

July 20, 2021
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Mark 4:35-41

JESUS IS THE LORD OF CREATION AND HE ALONE SAVES.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Mark, the 4th chapter, which you heard read earlier.

Think of a time in your life when you were *truly in fear*. Perhaps you just lost your job or were on the verge of bankruptcy. Maybe it was one of those times when it seemed that everything was moving in slow motion, when you were in a car accident, or received a life-threatening diagnosis from your doctor, or you lost someone really close to you. Sadly, many police officers and those in the military know too well the raw terror of life and death situations. In our Gospel text this morning, Jesus' disciples were *truly in fear*.

Jesus had spent the entire day teaching to a large crowd beside the Sea of Galilee from onboard a boat. (cf: Mark 4:1-2) After the exhausting day, Jesus wants to take a break from the crowds and tells His disciples that they're going to cross over to the other side of the Sea. (cf: Mark 4:35) Due to its size, depth, and geographic location the Sea of Galilee is, even today, often afflicted by violent storms. And as Jesus and His disciples crossing the sea:

“... a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.” (Mark 4:37)

Some of the disciples were experienced fishermen. They'd certainly faced the vicious storms of the Sea of Galilee before, so perhaps their fear indicates the magnitude of the storm. It's dark. The waves are filling the boat. It doesn't look good. They're unsure whether they'll live or drown in the bottom of the Sea. They're doing everything they can think of to save themselves and then – they remember Jesus. The exhausted God in flesh is sleeping in the stern of the boat. (cf: Mark 4:38) Despite the wind and the waves and the water sloshing within the boat, Jesus peacefully sleeps, undisturbed, without fear, trusting completely in His Father's care.

The disciples know He's not a sailor but the boat is sinking and they need all hands-on deck. Sure, they've witnessed Him heal the sick and diseased. They've watched as He cast out many demons. (cf: Mark 1:34) They knew Him to be a great teacher and miracle worker but apparently they believe a miracle over the wind and sea is too much for him. They only wake Him out of fearful selfishness and accuse Him of being indifferent to them in a life and death situation, saying:

“... Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (Mark 4:38)

Perhaps, at the very least, He could help bail water out of the boat or grab the rudder and help keep the boat pointed into the wind.

You know what it's like, those times in your life when it seems that everything is out of your control and you are *truly in fear*. When relationships are in danger, you go on the attack to blame others rather than prayerfully seeking ways to bond together. When you are afraid of illness, suffering, and death, you turn on those who wish to help and comfort you, pouring out your frustrations on family, friends, and medical people, even resenting others who're not in your situation.

Maybe you lash out at God because it seems like He's asleep in the boat. "*God, do you not care? Don't you know what I'm going through? What about that promise to never leave me or forsake me? Why are you letting me suffer like this?*" Or worse yet, perhaps you've fallen for the devil's lie that God is punishing you for something you have done or left undone.

That's what Job's friends try to convince him of in his Old Testament book. Scripture depicts Job as a man of perfect moral character who feared God and turned away from evil. (cf: Job 1:1) Yet in God's hidden wisdom, He allowed the devil to afflict Job with every manner of extreme suffering. And to Job's friends, the reason why was obvious. Job must have sinned. Why else would he be suffering? (cf: Job 4:7-11)

At the center of your struggle and mine when suffering – is a lack of faith and trust in God. We see that with the disciples in the storm. The book of Job teaches us the role that suffering plays in faith. It causes the believer to deny himself and flee to Christ and cling to Him for salvation. (cf: Job 19:25-27) Everyone, even someone blameless and upright like Job, will indeed, face suffering – and – struggle to understand why God allows it to happen. Sometimes your suffering is self-inflicted when you make poor decisions. Other times, they are afflictions sent from the devil, tempting you to doubt God and His promises. Still other times, God is allowing you to be tested, to draw you closer to Him, trusting in Him for salvation.

St Mark writes:

"... [Jesus] awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." (Mark 4:39)

Waking up, Jesus is at complete peace and in control in the boat, just as He is confident and in control of your every crisis. His Word always does what it says and never returns void. (cf: Isaiah 55:11) He speaks three words in our text, (actually two in the original language) rebuking the wind and sea: "*peace, be still,*" – creating peace and a great calm. God allowed the great storm so that Jesus could reveal that He is much more than a man who is *also* a miracle worker. He is none other than God incarnate, that is, God in the flesh of man, the Lord of the wind and sea, and Lord of Creation.

"[Jesus] said to them, 'Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?'" (Mark 4:39-40)

At the center of the disciple's fear on the Sea of Galilee was a lack of faith and trust in God. And once Jesus revealed His identity as Lord of all Creation, the disciples faced a new fear:

“... they were filled with great fear and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’” (Mark 4:39–41)

Of course they were filled with great fear! They had just rebuked Jesus, accusing Him of not caring if they perished – and He in return – demonstrated who He was, the One who has power over the wind, waves, and all Creation. They were filled with great fear, but this fear is different. It’s not the fear of suffering and dying. The danger was past. The wind had ceased and there was a great calm. They were filled with the great fear, awe, wonder, and reverence that weak mortals feel in the presence of our immortal God and His divine power. They rebuked Jesus – and yet He saved them. They deserved His judgement for their lack of faith – just as you and I deserve His temporal and eternal judgement – and He had mercy on them just as He has had mercy on you and all who believe.

Dear disciple of Christ, your Lord and Savior is One who is to be feared. But *not* the fear of punishment or the fear that you might perish – but in the fear, love, and trust in the One who first loved you and has saved you. (cf: 1 John 4:19) Before God laid the foundations of the world, He saw you floundering and in danger of perishing in the sea of your sinfulness and unbelief. While you were still His enemy, He loved you. He loved you and sent His Son into to the world to die on the cross to make peace between you and Him, reconciling you to the Father. (cf: John 3:16; Romans 5:10) He forgives you of your sins of blaming others, pouring our your frustrations and resenting those who suffer differently than you. He even forgives you of lashing out at Him during your suffering and weakness of faith.

God is not an angry God who holds you in fear of condemnation.

*“... [He] **did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.**”* (John 3:17)

The danger is past.

*“... [Jesus] **was pierced for [y]our transgressions; he was crushed for [y]our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought [you] peace, and with his wounds [you]are healed.**”* (Isaiah 53:5)

Jesus says to you: “**Peace, be still,**” for in His death and resurrection He has rescued from the threatening seas of sin, death, and the grave. He *will* never leave you or forsake you, even when you face danger, illness, and death. Please hear this. **The point** of our text **is not** that Jesus will protect and rescue you from every sort of earthly suffering and mortal danger. No, **the point is this.** In the storms of this life, Jesus is Lord of Creation and He alone is the One who saves. By trusting in Him, you will never perish.

In God’s hidden wisdom, our Lord allows His beloved children to face the storms of this life: trials, afflictions, and sufferings so that you flee from your trust in self and false idols and cling in faith to the Lord of Creation, trusting in Him for salvation. He has already gone through all of your sufferings that you now face, even death. So, when the day comes that our Lord wills that you breathe your last on this side of heaven and die, you can die with the assurance of Jesus’ Word of peace. He is the Lord of Creation and He alone saves. The fear of death and the grave is past for it has been swallowed up in victory. (cf: 1 Corinthians 15:54) You can die with a great

calm, trusting completely in your heavenly Father's care, knowing that you are not perishing, that is, coming into judgment, but passing from death into eternal life. (cf: John 5:24)

Jesus is the Lord of Creation and He alone saves. By His perfect life, death, and resurrection, He has made peace between God and you. And He comes to you right here every week in the Divine Service speaking peace into all your storms. He speaks His peace in the remembrance of your Baptism in the Invocation. He speaks His peace of forgiveness of sins in the Holy Absolution, His peace in His living and active Word in the preaching of the Gospel, (cf: Hebrews 4:12) and His peace in His holy body and precious blood in His Holy Supper. When Jesus speaks peace, you know that you have nothing to fear for He went to the cross to save you.

Jesus is the Lord of Creation and He alone saves. He is in control, over nature and over your eternal welfare. He has spoken His Word of peace that declares you not guilty of your sins because of His work of salvation on the cross. God grant that you joyfully serve Him in peace and quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. (cf: Collect of the Day)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.