

5th Sunday after Pentecost
June 27, 2021
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Mark 4:35-41

Lord of the Wind and Waves

Mark 4:35–41 (NIV84)

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.”³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Dear Friends in Christ,

The book of Esther tells the story of how God protected his people from genocide during the rule of the Persian Empire. Esther’s husband was King Xerxes, arguably the most powerful man of his time. He wanted to fulfill his father’s dream and conquer Greece. So he had a plan developed to invade Greece with a huge army. The plan included building pontoon type bridges. The engineers built the bridges and a storm on the sea destroyed them. Xerxes was furious at the engineers and had them executed. He was also furious with the sea and had it whipped with 300 lashes, branded with hot irons and had his soldiers shout at it. This powerful king thought he could show his dominion even over the wind and the waves. He thought he could make the sea behave so he could complete his invasion. Foolish man. While he did get his army across the second set of bridges, they too were later destroyed in another storm and his army was defeated by the Greeks.

We humans can control many things in this world. We can develop treatments and even cures for terrible diseases. We can send people into outer space and return them safely to earth. We can predict the weather and see storms developing. But we can’t stop storms. We cannot control the weather. We would be as great a fool as Xerxes if we stood outside with a storm bearing down on us and yelled at it to stop. But Jesus is no fool. He speaks and the wind and waves cease. Jesus is Lord of the Wind and the Waves.

Trust in Him During the Storm

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.”³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

So far in the Gospel of Mark, the disciples have witnessed Jesus casting out demons, healing many in Capernaum including Peter’s mother-in-law, healing a man with leprosy, a paralytic and a man with a shriveled hand. This doesn’t even include his first public miracle recorded in John, turning water into wine. The disciples know Jesus is the Lord, the Savior, the Messiah, the Son of God! They have heard him teach and seen the proof.

But when a great storm came upon them on Sea of Galilee, they forgot who was in the boat with them. The storms on the Sea of Galilee can come upon sailors quickly, with little warning. In their panic, they made a couple of terrible assumptions when seeing Jesus asleep in the stern. “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” First, they assumed that this storm was going to sink the boat and they were going to perish in the water. They jumped to the worst possible outcome of the situation. I’m glad none of us do that when faced with obstacles and trouble in our lives. That would just increase our panic and fear and anxiety. But, of course, we often do jump to the worst outcome.

Their second terrible assumption was that Jesus did not care because he was not immediately solving the problem. Jesus was sleeping as if there was nothing to worry about during a storm that was sure to be the death of them. He must not care about us. How easy it is for us to fall into similar accusations against our Lord when our boat seems to be sinking. When unexpected bills threaten our ability to pay, when sudden disease and illness threaten our health and life, when sudden anger threatens to sink a relationship, when temptations again drag us to the depths of sin, where is Jesus? Is he sleeping on the job? Doesn’t he care about my life, my health, my happiness?

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

The doubting, fearful disciples did not deserve to have the Lord of the wind and waves save them from the storm or save them from their sins. But Jesus does both. With two words, he stops the storm. With two words he makes the great storm into a great calm. And with one word (more than one in English) he announces that the payment for the sin of the world has been made in full. With one word from the cross he tells us that he cares for us always. He said, “It is finished.”

On the Sea of Galilee he showed us his power over even the weather and his care for his disciples. At Golgatha, he demonstrated God’s love for all sinners. For while we were still sinners Christ died for us. During the storms of life, trust the Lord of the wind and waves. He cares for you. He gave all for you. He will bring you through the tribulations of this life into the great calm of eternal life.

Trust in Him During the Calm

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. ⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” ⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Jesus changes the great storm into great calm and the disciples are still terrified. They were afraid even after the storm, during the great calm. For the disciples, the fear came from realizing that Jesus is the Lord of the wind and waves together with the fact that they had accused him of not caring. Jesus forgave them and this terror of being in the presence of the Lord would change to love and respect and honor.

We can certainly have great calm in our spiritual lives as we trust in Christ. He has and always will forgive. He has been with us and always will be with us. These gospel truths give us calm no matter what is going on around us.

But what about the times it is actually calm in our lives? We make plans and the plans happen as

we expected. We save some money and there are no emergencies to use it up right away. Everything is good with our children and parents and spouse and friends. Life is good. When these times happen, praise the Lord and continue to trust in him because it is during the calm that we are tempted to drift from Jesus.

We can sail our boats and live our lives in the calm water without any help. Sure, we need Jesus to be the Lord when we hit big problems, but we are smart enough, strong enough, persistent enough to overcome most things and keep our boat afloat in the calm seas. This is when the big storm hits out of nowhere. This is when our faith is tested and if we have drifted away from Jesus because life has been good for many years, the waves might overtake us.

It is important to be near Jesus during the storm but just as important to grow in faith in Christ during the calm. Almost 20 years ago our nation saw a dramatic increase in attendance at churches. After the attacks on our nation on September 11, 2001, attendance at religious services increased about 25%.¹ People wanted to be near the Lord of wind and waves during a big storm. But attendance returned to normal or below normal within weeks. The trend downward has continued these past 20 years. During these years of relative calm, peace and prosperity, many in our nation have abandoned the Christian practices and faith of their parents and grandparents.

But it is during the calm that we prepare for the storm. It is during peace that a soldier prepares for battle. It is during the offseason that an athlete prepares for the competition. Jesus tells us that in this world we will have trouble. We are not promised calm sailing through all of life. Instead we are to expect storms. Therefore we trust in our Lord during the calm. We gather around his Word to hear of his power over the weather and all things. We put his promises into our hearts and minds so we have them with us when trouble comes. We receive his forgiveness over and over so we don't forget his love and care for us when the storm strikes.

King Xerxes foolishly whipped the sea for daring to ruin his invasion plans. The one, true Lord simply spoke and the wind and the waves obeyed him. Trust him in the calm and stormy waters of this life for Jesus is our Savior who cares for us.

Amen.

1 "The Religion Bubble: Churches Try to Recapture 9/11 Crowds"
www.wsj.com/articles/SB1031681981556422835 accessed 6/24/2021