

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church  
Shobonier, Illinois  
Pentecost 10B - Proper 12B  
July 28, 2024  
Mark 6:45-56

### Jesus Comes in the Midst of Trials

And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, . . . (Mark 6:48 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

No matter what happens, it's always good to remember that Jesus is in control. In the midst of trials, difficulties, stormy periods in your life, times when you work like mad and see very little progress, moments when you are about to despair, remember that Jesus is in control.

When the disciples were on that windy lake that night, Jesus did something remarkable; He walked out to them on the water. More than that, He intended to pass them by. How odd! And yet, Jesus did not pass them by. He did not leave them in their fear. He did not leave them in their lack of understanding. He came to them to give them peace.

As we heard last week, Jesus had intended to take His disciples away for some much needed rest. But it didn't happen. When they got out of the boat, they faced a huge crowd. More and more people wanted to spend time with Jesus. They wanted His teaching. They wanted His miracles, His healing. There was no rest for the weary.

So Jesus taught them. And He fed them – with five loaves and two fish. The disciples gathered up the leftovers. He sent the disciples away, and then dismissed the crowd. He went off by Himself to pray. He needed time with His Father to be strengthened and renewed in spirit.

But Jesus cannot keep His eyes off those He loves. While in prayer, He looked out on the lake in the middle of the night and saw His beloved disciples struggling mightily against the wind and waves. He had compassion on them, just as He had had on the crowd. So He went out to them.

There was no boat, and no need of one. Just as there had been no need to buy food to feed thousands, there was no need to make use of a man-made vehicle to get Himself to them. He just went right out to them.

But why? Couldn't He have calmed the wind by merely speaking the words? Couldn't He have simply willed the disciples' boat through the raging waters and brought it safely to the other side? Certainly He could have, but He didn't. Undoubtedly, Jesus had something to teach those disciples. So He went out to them.

And He did it for you. You see, those disciples had hard hearts. They didn't understand about the loaves. They didn't realize that Jesus was God in the flesh. They didn't perceive that, being God, He could do all things and that He always had their best interests at heart. They had no idea what He was really training them for.

So you too need Jesus to come to you so that you may understand that He sees things very differently than you do, and that He operates very differently than you do. For even when Jesus was not with them in the boat, even when He was about to pass them by, He was with them – to save them. When they saw Him, they thought they were seeing a ghost. You can understand that. After all, you also know that people cannot walk on water. Your experience and the laws of nature tell you that. And in the middle of the night, when it's the darkest, and you're most tired, you know your thoughts often get jumbled. You know how frightening it can be in the dark.

And yet, hearing their cry, Jesus tells them, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." What comforting words! "It is I." There's no need to be afraid. Jesus is here – to save you, protect you, feed you. Jesus can bring an end to your fear and give you the comfort you need, even as He did for the disciples.

And, unlike those disciples, you have the benefit of looking back on these events. You can be a Monday morning quarterback and analyze what the disciples should have done and how. You can try to determine why Jesus did what He did, though you can never fully know the mind of Christ. And while the disciples may at some point have looked back on these events and come to understand them, at this moment their hearts were hardened. They didn't fully trust in their Lord but instead viewed Jesus as one who would simply pass them by without rescuing them in their time of trouble. They knew who He was and yet they didn't. They were His disciples, they were following Him, and yet their trust in Him was lacking. They were still operating according to their own mindset, their own notions of who God should be and how He should operate. Namely, according to what they saw was best.

While Jesus intended to pass them by, He didn't. He heard their cry and comforted them. He stilled the wind by getting into the boat. He was with them and He is always in control. They didn't always know and believe that though. And it's the same with you. Each of you has trials and tribulations, and storms to endure. Each of you has those moments when your labor seems in vain. It doesn't mean that your Lord doesn't care or is not with you. Just the

opposite, in fact. It's what the disciples failed to see and later on came to understand and believe and trust. What if Jesus had passed them by? They still would have been in His care. He still would have been in control. They would have had the opportunity in the face of mortal danger to know and believe that He is always in control and always knows what's best.

It took many times for Jesus to get this through their thick skulls. But the head is only part of the problem. The way you see things is not only because of how you rationally look at your life. It's also your sinful flesh holding on to its own beliefs that there is always a better way than God's way. That's why if it seems that Jesus does pass you by, you see it as a bad or inexplicable thing. He, on the other hand, knows exactly what you need, and how He needs to operate in order to save you from yourself and your sinful nature. For if left to yourself, you would think you can survive the biggest storms of life on your own. That's why Jesus comes to you to rescue you from your sinful flesh.

Beloved, you have the benefit of looking at the whole of Scripture and God's entire plan of salvation and know that Jesus came to earth not simply to die at the hands of a raging sea but at the hands of sinful men on a cross. You are blessed to know that Jesus didn't become man simply to string His disciples along for a ride only to leave them high and dry and perish in a storm on a lake but to bring them along in His footsteps that led to a cross, and then call them out into a world perishing from a storm of sin, guilt, and the condemnation of the Law.

Would Jesus pass you by? What if He did? You know who He is. You know He is in control. You know that all that He does He does for you and for your salvation. He guides you in your life even as He sometimes intends to pass you by in order to test you and strengthen your faith. Never forget, He will never pass you by when you hear Him proclaimed to you in the Gospel. Always remember that He will never pass you by as you daily die and rise to new life in repentance and live in your Baptism. Rejoice that He will never pass you by as He gives to you at His Table His very Body and Blood for you for your forgiveness and to strengthen your faith and to keep you in His care and to sustain you in eternal salvation.

So your Lord gave these words through the apostle Paul: "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

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

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