

**Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – June 28, 2015**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

*Pastor Charles Heup*

**Mark 4:35-41 (NIV)**

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." 36) Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37) A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38) Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" 39) **He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.** 40) **He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"** 41) **They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"**

Dear fellow disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ:

It's dark! The wind is howling. A flash of lightening streaks across the sky...followed by a loud booming crack of thunder waking little Billy and sending him to his parents room where he crawls under the blankets with his sleeping parents seeking safety and reassurance. Many little children react in just that way during a thunder storm – but it's not just the weather that causes storms in our lives. Life might get a bit stormy for parents as the struggle to disciple their children. The report of the doctor that indicates a more serious than expected health problem – causes turmoil for some. Then there are those stormy relationships – with co-workers, neighbors, or difficulties with a spouse. Or how about the storms that we encounter as we try to juggle the responsibilities of our busy schedules and just can't seem to be able to make anyone happy. Wouldn't it be nice if we could handle those storms by rushing to our parent's bedrooms and crawling under the blankets with them like little Billy?

Actually, we have a heavenly Father who sent Jesus to be a storm stiller.

Jesus not only stills the storms of life – he also stills the storms of faith. That's the lesson we learn in our sermon text for today.

Our text tells us that it was Jesus' idea to set sail on the Sea of Galilee to get to the other side. Jesus' day had been filled with preaching, teaching, and ministering to the crowds of people. He was looking for a break from this strenuous activity. He was tired, exhausted from preaching and healing. He needed some rest. The crowds followed him everywhere. Even on the water, they followed Him in boats. At least in the boat they could be by themselves - Jesus and His Twelve. Time to breathe -- The quiet was welcome. The boat gently rocked on the waves. The sun set behind the mountains. Jesus quickly fell asleep.

The Sea of Galilee was known for its windstorms. Storms could kick up in an instant, without warning, turning a gentle boat ride into a deadly disaster. Without warning, a strong wind howled down the mountainside and stirred up whitecaps on the water. It buffeted the little boat and threatened to blow the disciples overboard. The waves crashed hard against the little boat. Each wave added its dose of water.

The disciples looked anxiously at one another. Fear gleamed in their eyes. These were not cowardly landlubbers. At least four of them were seasoned fishermen. They knew the sea and its storms; they knew how much a boat could take. They were bailing as fast they could. "All hands on deck! We're sinking!"

**Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – June 28, 2015**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

*Pastor Charles Heup*

Meanwhile Jesus was sound asleep on the captain's cushion in the back of the boat. He was completely at peace -- without a care in the world. The wind and the waves posed no threat. He is their Master, the Lord of heaven and earth, the ruler of wind and wave. Of all the boats out on the sea that night, this one was the safest

of them all. Who would you want to be in your boat in a storm? Twelve seasick disciples? Four fishermen? One sleeping Jesus?

Perhaps we miss the point just a bit. Boating is recreational activity for us. Instead of a boat on the Sea of Galilee, let's make it a little twin-engine commuter airplane at twenty thousand feet. A total of twelve passengers on board. The plane has hit an unexpected storm front. It's been struck by lightning, the instrument panel has gone haywire, the engines are sputtering, and the plane is veering out of control. As all of this is going on, Jesus is sleeping in the pilot's seat. Get the picture?

The question is - How far do we trust Jesus? Do we trust Him when He seems oblivious to our situation? When our lives in danger? When He doesn't seem to be paying attention? When He's asleep on the job? Do we trust Him with our lives, when chaos threatens to sink us? Do we trust a sleeping Jesus?

The disciples didn't. For the Twelve, a sleeping Jesus was as good as no Jesus at all. They trusted Him enough to grab him by the shoulders and shake him and wake him up. They trusted him enough to say, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" But they didn't trust him enough to let him sleep through the storm.

They needed to learn, not by words but also through experience, that Jesus is Lord even when He is asleep, even when He hangs dead on a cross, even when He's buried in a tomb, even when it appears as though he's lost control. And he is Lord not only over the devil and his demons and diseases. He is the Lord of heaven and earth, the One through whom everything was made and in whom everything holds together.

He is the One who commanded the proud waves and said, "This far you may come and not one inch farther." There isn't anything outside of Jesus' lordship.

His disciples needed to learn that. And so Jesus sends His disciples out into a storm in a little boat with no protection but Himself. Their boat can't save them. Their strength can't save them. Their knowledge and ingenuity can't save them. Their swimming ability can't save them. Only Jesus can save them, and He appears weak and weary, asleep on the pilot's pillow.

Don't you care? the disciples ask him. "If you cared, you would do something. Bail, at least. Don't just sit there. Do something, if you care." Of course, Jesus cares. He cares that they were in danger of perishing, though death isn't the worst that can happen to us. Jesus entered our world because he cares. He became a flesh and blood human being because he cares. He preached the good news of God's reign because he cares. He healed the sick, cast out demons and absolved sinners because he cares. He hung on a cross and died because he cares.

He speaks His Word because He cares. He stood up in the sinking boat, and rebuked the wind and the waves. "Be quiet! Be still!" Those are the very same words he used to silence the demons. Be quiet! Be still! And, like the devils, the wind and the waves obeyed him. The wind died down. There was a great calm. All it took was two words from Jesus' mouth. Be quiet! Be still! He speaks His Word and it is.

Through testing and trouble God forges faith, the way steel is forged in fire. We think that things are going well with God when everything is peaceful and quiet, when our lives are in order, health is good, the marriage is strong, the family is at peace, the sky is blue, the sun is shining. But the Spirit's faith-work goes on in the storm, in the chaos of suffering, testing, temptation, in the unexpected hurricanes and tornados of life, when we suddenly realize we have no control over our lives.

Why are we afraid when our safety is threatened? When our health fails? When the doctor brings bad news? When our lives are thrown into chaos and disorder? When the winds howl and the waves threaten? It's

because we don't believe, we don't trust Jesus, at least not fully, not with our whole heart, soul, and strength. We reserve a bit of control for ourselves. We keep one hand on the rudder, just in case God doesn't know where he's going.

We're afraid because we think we're in control. We think we can save ourselves. We think God needs a wake up call to get him moving. We think it all hangs on us. That would be frightening! The good news is that we aren't in control. Jesus is.

**What's left to fear with Jesus at the helm? Wind and water? Flood? Famine? Fire? Earthquake? Disease? Devil? Death? St. Paul says, "No. In all these things we more than conquers through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

Recall the little boat, the wind and the waves, and Jesus sleeping at the helm. No need to fear or panic when God causes the wind to blow and the waters to rage and foam. Jesus is in it with us. He is in charge of things, in control, in His own quiet, humble, and hidden way. Don't be fooled by what you see. His strength looks like weakness. The power of God is hidden behind the exhausted man asleep in the boat, the broken man hanging dead on a cross. His powerful Word that stills the storm is there to save us, submerged in baptismal water, spoken in the quieting word of forgiveness, given in the bread that is His body, the wine that is His blood.

#### **What A Friend We Have In Jesus (411)**

*What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry Ev'rything to God in prayer!  
Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry Ev'rything to God in prayer!*

*Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged -- Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness -- Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

*Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge -- Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
In his arms he'll take and shield you; You will find a solace there.*

After the storm, the disciples were still afraid. Even though the wind was quiet and the waves were calm, **Mark says they "feared a great fear." They were terrified. "Who is this, this man who speaks to the wind and the sea and they obey him?"** Because of all that Jesus had done – the disciples were filled with fear – they obviously knew that Jesus was God because of the miracle they had seen. Yet they continued to doubt – their sins filled them with fear – because no sinner can stand in the presence of God. But Jesus came to still these storms of faith as well. He gave up his life to pay for our sins – his word promises forgiveness and eternal life – there is nothing left to fear. Yet we often continue to doubt and fear. We often question his wisdom and judgments. The Scriptures point us not to our faith, not to our works, not to our strength but to the Lord to silence all our fears.

**(Psalm 46 NIV) God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2) Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3) though its waters roar**

**and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. 6) Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. 7) The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. 10) "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." 11) The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.**

"Be still, be quiet." Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey? Jesus. The Son of God. The Lord of creation. Our Savior and Redeemer. You can trust him when it looks as if your boat is about to go under. You can trust Him even when He seems to be asleep. You can 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 to save you. Stronger than the wind and the sea that do His bidding. Stronger than your sin. Stronger than your death.

We know that our Redeemer lives. (152, vss. 3, 5, 7 & 8)

*He lives to bless me with his love;  
He lives to plead for me above.  
He lives, my hungry soul to feed;  
He lives to help in time of need.*

*He lives and grants me daily breath;  
He lives, and I shall conquer death.  
He lives my mansion to prepare;  
He lives to bring me safely there.*

*He lives to silence all my fears;  
He lives to wipe away my tears.  
He lives to calm my troubled heart;  
He lives, all blessings to impart.*

*He lives, all glory to his name!  
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.  
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives:  
"I know that my Redeemer lives!"*

With his Word and with his Sacrament the living Lord Jesus calms our fears and strengthens our faith. He enables us to rely more and more on him, to call out more frequently and fervently to him, to leave all things to his direction. In his name we calmly pray, "your will be done," as we wait for him to carry us through the storms of life which threaten our faith to our eternal home where we will live in safety and glory forevermore. Amen.