

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – 2024

Job 38:1-11

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

Mark 4:35-41

I once read about colossal blunders in the business world, really bad moves that supposedly smart people made that didn't age well. The record executive who had the opportunity to sign the Beatles passed on the option because he thought that guitar music had pretty much run its course. Then there was the lawyer who refused to invest in Ford Motor Company because, in his words, "the horse and buggy were here to stay." Tom Brady was the 199th player drafted in the year 2000. Football experts pigeonholed him as a career back-up. "Poor build, doesn't throw a tight spiral, can't drive the ball down the field." Statements that don't age well; we've all been wrong about one thing or another. Reading tea leaves is not my expertise – yours either. Christianity is not reading tea leaves. Christianity is trust. Christianity is faith. Christianity is the Son of God intervening in our death and forgiving our sins and delivering us out of this world by His righteousness, by His blood, by His resurrection, by His ascension to heaven.

It wasn't just fear spilling out of their mouths. It was an accusation. "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38). They were in a storm. Their boat was being swamped. The threat was real. Hardy fishermen were at the mercy of a storm and the threat was real. Their fear was justified. Jesus had exhausted Himself – teaching the crowds, healing their sicknesses, confronting the demonic realm. The Lord was subject to all of our physical limitations. He was asleep. In the stern of the boat, the Lord Christ was asleep and the disciples' fear reached a fevered pitch. It is not a remark that aged well: "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" I know that sentiment. It is spiritual self-pity. It is ungrateful. That sentiment deliberately forgets what God has done. Those twelve men were as close to the Lord Christ as any human can be. In this storm, they accuse Him of not caring whether or not they perish.

Place that statement at Golgotha. Put Peter, James, John, Andrew, Thomas, and Matthew at the crucifixion of the Lord and have them utter that accusation to His face. Could you voice that self-pitying sentiment there? Would you say those words there: "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" It's embarrassing. God's concern for us is extraordinary, limitless, astoundingly lavish and tender and unwavering. And when we are called upon to weather a storm, we snipe at His grace, we exaggerate how forlorn and forgotten we must be. It's embarrassing. Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? You can't possibly say those words while looking at Jesus nailed to the cross, giving everything that He has, everything that He is to ensure that we would *not* perish but have eternal life. Does God know that justice is perverted in this world? Yes, He knows. Does God know that the innocent, the vulnerable and the weak are preyed upon by the strong, the influential? Yes, He knows. Does He care? Yes! Each of you has a cross to bear. I know many of them, how heavy, how persistent. It is reasonable for you to pray that you would be delivered from your cross. St. Paul prayed that way. St. Paul pleaded that the thorn in his flesh should be removed. The answer that Paul received teaches us something.

Do you want to learn? Jesus was roused from His slumber and took action. The Word made flesh didn't whine at the storm. The King of Creation didn't bargain with the elements. The

omnipotent Messiah didn't compromise or offer a bribe or mumble a tentative threat at the storm – He commanded the wind and the wave: Silence! Be still! Chaos was turned to peace. A threat was vanquished and the disciples were in awe. Fear gave way to fear. A new fear, a holy fear, a wise fear; “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:41). That common-looking man, Jesus of Nazareth, raised dead Lazarus. “Lazarus, come out” (John 11:43). Who then is this, that even death obeys him? The Lord Christ, the One through whom all things were made, He is with us in our boat. “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades” (Revelation 1:18). The disciples learned. They suffered a rebuke and they learned. After He calmed the storm, this is what Jesus said: “Why are you so cowardly? Have you still no faith?”

Boy, could He say that to me. Is the Lord Christ in charge of heaven and earth? Yes. Do you always recognize it? Do you believe with all your heart that God works all things for good, according to His purpose? Are you confident that evil will not prevail, that death will not prevail, that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus? When Jesus rebuked the disciples, was He rebuking their fear of the elements, their fear of death while He was with them or was Jesus chastising them for the idea that He didn't care? Are those two ideas correlated? Who's in charge of your life? Irrespective of the storms, in peaceful moments and when the tempest blows, who's in charge of your life? Why is He in charge? Does He deserve your trust? Are you stronger when you trust, when you commend yourself to His care no matter what? You and I need to grow. To be sure, the Lord is at work among us. We are in a good place. But it's equally true – you and I need to grow. Joy at living in Christ's care – we need to grow. What puts this world into focus? What puts the storms that you go through and the provision God extends to you and the purpose of hardship – what puts all that into focus? God's Word puts it in focus. That's how we learn.

Jesus used His omnipotence to calm the storm, but this is not a story of raw power. Your Lord has authority and He uses it. How? It's not omnipotence that saves you from your sin. A sacrifice saved you. Jesus was the locus for a cosmic storm. Good and evil, life and death, truth and lies, virtue and vice, heaven and hell – Jesus came to confront all that which stood opposed to us, opposed to God. The storm raged around Him and He allowed it. Evil men plotted His death and He allowed it. Satan attacked Him and He allowed it. All sin was located on His person and He allowed it. Death swallowed Him and He allowed it. The storm that we brought on ourselves could be calmed in no other way than the Son of God suffering. In this cosmic storm, Jesus was alone and forsaken and evil did its worst. In His body, the storm raged. And then... “It is finished.” The Lord of life died. The glory of God was unleashed as Jesus took our sin, suffering the devil's wretched assault, and truly dying for us. What's our response? Master, how *wonderfully* you care! In order that we would not perish you would do *this*? For me? I am yours forever! I adore your wounds. I am exalted by your humility. I am freed from guilt and shame and you have done it all.

In this place, in this church are believers who will trust the crucified King when we go through storms. Christ builds trust in us. Christ's Word forges fortitude in our soul. Our hope is that the storms end. That hope is like an anchor for our soul. This anchor is embedded in heaven and it does not move (Hebrews 6:19). Our storms will end. The risen Christ commands it. In this world we live on the sea. In this world, the storms will come. For now we learn as St. Paul

learned, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Throughout this life, we learn that blessed truth over and over – my power is made perfect in weakness. What a joy it is to sail the seas of life in the good ship Christ the King. I’ll leave you with a Navy blessing – may you ever have fair winds and following seas. Fair winds is what carries you along and provides for a safe journey. Following seas are when the waves move in the direction of your heading. Our voyage has the fair wind of Christ’s resurrection. We are safe as we make our way home. The following seas are the grace of God’s forgiveness, Jesus’ merit being given to us as a gift and that grace steers us to heaven. Fair winds and following seas, dear friends. The One who commands the wind and wave is with us.