to anyone else.

One day as they are exchanging their usual insults and disrespectful comments, Big Bernard, the silent recruit who sits in the back row, stands up and says, "***Shut Up! This man's got something to teach us.***" Instantly the room falls silent. The whole room full of rowdy, disruptive, self-impressed Double D's take notice that the biggest and most powerful among them has given authority over to this little man, this teacher.

Mark's account of Jesus' stilling of the storm makes the same point. It is *not just another instance of Jesus exhibiting great and miraculous power*, although that is certainly true. At first the raw power of Jesus act might be what seems to cause the disciples awe and bewilderment, but ***what the disciples say tells what this incident reveals to us about Jesus.*** They say, "*Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?*" – EVEN THE WIND AND THE SEA OBEY HIM. The most powerful, bullying forces in the world: the wind, the sea, unclean spirits, demons, ***even death itself finally has to obey Jesus three days after he dies on the***

cross and is laid in the tomb. Jesus is Lord over all these things. They all obey his commands, even the mightiest, most powerful forces.

If even the wind and the sea, sickness and death obey his commands it seems a little absurd that we have such a hard time obeying His teachings and commandment to love one another, but that is in fact the case. *Here is the one – the one to whom all the forces of nature – and yet in our wisdom we decide that we can pick and choose which if any of His commands we will obey.*

And what is his will for the forces of chaos, “peace, be still.” So it is will be for our lives if we will give authority to the one to whom authority has been given.

St. Mark's gospel reveals to us the Jesus Christ telling us, “*The Kingdom of God is at hand – within your reach.* **Jesus commands us to follow Him:** *forgive one another*, love our enemies and pray for those who hate us, *abide in Him*, walk in newness of life, *go into all the world sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, and gather around his own Body and Blood.

We have a choice. *We can try to manage the storms of life with our own inadequate resources* – running from the basement to the attic, back to the basement, then the attic – *or we can turn control over to God*, following his will and living our lives by His words, “*Peace, be still !*”

God leaves the choice to us, but we should probably remember – the wind and the sea obey him. *Why would we doubt that Jesus can take care of the small storms in our lives.*

Amen!