

Sermon #45
October 28, 2018

Good news
Good news: Jesus is in the boat

Mark 4:35-41

⁵ Later that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the lake.” ³⁶ They left the crowd and took him in the boat just as he was. Other boats followed along. ³⁷ Gale-force winds arose, and waves crashed against the boat so that the boat was swamped. ³⁸ But Jesus was in the rear of the boat, sleeping on a pillow. They woke him up and said, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re drowning?” ³⁹ He got up and gave orders to the wind, and he said to the lake, “Silence! Be still!” The wind settled down and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ Jesus asked them, “Why are you frightened? Don’t you have faith yet?” ⁴¹ Overcome with awe, they said to each other, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”



On page 512 of the hymnal you will find Charles Tindley's prayer:

*When the storms of life are raging,
When the world is tossing me,
Like a ship upon the sea,
Thou who rulest wind and water, stand by me*

I am pretty good at being stressed and worried. Emma gets a bad grade and it almost becomes the end of the world for me. An unexpected bill comes and I am acting like we will not survive. It is Tuesday night and my sermon is not written so I figure I cannot be a pastor. I hope I am making progress because at least I am aware of it. Right?

It is also a call for me to deepen my faith in practical ways by starting my day with lots of prayer, reading and getting myself ready in God's power and guidance along with journaling all my stresses. During the day I work on remembering to breathe in and intentionally turning my thoughts to Him. I seek to serve God in ways that really push me out of my comfort zone. Let's open our minds to today's Gospel reading and see what we can take from it to help us manage our stress during real storms and stresses.

"Later that day, when evening came, Jesus told them: Let's cross over the other side of the lake". Notice that it is Jesus who is asking them to cross over to the other side. So, first of all, it is His suggestion – His request. The disciples left the crowd and took him in the boat. They were obeying Jesus.



A big windstorm blew up. The storm came from nowhere. A storm that provided real danger even for the best commercial fisherman. They knew the sea very well and they were not easily scared by little storms. This one truly put them in peril of losing their lives. "...waves crashed against the boat so that the boat was swamped". Yes, they will die. Death is breathing down their necks.

We get an idea of what it is like by watching "Deadliest Catch" on the History Channel or hurricanes and typhoons on the Weather Channel. Last summer we witnessed in horror as 17 people perished in Branson, Missouri when the duck boat capsized.

One of my favorite stories from John's Wesley's life is the one when he and his brother, Charles were at sea. John and Charles Wesley set out for America in 1735, enthused by the idea of preaching the Gospel to Native American people.

During the voyage the ship was struck by a terrifying storm. He described it this way:

"About midnight we were awakened by a confused noise of seas and wind and men's voices the like of which I had never heard before. The sound of the sea breaking over and against the sides of the ship I could compare to nothing but large cannon, or American thunder. The rebounding, starting, quivering motion of the ship much resembled what is said of earthquakes."

John was afraid and was troubled by this fact. He wrote:

"I went to America, to convert the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me? who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of mischief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near; but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain!'"

"I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun my last thread, I shall perish on the shore!"

"Oh! who will deliver me from this fear of death? What shall I do? Where shall I fly from it? Should I fight against it by thinking, or by not thinking of it?"

He prayed with the English passengers. Shortly afterwards he was at another service with a group of German Moravians when a huge wave engulfed the ship and water poured down into the cabins.

While the English passengers screamed in terror, the Moravians continued singing - men, women and children seemingly untroubled.

John knew that they had something he didn't: an absolute trust in God. **They were prepared to lose their lives because they knew that God was never going to let them go.**

One of my previous churches was right on the border of Russia. The Russian check point was closer than I-74 is from where we are right now. We could see it every time we went to church. Suffice it to say that we did not always feel safe.

Word spread that the Russians were getting ready to occupy Lithuania right after they occupied the Crimea in Ukraine. Fear dominated the news on TV and on the radio. I came to the youth group and the room was full of youth who were like never before in my life.

Suddenly the reality of war hit us. Every Lithuanian knows about the Nazi German invasion followed by Soviet terror. To youth they seemed to be little more than stories. Now, the reality of being captured, occupied and maybe killed was overwhelming.

Let me tell you we did not sing songs or praises. We did not have peace in our hearts. We, including me, were filled with fear. We prayed. Even the youth who were usually full of jokes and bologna prayed with me. We feared for our lives and that of our families.

Part of living on this earth is encountering hurricanes of every sort. We suffer illness, disasters, accidents, financial setbacks. Fear swallows us. Not many of us are like those Moravians. So what are we missing?

Jesus was sleeping all during the tempest. It is hard to believe that He would be able to do so, but He was. It makes me rethink the meaning of the verse: **“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7).** There is a much bigger peace in God that we are still yet to receive and maintain. There is a peace available even when we face deadly storms and death itself.

In John 14 Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don’t be troubled or afraid.” After the resurrection, Jesus’ first word in the closed room was “Peace”

We do not read about the disciples being afraid after Pentecost. The Holy Spirit filled them instead with power, love and joy. In this day of so much bad news and fear we need a baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Remember how people were following him everywhere. He could not even eat. Pharisees, scribes, authorities, even his own family, rose up against him. As if this was not enough, now the sea is raising up and is about to kill. “They woke him up and said, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re drowning?””.

What they did not realize, but we know on this side of the crucifixion and resurrection, is that nothing can kill Jesus. He is the resurrection and life. Jesus laid down his life for you and me. It was his choice.



First of all note that Jesus is in the boat before the storm started. They did not suddenly realize they are in trouble and start looking for Jesus. No, Jesus was in the boat with them. I want to ask you: Is Jesus in your boat? Even if there is no storm yet, is He in your life, in your boat. Most of us turn to him and call on Him when we are facing troubles. Jesus was with disciples in their boat before the storm.

He is now in a deep slumber. He is not much help at all in this crisis. At least he could help bail the water out. Don't we also wonder: how in the world, Jesus could let that happen? He is with me. He even led me this way. Look at me now. I am sinking, drowning. I am as good as dead. How can it be that Jesus let the disciples to be in the typhoon? He knows the future. Couldn't He tell them to wait or tell them to be prepared or take another route.

They were with Jesus, but still right in the midst of a deadly storm. Jesus does not promise calm, stress free, easy lives. No, he never promises that to us. Even with Jesus we get into hazardous gales. When our obedience to Christ takes us into a storm of trouble and we don't know how to find our way out, it's easy to lose confidence especially if we thought we were being guided by God. "If God really was guiding me," we think, "things should be going more smoothly than this."

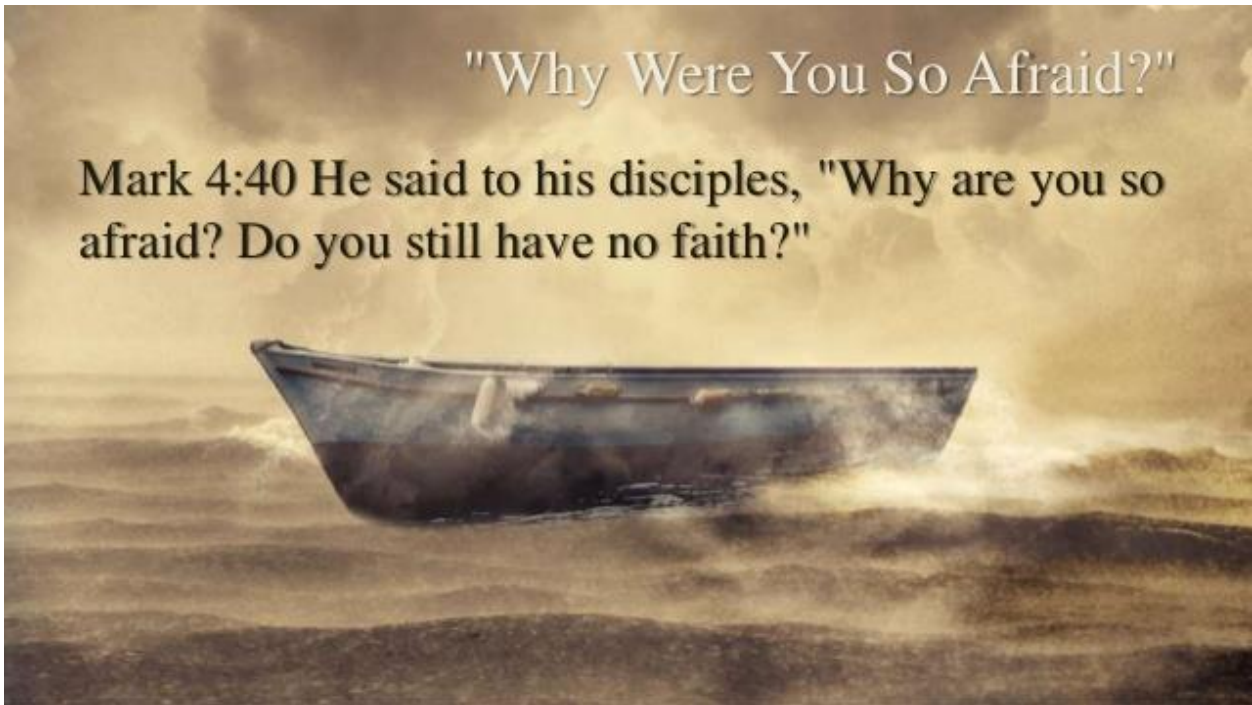
A more common error is to look with envy at the blessings others receive and wonder why God cares so much for them but seems to have so little regard for us.

What did the disciples do? Of course, they woke him up blaming him that he did not care for them. He is doing nothing to save them or help them preserve the boat. It's not the heavy weather on the horizon of our lives that bothers us the most. It is God's apparent impassivity that sends us over the edge. It is the silence of God that causes us to stumble.

What did Jesus say? "I am sorry guys, I was just so tired and fell asleep. Please forgive me." No, he did not say that. "He got up and gave orders to the wind, and he said to the lake, "Silence! Be still!" He spoke to the sea. First he calmed the sea with three words. The whole nature, whole world is created and is under Jesus authority. It still is today. Jesus says: "Silence, you are making too much noise – and stay silent. Be still".

For the first century citizens the sea symbolized the dark power of evil, threatening to destroy God's creation, God's people, God's purposes. In books like Daniel, the sea is where the monsters come from" (N.T. Wright). So hearing and seeing how Jesus calms the seas speaks of Him as God, as the One is in power. Even the evil roaring sea, submits to Jesus order.

*O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong
Seems oft so strong
God is the ruler yet.*



"The wind settled down and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ Jesus asked them, "Why are you frightened? Don't you have faith yet?" Yes, there is great calm now from outside, but how about the disciples' hearts. Jesus asks them a question. "How is it that you do not yet have faith?"

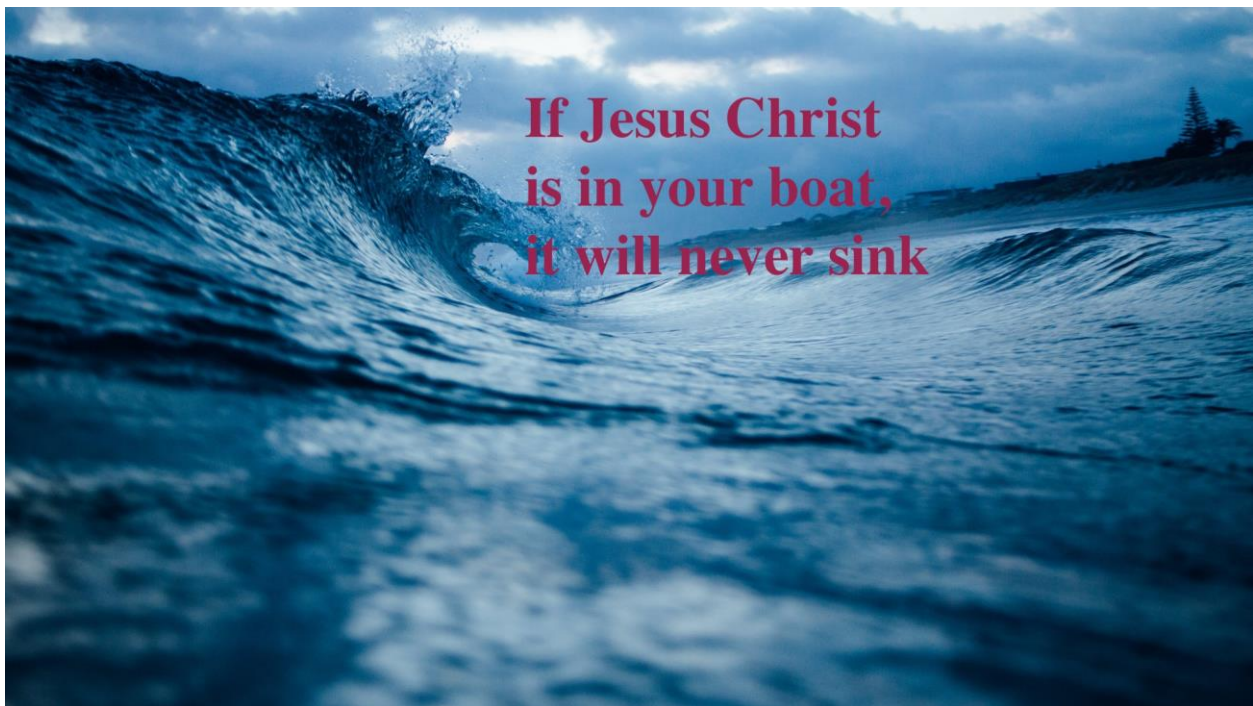
Today is Reformation Sunday. We are reminded of Martin Luther's discovery that it is by faith alone that we are saved.

In most translations say that the disciples became extremely terrified after Jesus spoke to the wind and the water. The storm was bothersome enough but now they were truly scared. Why? They had witnessed countless healings and hear amazing teaching. They had seen demons cast out. None of this was unheard of. Now they were in the presence of someone with authority over nature itself. Who is this guy? Only God can do that. The Scriptures ask, "Can a man see God and live?" Furthermore, they are stuck on a boat with him in the middle of the sea.

It was only much later that they understood the love of God.

I have to wonder and bring you to wonder too. Obviously Jesus is highly disappointed with the disciples' reaction and action during the storm. He sees no faith in them. Zero. So what would Jesus have expected them to do? What would be a better scenario? What would faith in action look like? Clearly they could not stop the storm. How about their reaction to the storm? How about the fact that Jesus is with them? Even if he is not stopping the storm right away. Jesus was able to sleep through the storms. Can we at least trust and stay calm. We cannot calm the sea, but in faith we can calm our minds, our hearts. I know in reality I would be the same or worse as the disciples. But now I think I know what I would like to do. I would choose not to wake up Jesus, not to blame Him, that he is doing nothing or sleeping, but I would come to Him and just be even closer to His presence... What kids do when they are in danger? they run to the mom or dad. You know what Wesley does? He puts his head under my shirt, to be as close as he can so he can be safe. I want to practice being closer in to Jesus presence when I feel the world is fallen apart.

I encourage you and myself this week, as we get stressed for little or big things, take a real step and not get angry, upset, blame others, get upset and question God,



but deepen our faith by praying in the presence of Jesus with these words: **"If Jesus Christ is in your boat, it will never sink"**. Believe and live your faith by what you believe.

What if Jesus is taking us through the storms so we could see how great He is, how saving He is, how mighty He is to save us.

