

5th Sunday after Pentecost
“Where? How? Why? Who” Mark 4:35-41
June 23, 2024
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Mark 4:35-41.

“35 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, “Let us cross over to the other side.” 36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. 40 But He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!”

So far our text.

An evening boat ride. Have you ever been on one?

If you visit South Padre there are numerous boats that will take you out to look for dolphins during the afternoon and stay out into the night so you can watch the fireworks in the bay from your boat.

Or, maybe you spent a long day fishing off shore and the ride back to shore is in complete darkness. It can be a little daunting trying to remember the landmarks to guide you back, but certainly not life threatening.

This was not the case for Jesus and His disciples. A great windstorm arose. This was not a little tropical depression, but one of those storms that makes it difficult to stand against the wind if you're on the shore. We don't know the category of the storm, but it would

have received a name nowadays. And the weathermen would be filming it on the shore in their raincoats with much emotion as they usually do.

As we see the scene unfolding in the disciples small boat, with no GPS, no cellphone service taking on much water, their emotions are excited, fearful and real.

And yet, there is One in the boat who isn't bothered at all by the rocking of the boat, the wind and the waves pouring water over the sides. In fact, He is fast asleep in the stern of the boat. He's resting after a long day of teaching the crowds. In fact, our Gospel reading tells us that...

“they took Him along in the boat as He was.”

Him...being Jesus...as He was...tired as He was... not waiting until morning to rest and recover. True man – Jesus who experienced and felt the weariness in His body after a grueling day.

But what Jesus didn't feel was fear. He was perfectly at peace in the wind tossed boat. He trusted His heavenly Father perfectly. The disciples, on the other hand, were beside themselves. They went to wake Jesus and even had some judgmental words for Him.

“do You not care that we are perishing?”

Yes, they were indeed in a life-threatening situation. It was grim. But, when life gets tempestuous, when sudden great winds blow into our lives, does that mean that faith in God ceases? Is faith in God only for the calm and easy going moments of life? Is faith something that takes a back seat when rubber hits the road?

Jesus asks His disciples some direct questions? Where? How? Why? From Luke's account in chapter 8 Jesus asks point blank, **“Where is your faith?”**

From our Gospel reading from Mark, we hear that Jesus also said, **“Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?”**

Have there been moments in our lives that Jesus could also ask each of us the same questions? Have you been in a life- threatening situation or have you received very difficult news, a sudden death in the family, a great loss of property, or a grim health diagnosis that caused you fear and doubt in God? When the windstorms have been great in our lives have we also asked God if He cares about what we are going through?

Oh, Jesus, the Son of God cares! He cares so much about us that He would take on our flesh and come to our rescue by facing the greatest categorical hurricane that there is, sin, death, and the devil. He allowed these great forces of evil to toss Him about and take His life. Yes, Jesus was born into our world knowing that it was life-threatening... for the very purpose of giving His life as a ransom for all people.

Oh, Jesus showed His power over the devil by driving out the demons as we heard last week. He showed His power to forgive sins and remove the power of the condemnation of the law. And He showed His power over death by raising up the dead and Himself conquering death.

Jesus, tired as He was, true Man is also true God, the creator of heaven and earth. He controls the world with His powerful Word and we should never doubt that. He helps us in our greatest physical and spiritual needs, indeed, because He cares for us! Jesus loves us! He came to defeat all the evil forces that we could never defeat, that we are helpless to defeat.

Look at the disciples in the boat, helpless as they were in the storm and know that this is a picture of us. Sure, we have technology these days to warn us about physical storms. We have advanced medicine. We have AI. Well, that needs some improvement yet. As I read, that McDonalds had a drive-in run by AI but it couldn't get the orders straight. Ketchup with ice cream or something like that.

Yes, man can try to boast about colonizing the moon or Mars, but the fear of perishing is something that no man can conquer.

But there is someone in the disciples' boat who can and did. Who? The question was asked by the very disciples after they witnessed Jesus instantly calm the waves and the wind. Who is this? Jesus Christ it is...of Sabaoth Lord. He is the One who makes the sea rest and be calm. How? With His powerful Word!

“Peace. Be still.” And the sea must obey. He is the One who plunders the strong man's home as we heard and rescues those in the devil's captivity with His powerful Word of salvation!

He is the One who began His New Testament church with these same disciples on Pentecost, like a mustard seed. They were few, about 100 believers who were no longer

doubting but had grown in their faith after seeing Jesus many miracles, heard His Life-giving Word and were witnesses of His death and resurrection.

Yes, the Lord helped these weak, fearful doubting disciples grow in their faith so that they were no longer tossed to and fro by false doctrines. They were tested in the trials of life so that they could carry the Good News to the nations without doubt or fear, but in much love. Listen to our epistle reading from 2 Corinthians 6 again.

“4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, 5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; 6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

And God in His great love for each of us tests us, refines us and strengthens us with His same Word of truth. So that we can also rejoice when sorrowful, and possess all things when we have nothing. All things... heaven itself...where there is a sea of glass of perfect calm, joy, happiness and love. We know these great spiritual gifts even now through faith in Jesus, though dimly.

But we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God! As we know from Romans 8...

“37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Yes, “peace, be still” Jesus says to each of our hearts when we are fearful or doubting and reminds us that He is always with us, in our boat of life, piloting us to our heavenly shore. Amen!

“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)