

Sermon: Memorial Service Mike Sandmann

Text: Mark 6:45-56 – Jesus walks on the water

Theme: Jesus comes to our help in strange ways. (v.40)

Goal: We are never alone. Jesus comes at the right time and stretches His hand to help us.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: When Mike came to the church for the last time I preached about this text. The image of Jesus walking on the water in the midst of the storm is powerful! And it helps us to understand what happened when Mike was called home. It helps us to understand about our daily life as well, and how God prepares us to face storm and even death.

I – Jesus sends us to the midst of the storm

After an exciting day, the disciples were sent by Jesus to the boat to cross the lake. - It seemed to the disciples that it was not the right time to leave Jesus and the people who were around Him. But Jesus had other plans. When everything seemed to be wonderful, He made the disciples get into the boat to cross the lake by themselves! Jesus didn't go with them! - It was evening when they departed, and later in the night a storm broke out on the lake. They struggled with the wind all the night until the dawn of the next day.

We cannot understand why Jesus sends us sometimes to difficult places and why He sets big challenges in front of us. We cannot understand why we have to face problems and storms in our lives. We cannot understand why Jesus remains on the shore and sends us alone to the sea... moreover at night!!! We cannot understand why... why a lot of bad situations occur in our Christian lives. Some people believe that when they are Christians, nothing sad will happen to them. But this is not Jesus' promise...

We cannot understand, but Jesus has His purpose. He knows how far we can be tested. Several Bible stories tell us about suffering and release.

Paul wrote: “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” (1 Corinthians 10:11-14)

II – Jesus prays for us

As Jesus sent the disciples to the midst of the storm, He sends us sometimes too. On the other hand, He is aware of what is happening. First of all, He prays for us. Second, He sees what is happening. Third, He comes to the aid of the needy.

The text says that Jesus “made His disciples get into the boat... (while) He went up on a mountain to pray”.

The picture of Jesus praying is an amazingly comforting image for us. He doesn't pray only for Himself, but we know from the Bible that He always prays for us. He speaks to the Father on our behalf and carries all our weaknesses and needs to the Father, asking for strength and for help. Paul wrote: “Christ Jesus ...died, was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” (Romans 8:34). “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). – Someone portrayed the image of Jesus sitting at the right hand of God and commented: When we do something wrong and God wants to punish us as a right judge, Jesus, sitting at the right hand of the Father intercedes for us and says: *Daddy, don't punish him. He is my friend. I died for his sins. He believes in me and asks for forgiveness.* – We mentioned this several times in our Bible study group where Mike was a regular participant. And he always agreed and smiled. He was sure of God's forgiveness and love in Jesus.

We are not alone in the midst of the raging storm, even when we face

death. Our text says that “Jesus saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the winds were against them.” How many times we feel the winds blowing against us, and we become desperate! It's our human feeling, and it shows how weak we are and how little our faith is. But Jesus sees us and prays for us.

Hebrews 4:15-16 says: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are —yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

The biggest storm was faced by Jesus Himself on the cross on our behalf. And He won and survived, appearing to His disciples on Easter morning! This is the guarantee that He is the powerful Son of God, who comes to our relief and help in all our needs: To save us from sin, to save us from hell and from Satan, and to help us in our daily distresses as well. He saves us even from death, because He promises that those who believe in Him will rise again as He himself was risen again.

III – He comes at the right time

I can imagine the disciples complaining while they were struggling against the storm: “If Jesus were here with us.... why did He dismiss us alone??? ... we will perish... where is Jesus now???” - This is the most common reaction of everyone when a catastrophe happens or when someone becomes desperate with pain and suffering. Where is God??? Why does He not listen to my cry? Why is He slow to answer?

Jesus has His reason to wait and He knows the right time to come to our aid.

When Jesus told the Parable of the Widow and the Judge (Luke 18:1-8) to teach the disciples that they should always pray and never become discouraged, He said: “Now, will God not judge in favor of His own people who cry to Him day and night for help? Will He be slow to help them? I tell you, He will judge in their favor and do it quickly.” (GNB).

Jeremiah confessed in a very big distress after the destruction of

Jerusalem (Lam 3:24-26): “I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for Him. The LORD is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.”

And Jesus came to help the disciples in the boat. He didn't come in the natural, regular way, but He came walking on the water. They could never expect this kind of help. But Jesus had His own way to help. The first reaction of the disciples was of fear when they saw Jesus walking on the water in the midst of the storm. They didn't recognize Him and they thought it was a ghost and were terrified. But then the calm and familiar voice of Jesus reached their ears: “Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.” Then He climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down.”

We need to learn to listen to the voice of Jesus. Open your Bible and read, read, read... and read again. Jesus will talk to your heart the right words. If you are in sin, He will forgive. If you are in doubt, he will confirm your faith. If you are without hope, He will lift up your eyes to the source of all hope: His resurrection. He will strengthen your faith and give you patience till we reach with Him the other side of the lake of this life.

This is our hope about Mike. He had severe struggles in his life. But at some moment Jesus stepped into his boat and gave peace to Mike. “Take courage”, He said, “It is I. Don't be afraid!”... and the wind died down. Carol and the children are sure of this. And Jesus is with you in these hard days. You will miss Mike, as we do as well; but we know where he is: With Jesus. May his good example of faith strengthen our faith and lead others to the loving arms of Jesus.

Conclusion: To those who are friends of Jesus and who follow Him, He will say at the end of the days: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the word” (Matthew 25:34) Amen.

