

Grace Lutheran Church

The Rev. P. Stevens Lynn – Sermon

Sunday, June 24, 2018

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – Mark 4:35-41

*Grace to you and Peace from God Our Father and
Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen*

Our Gospel lesson this morning is one of Jesus' great nature miracles, where he shows he has power over both wind and water. What can we learn from this story? What word of God can be gleaned? Let's dig in and see.

Jesus and the disciples had a long day of ministry – people came from near and far to hear him. But the day was passing and Jesus wanted to cross the Sea of Galilee before night. As they were sailing, Jesus fell asleep. All of a sudden, as can happen on the Sea of Galilee, a large storm was upon them. Storms can happen like that on water and in our lives. Everything can be going smoothly, and bang – a telephone call and you hear of a car accident or a suicide or an overdose, a doctor's appointment and you hear of cancer, a fall and your parents are out of their home and into a care facility, your boss calls you in and your job is gone, a decision made by a teen or by your spouse and your life is turned upside down. A law already on the books but now enforced in a different way and children and parents are separated and the suffering is horrific. It doesn't take long for terrible storms to develop.

Amazingly, when this violent Sea of Galilee storm was crashing, Jesus was asleep. One time, Katie Luther saw her husband Martin brooding and worrying and being miserable. It affected him and those around him. After watching this for a few days, Katie said to her husband, “Well, let’s just stop all this ministry business of Jesus, because Jesus is obviously dead.” “Why would you say such a thing?” bellowed Luther? “Because of you!” exclaimed Katie. “You’re acting like Jesus is dead!” As is often the case with a strong word from a good spouse – Luther’s attitude changed. Storms will come. We all experience them. And sometimes, we too, go to the stern of our boat and we find Jesus sleeping. Jesus is not dead, but often we wonder – Where in the universe is he? – As we are being buffeted by our storm. We scream – as I’ve screamed before, during my storms. “Master, don’t you care – I’m drowning here, help me.” You’ve been there too. We’re all screaming it now for those children we hear crying. Furious storms arise around us and over us at different times, but actually what goes on inside us can pose an even greater threat to our peace and security. Who will calm our storms? Who will say to our fears and doubts in the dark of the night? Peace! – Be still. Another thing we learn from this boat ride of the disciples and our boat rides in our lives – we can lose our direction. Many of the disciples were experienced, crusty fishermen. They knew the Sea of Galilee. They were caught in storms on that lake before. Was this storm the worst one they ever experienced? I doubt that. Those

guys knew what to do in a storm. They knew how to handle a boat. They knew what to do in this storm. What I think happened is this. They are incredulous that Jesus is sleeping – not pulling his weight. They see him sleeping – in the midst of their rowing and bailing and they say – Wake up Jesus! Don't you care what's happening here? In other words, are you going to sleep, or are you going to grab an oar or a bucket and help us? And obviously they did not realize, no clue, that Jesus could “still and calm” the wind and waves – so instead they wanted him to grab an oar – they needed all hands on deck. If they thought he could command the wind and water – why were they so stunned when he did?

It's at this moment that the amazing happened. Jesus got up – he doesn't grab an oar or a bucket. He screams at the storm to be still – and it did! And that, puts the disciples into another panic and tizzy. Look at the story. The disciples were frightened by the wind and waves; but, when Jesus calmed the storm – rebuked the storm – the disciples were stunned. Our text says, “They were in awe,” but the Greek word here is phobos – most often translated as “fear.” They were looking for human help – grab an oar, man – but instead they got divine power. They were looking for a hand, and what they got was a God! And that raw power of God scared them even more than the storm. They were terrified again – but now by Jesus. And they yell – “Who is this guy that even wind and waves obey?”

It was right at that point that the disciples lost their way. They were frightened during the storm, but after it, they were stunned – because of “who” was in the boat with them. The real storm then became – not the wind and waves – but the doubt and fear about who Jesus really was. That was the bigger issue.

Where do you turn during your storms? It’s the question of the day, and probably a big question in our lives, and the answer always depends on where your real security comes from.

You’ve heard me before talk about Zelda Royer – she was a woman who found her security in Jesus. A wonderful example for me that I always like to share with you. It was the mid 90’s. Zelda lived in DuBois. And Zelda was actively dying. She was conscious and aware, but too weak to speak. She had three daughters who were surrounding her bed and they would talk to her and pray for her and us and the sisters even sang some hymns. And every so often, they would cry – and when Zelda – the mother – would hear them crying and sensed their distress, she would muster the strength to hold her hands out like this – she was telling them without words – “Peace, be still – I am cradled in the hands of God. All is well.” Zelda knew where to turn when it was rainy and blustery – during her storms.

I believe Jesus' biggest disappointment that day was not the disciples' fear of the storm, but the disciples' lack of understanding about who he was. If they understood that, perhaps they wouldn't have been so stunned at what he did.

When you find yourself in the midst of one of your storms, and your boat is taking on water, and you're bailing as hard and fast as you can, and it's not enough, what else are you going to do? Where else are you going to go? For Zelda it was Jesus – For all of us Christians, it is Jesus. Jesus can calm your storms and give you peace. But we must be clear about what Jesus promises us in the midst of our storms. The promise is – that Jesus will be present with you in your boat, with love and strength and guidance for you. When you benefit from that, peace will be the result. That's the promise – No more, No less. Will the winds cease immediately – not necessarily. Will you no longer struggle with the problem – That's not the promise. Will you always prosper, as you hear the TV preachers say. Jesus never said that.

Well, you say, how great is this promise of God? Well, that promise of God's love and strength and guidance and salvation was good enough for Noah – during his storm; it was good enough for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the furnace, it got Israel through the desert, it got Mary and Joseph through the pregnancy, it got Jesus through the crucifixion, it got Paul through torture and

prison, and I know God's promise of love and strength and guidance can be sufficient to get you and me through any storms of this life.

Isn't it so? Yeah, it is! *Amen.*