

Sermon: 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Reading Service

Text: Mark 4:35-41 (v. 38): “Teacher, don’t you care if we die?”

Theme: Three Questions.

Dear Friends,

After a routine visit to the doctor's office a person gets the surprise news, "You've got a malignant tumour. We'll have to operate, give you chemotherapy, radiation, and take it from there."

There is no way to prepare for this kind of unexpected news. Will they get it all? What about the healthy diet and exercise I've adhered to? How can this be happening to me? Where is God in all of this? What about my family, my children? Who's going to care for them? Lord God in heaven, O Jesus, just where are you? Don't you care about what happens to me?

The readings for today have questions as well.

The disciples ask Jesus: “Don't you care if we die?”

Jesus asks His disciples: “Why are you afraid?” – “Don't you believe?”  
-The disciples ask each other: “Who is this, that the wind and the waves obey him?”

I - Lake Galilee was known for its bad storms. Nestled up among hills, rough storms came up with little warning. That night they were out on the water, and it was Jesus' idea that they go. Everyone was tired from the preaching, the healing, and the crowds. Even out here on the water they followed him in the little boat. At least in the boat they could be alone for a while.

Then the storm came. The waves crashed into the sides of the boat, loaded with thirteen men, and it began to fill with water. The men were bailing frantically; fear was in the hardened fishermen's eyes.

Meanwhile Jesus was sound asleep on the captain's cushion in the stern of the boat. He didn't care about the storm. It posed no threat to Him. They woke Him and pleaded, "Teacher, don't you care if we all die?"

It may be hard for us to understand the tension here. Let's imagine that we are on a small commuter airplane in a storm. There are a total of twelve passengers on board. Lightning strikes have knocked out the instrumentation, the engines are sputtering, and the plane is veering out of control. And all the while this is happening; Jesus is asleep in the pilot's seat. Get the picture?

Now if your life right now is all smooth sailing, then there is nothing in this story for you. But if you are facing storms of chaos and you are afraid of what's going to happen, then there is much good this story can do for you.

And where Jesus is, there the storms are sure to come. A congregation that is blessed by Jesus' presence in the Sermon and the Supper is sure to have trouble in this world. When Jesus enters a person's life, when He baptizes and forgives them, lifts them from darkness and death through His resurrection and live, then watch out. The winds of temptations and the waves of trouble are sure to follow. Jesus said it Himself, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth, but a sword."

But when the storm does break, we might ask the same question ourselves. God, don't you care what happens to me? If you're who

you say you are, merciful and all powerful, why don't you do something to help me?

The disciples question to Jesus, "Don't you care if we drown", is another way of saying, "If you care about us, then do something; bail water out of the boat at least. But do something. Don't sleep. Give us some sign that you care."

Jesus doesn't care about the storm. But He does care about those who care about the storm. He cares about us also. He cares that we are perishing, although death is not the worst thing that can happen to us. Jesus entered our world because He cares. It's the whole reason He was in the boat that day. He preached the good news of the kingdom of God because He cares. He healed the sick and cast our demons and forgave sins because He cares. He hung on a cross and died because He cares.

But he doesn't care about the storm. This is because He knows what He has to do for these twelve men, and no storm is going to keep Him from doing it. Jesus has a purpose for us to join Him some day, and no storm is going to prevent that either.

Jesus didn't come down to earth as an infant, spend thirty years growing up, go around preaching and doing miracles for three years, allow Himself to be falsely accused, arrested, and executed - for nothing. He didn't rise from the dead, show Himself to His disciples, ascend to the right hand of the Father in heaven, and send us the Holy Spirit - for nothing.

Jesus is not going to let any problem, fear, or chaos prevent Him from accomplishing His purpose in our life.

Now that day He stood up in the sinking boat and rebuked the wind and waves. "Be quiet. Be still." Those are the same words He used to

silence the demons who possessed people. "Be quiet." And like the devils, the wind and waves obeyed Him.

All was quiet. And all it took was two words from Jesus mouth. Be quiet. Be still.

This story may remind you of some other great water events in the Bible. The creation story where the Spirit of God moved over the chaotic waters of the deep, and they were ordered into being. Or the account of Noah and the flood in which the life of the world was saved by a little boat bobbing in the waves. Or even the red sea crossing, where the water was parted magnificently and the people walked right through and the enemy bent on death was destroyed as the waters closed again.

You see, God is saying to us that out of chaos, He creates. Out of the storm He speaks. Through testing and trouble in our lives God forges trust in Him. We think things are going well and then all of a sudden the sky turns black and we are suffering, being tempted, and we realize we have no control over our lives. That is what makes us afraid. We think we have control, and then we realize we do not.

II - Jesus says, "Why were you so afraid? Have you no faith?" That's our second question for today. When we are afraid and panicking, where is our faith? Did we really think we could save ourselves with our wit, or with our energy, or by just hanging in there, trying hard? No wonder we are afraid. No, we are not in control. But the good news is: Jesus is.

He is here with us in His little boat, His Church. In Christian art, the church is often pictured as a little boat riding on top of the waves.

What's left to fear if Jesus is steering the boat? Even if death overtakes us, we will live again with Him, for He has died and rose to

prove it to us. Not every storm is calmed in the same way. Jonah faced a storm at sea, and didn't know God's deliverance until he was thrown into the water and swallowed by a great fish; but God saved him.

St. Paul once spent many days at sea in a fierce storm only to be shipwrecked on an island. But even then he went on to fulfil God's purpose for his life.

As God's people by faith we will not perish hopelessly in whatever difficulty we face. God will fulfil His purpose in our lives. The storms will test our faith and make our souls stronger to trust in Jesus more fully. Do not lose faith in Jesus.

I'm reminded of another question in the Reading from Job today. God says, who do you think you are to guess my reasons for suffering? "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?"

III - The third question comes at the end of the reading. After the storm was quieted the disciples were terrified of him. They asked each other, "Who is He? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!" They were no longer afraid of the storm. Now they were afraid of the One who was asleep in the back of the boat. It is better to fear the Lord than the wind and the waves. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It is also the beginning of faith. Jesus said, "Do not fear those who can harm the body but cannot harm the soul. Fear the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell." Fear God and you have nothing left to fear.

Jesus wants all our fears. Whatever it is that we dread most, troubles us, keeps us up at night, or causes us to panic, - He absorbs them all into His death. He nails them to His cross. He buries them in His tomb. He speaks a word that no trouble can stand against. "Be quiet,

be still." That's the power of His word. And we have a whole book full of those words to guide us.

“Who is this that even the wind and waves obey?” It is Jesus the Son of God; the Lord of Creation; our Saviour and Redeemer. Trust Him with your life and with your death. He cares for you. He died for you. He rose and reigns for you. He is strong enough to save you. Amen.

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