

Sermon on Mark 4:35-41 for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church 6/24/18 Pastor Nate Scharf

### **What God Ordains is Always Good.**

Life Jacket: You can check these out for three weeks at a time from our local library. I feel better as a parent watching my kids at the beach if the littles have one of these on. There are so many distractions. But they can definitely give us a false sense of confidence. They don't always work like they're supposed to, and as I learned water-skiing one time after a pretty violent fall, you can plain slip out of these. What can help – learning to swim, having wisdom in which water you jump into, or when to swim can all aid you in staying safe. Have enough life jackets for everyone in the boat and better yet, putting them on. But there are no guarantees when you are talking about water and boats and weather, right?

Peter, James, John and probably others in the boat were experienced fishermen. They knew the lake. They knew the dangers. They had the power and the know-how to maneuver. This would be no problem. Jesus must have been exhausted from teaching, healing, helping others – pouring himself into the work his Father had called him to do. They had this. Then the wind hit. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record it. It was significant history, and significant to them and therefore to us. Some said hurricane force, or was it straight-line winds? The National Weather Service was not yet formed to confirm which category, however there were 12 eye witnesses in the one boat and those who were in the other boats could verify it too. It was life-threatening. In fact, these grown men were certain they were going to die. As they approached Jesus to wake him as last resort, they asked him, *“Don't you care if we die?”* Too much water in the boat. Too strong were the wind and waves. Their strength to change their situation was ineffective. They couldn't. They were going to die.

*“Jesus was in the stern (the back of the boat), sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don't you care if we drown?” He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. Take a deep breath and wrap your head around this. Waves pouring in, wind relentlessly attacking them. Good, experienced sailors turn to a carpenter for help. The carpenter was sleeping fine, but wakes up and speaks two words. With two words he muzzles the wind and the sea falls calm so that it looks like glass. Who of us when the wind is wreckless*

would ever hope to harness it? Who of us when the sea rages would ever dare speak to it to command it? Yet his two words!

*He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"* I can't even. You know, Lord, if you can be afraid of anything, it has got to be when your world is flipped upside down and you are in immediate, mortal danger. If not that, then what is allowable to be afraid of? But Jesus' answer leaves no room. *"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"* (Matthew says, *"so little faith."* The point is the same). They would never forget this question Jesus asked.

When they got into the boat, I am sure they had the full range of emotions – some might have been excited about the crowds or frustrated at them and that they had no relief or time to really ask Jesus questions. He took time to explain his parables to them, but more time might have been better. Maybe some were just plain exhausted like Jesus must have been. Some may have been thinking of what the future might hold. Regardless, Jesus had just taught and spoken amazing words – a day of teaching and miracles that takes up multiple chapters in the Bible. And now they had respite after a full day – time to set out on the water. Jesus could sleep and they could get to work and reflect on the thoughts God had filled them with. Their hearts were full, but in mere moments trust went weak and withered as the winds wound around them and their hearts filled with fear as the waves filled the boat.

What saps your joy, your peace and your contentment? Is it your lust for more or your desire for the water always to be calm in your life an earthly sense of security – health always there, paychecks always coming in, family always a model and holding you up, marriage a place of support and butterflies in the tummy rather than disappointment and angst. Does the disappointment that there are waves and winds every stinking day in this sinful world cause you to complain, to lash out, and to become selfish, desensitized and judgmental?

What fills your hearts with anxiety, worry and despair? Is it what is going on in the world? Is it the refugees showing up at so many borders because of war, persecution, poverty or dangerous and corrupt gangs and governments, children separated from their families, or dead, or most of what passes for "breaking news" (really just "heart-breaking news."). Is it what is going on in your family? Is it the faithlessness of some, or the infighting, or the sins against one another and the disregard for God's loving will for us, or just plain dysfunction? Is it what is going on in your heart? You have difficulty shaking a sin and fear you must give into it again. You can't shake a feeling of guilt, shame, or anxiety or you

fear panic will set in once again? You feel that God must be abandoning you either because of your sin, or your lack of faith, or because of your arrogance and distrust, or why else would God be allowing such troubles and hardship to come your way, even if you're the only one who feels them. You can't find relief. You are caught on the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. A Saturday should be a day of rest and peace, but only fear and disappointment reign.

Sometimes God allows the storms to come for this very reason. He lays crosses on our hearts, on our families, on our societies. We hate these crosses, but they do their work when they make us look to his cross. We are not saved because we are so good, or we have our lives together, or because we strive so hard to do everything right, or get it right, we think. We are not lost because we suffer, because our hearts may be a mess. We need only look to the cross and see what God has done. Through Jesus' cross God forgave the sins of the whole world – including every one of yours, including you. Through Jesus' cross God cured us of every hoping we'll find an earthly peace in this world. But we don't stay at that cross on Good Friday. God doesn't let us stew in silence on that Saturday. He brings us to Easter Sunday morning where we look in astonishment as angels inform us of the carpenter's resurrection. We stand in astonishment with Mary as we embrace our risen Lord. We are humbled with Thomas as we too must place our hands in the nail marks of his hands and the opening in his side. Our sin is forgiven. Our doubt is dispelled like the waves and the winds. Our Savior is in the boat with us. Our Savior is everywhere we will be – boat or not - until he calls us home.

*“They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”* After Jesus had risen from the grave, they spent the rest of their lives answering their own question for all who would listen so that others too might know their Savior and their God, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Lord, the Son of God, God in the flesh. He commands you also to come to him with your burdens and weariness, your requests, your prayers and petitions, your thanksgiving and your voice. “Cast your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5). Trust him! God did not abandon the men on that boat, even if they had perished on the sea. Jesus wanted them to know that. God will never abandon you, either. He is with you every step of this life and he will bring you to the life to come.

The disciples never forgot the question Jesus asked. They never forgot the answer to the question they asked in astonishment either. Church history testifies to as do other examples. The disciples were willing to go through

torment and even crosses like the one Jesus died on rather than give up their faith in Jesus. The Apostle Paul suffered lashes, imprisonment, shipwreck and wanted rather than give up the great ministry the Lord Jesus had given him – to proclaim this Gospel to the Gentiles. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego told the most powerful king the world had known as he fumed in anger at them, *“King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up”* (Daniel 3).

God will grant us the courage to remember Jesus’ question, his power, and the answer to the disciples’ question in peril and crosses and in times of peace. *“What God Ordains is always good; This truth remains unshaken. Though sorrow, need, or death be mine, I shall not be forsaken. I fear no harm, For with his arm He will embrace and shield me; So to my God I yield me”* (CW 429). Amen.

Children’s Message: Picture of Jesus calming the storm. There was a big storm that came up on the water. They were afraid they would die. A million worries and thoughts probably came to their minds. If they thought about it, why did they not have to be afraid (Who was in the boat with them? Who was in control?)? Jesus! When there are things in our life that make us afraid whether it is because of people, danger, or our own worries and fears, God will help us remember that we don’t have to fear because Jesus is with us. Let’s Pray: Lord Jesus, help us remember that you are our true God and you gave up your life for us to pay for our sins and win us heaven. Give us courage to face each day and its dangers knowing you are with us and will never leave us. Amen.