

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Pentecost 4B (Proper 7B)
June 20, 2021
Mark 4:35-41

The Lord of Wind and Waves

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. (Mark 4:39-41)

Dearly Beloved in Christ:

Facing death is a terrifying thing, as the disciples knew only too well. Yet, as the storm raged around them, they should have remembered another story in the history of God's people and found in God's Word. See if you remember. A boat, a storm, someone sleeping, a cry of fear, a calming of the storm. Does that sound familiar? Let me refresh your memory. A certain prophet rebelled against God and defiantly set out to sea. A great storm arose and he slept. The sailors had done everything they knew, called on their gods, and thrown the cargo into the sea. Yet the storm raged. Finally, the captain came to the sleeping prophet saying, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish." (Jonah 1:6). Eventually the prophet was thrown into the sea and there was calm. The prophet's name was Jonah.

Today's Gospel has some similarities with Jonah and some critical differences. Rather than run away from His divine assignment, Jesus was busy carrying it out. Jesus had been teaching and healing all day and He was tired. When He got in the boat, He fell asleep. As they were on the Sea of Galilee, a great windstorm came upon them. With the wind bellowing and the waves crashing over the boat and filling it with water, they were afraid for their lives.

Finally, they remembered who was with them in the boat. They went to Jesus and cried, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" How like these disciples. They had heard Jesus teach. They had seen Him heal people of a variety of diseases. They had seen Him drive out demons. Yet, they still didn't know who He was. So, when faced with this severe tempest, they cry out, "Teacher, don't You care that we are perishing?"

Then again, in the midst of fearful situations, we don't always think correctly either. In the midst of the storms of our lives we may forget that Jesus is with us because we often forget that He is with us when the sea is calm. Perhaps we try to sail ourselves out of the storm by our own power. But we find that we can't. In fact, things often become worse. Only when we have come to the end of our rope do we cry, "O God, don't You care?" Indeed, when we suffer illness or injury or loss, when we face financial turmoil, when a loved one dies, when we lose everything we own, when our children rebel against us, when our heart is broken, we too may feel like the disciples. We too may feel that God doesn't care.

Yet, the question of the disciples was most certainly answered. "Don't you care that we perish?" Of course, Jesus cared if they perished. That's why He had come. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Jesus had come to suffer with us and for us. He had come to take our sins upon Himself. Even then, Jesus could sleep during the storm because He had perfect faith in His heavenly Father. He trusted without any doubt that His Father would guard and protect Him and His disciples. And that very trust led Jesus to perish so that we wouldn't. He suffered the anguish of hell for us so that we would never have to face it ourselves.

So, Jesus did care. And where the storm calmed down after Jonah was thrown overboard, here all came to rest when Jesus rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Shut up! Be muzzled!" The wind and the waves immediately obeyed Him, and it was calm. At His Word it was done, just as it was at creation. Indeed, creation must obey its Creator and Lord. God reminds Job of this in today's Old Testament reading. God says concerning the seas, "This far you may come, but no farther, and here your proud waves must stop!" (Job 38:11). Christ was in control.

And it's the same in our own lives. As we face the storms created by the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh, we too are doomed to die. For as those three evil, powerful forces combine against us, we face a certain death, and this can be most frightening. As the storms of life roll over us, we may feel there is no hope. As wave after wave crash over us, we are afraid there is no way out.

Yet, our Lord is most certainly in control. He who created us, He who washed us clean in His own blood shed on the cross, He who made us His own children and who calls us by name, doesn't let us perish. Yes, we may suffer storms in this life, but we have the certainty of peace at the end. As we go through the storm, He is with us to see us safely through and bring us to our safe harbor.

You see, He has tenderly invited us, His baptized children, to join Him in eternity - in the mansions He has prepared "on the other side." He has placed us in His ship, the Church, within which the Christian is carried safely through life. And we are safe because this ship carries within herself the Lord Jesus. He is at the rudder as He guides and directs her through the storms and rough waters of life. He is here in His Word and Sacraments. Jesus speaks His re-creating Word in Holy Baptism and you are born as Christians. He hears His redeemed confess their sins and then promptly and willingly forgives them. He rests upon the altar in the Lord's Supper and unites Himself to His people in that Holy Sacrament. Jesus carries His church - protecting her from all harm. He resides with her and she with Him.

A great windstorm. A great fear of perishing. A great calm. And then, a great fear. The disciples feared a great fear as they said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" Who, indeed? He who created the heavens and the earth and set limits for everything in them, even the waters, is Lord of all. And He is a Lord full of compassion and

mercy. He does care for you in everything, not wanting you to perish. He is a Lord who does all things so that you will not perish but have everlasting life.

Yes, today's Gospel should remind us of Jonah, but there is still more. For Jesus declares that Jonah was a sign which pointed to Him. Now Jesus didn't mention the similarities with sleeping during the storm at sea, but He does mention something else. "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matt. 12:40). You see, Jonah was a sign of the death and resurrection of Jesus. So it is that even sleeping and rising again points to death and resurrection - Jesus' and our own.

And this gives us great comfort. For in His resurrection, Jesus no longer slumbers nor sleeps. He is always at the ready to deliver us through the storms of life, whatever they may be. For there is no storm that is stronger than the Creator and the Savior who commands the wind and the waves, "Peace, be still!" To our troubled and fearful consciences He says, "Peace be with you. I forgive you all your sins." By these words He steers His Ship to the other side, and we rest secure in the calm effected by those holy words. God grant that we would so trust in Him and His Word that we would not fear but have His peace now and forever. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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