

Fourth Sunday After Pentecost – Year B
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- SERMON -

We've been through a lot this past year. It's great how things are getting back to some kind of normalcy, isn't it? It's feeling good.

Well, it's been a couple months since I've given a sermon, and while I was anxious to get back up here to share something with you, I wasn't quite sure when the Lord had today's Gospel reading to be about the storm the disciples experienced while in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. My first thought was, not a storm! We've all been in a storm, haven't we? Why couldn't the reading today be about a healing or something. But then, there's healing, and there's healing.

We're coming out of our storm for the most part, but let's see how we can benefit by reviewing the disciples' experience.

So, let's start by asking the question, what is a storm? How would you describe a storm? Well, according to the internet, a storm is a violent disturbance of the atmosphere with strong winds and usually rain, thunder, lightning, or snow. That's basically what we think about, isn't it? Well, maybe not the snow. At least, not down here.

Let me provide some context to this passage. The previous couple days Jesus had been teaching to crowds of people by the Sea of Galilee, and healing people from various diseases. And, after a couple days like this, Jesus had grown tired. I know I would have been.

So, when the evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go across to the other side." Remember those words. "Let us go across to the other side." We'll mention them again this morning.

After they were on their way in the boat a great windstorm arose, the type of which the Sea of Galilee was well known for. The fishing boats used by Galilean fishermen at that time, had low sides (so that the men could cast and draw in their fishing nets), and these boats would have been easily battered by the wind and waves. Mark tells us that the boat was quickly "being swamped."

The disciples were confronted by fear, great fear. Can you imagine what they're feeling? They're thinking, "This boat is going down! We're all going to die!" So they looked to the only One who might be able to do something, Jesus. But, where was He? He was in the stern of the boat, which is the back part of the boat. And He was asleep, on a nice comfy cushion.

Remember, He had said earlier, “Let us go across to the other side.” He knew they would make it to the “other side”. He had said the Word. And they were going to the “other side”. So here you have a situation of the WIND vs. the WORD.

I can just hear the disciples shouting out to each other and trying to get any water in the boat out of the boat. The fact that Jesus is asleep is not at all amusing to the disciples. They rouse him from sleep and ask him what any one of us would have asked: “Do you not care that we are perishing?” It’s a reasonable question. And Jesus provides an answer to them, but not in the way you’d expect. Rather than assuring them that everything will be alright, Jesus instead turns toward the wind and the waves, toward the darkness and chaos that threatens to engulf them all.

Jesus rebukes the wind (interesting Mark says He “rebukes” the wind and not just speak to it) and He says, “Peace! Be still!” No mere mortal could silence the very wind and sea. That power is something only the Creator God Himself has.

A great calm then comes over the sea. Order is established. The awful terror of the storm is driven away. The wondrous order of creation is restored.

Jesus then turns to his disciples and speaks to them for the first time since he’d fallen asleep. He asks them, “why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” “And they were filled with great awe”. Mark’s Greek literally says here that they, “feared a great fear.” The terror of the storm has been done away with, but a fear of a very different sort has taken its place. This fear, this reverent awe, is what a man named Rudolf Otto famously called the *mysterium tremendum*, the Grand Mystery that is simultaneously fearful and fascinating. And it leads the disciples to ask, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

God never said he would keep us from storms in our life. But he does say, in Romans 8:38-39 – “...neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Deuteronomy 31:8 – “The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

Even after all the disciples had seen Jesus do up to this point, even after all the parables he had taught, even after all the innocent people he had healed or freed from demonic oppression, the disciples still did not know Who stood in their midst. Indeed, they are so amazed at what they have just witnessed that all they can do is ask, “Who then is this?”

Who indeed is this Man? He who commands the very wind and sea to be silent. Who is this that He inspires a reverent fear – a glorious awe – greater than that of the might of the terrible storm upon the sea? The disciples are better able to handle the prospect of their own deaths, than the reality of God’s presence, standing in the flesh among them.

The storms we went through are easing up, but many are afraid to move forward. We see it on the news, read it in the paper. The anger, the bitterness, the chaos. It's known that once you have survived a storm, what people don't tell you is, even when the storm is over it can still rage on, on the inside of you.

Sometimes we are so consumed with our present struggle that we stop rehearsing our past victories.

Don't replace the story of what God has done for you with a story of fear. You are a story of the grace of God. You may not have what you are needing ... YET, but faith in Christ is important. Not your story of loss, but your story of what God has done. The Wind vs. the Word. Say to yourself, "Peace belongs to me. I am a child of God." "Joy belongs to me. I am a child of God." "Freedom is my inheritance. I am a child of God." Tell yourself THAT story. Preach the Gospel to yourself. Trust God's timing enough to give God the mic, and believe what He speaks.

Like the disciples on the Sea of Galilee, we are upheld by the One who rebukes the wind and says to the waves, "Peace! Be still!"

Amen//