

Mark 4:35-41
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
June 27, 2021

Problems in life are many and so are the reactions to them. There are the individuals filled with self-confidence: "I can handle it alone." Or maybe, "I can do it with a little help from my friends," whether they're talking about people or chemicals. Some are filled with self-pity. "Why me? What did I do to deserve this?" they lament. Then there is the frantic worry or fear that drives some to running in all sorts of directions or the opposite, to be paralyzed to inaction.

Today's text leads us to view the disciples and Jesus and a problem on the Sea of Galilee and to consider the best way to deal with difficulties.

TURN TO JESUS WHEN IT STORMS

- I. Be calm with Jesus
- II. Be safe with Jesus

Turn to Jesus when it storms and be calm. We meet Jesus during his Galilean ministry. Galilee is the northern part of the Holy Land. During this time Capernaum served as headquarters for his work. He was drawing crowds with his preaching and healing. We heard in the Gospel reading of a recent week how the busy activity scarcely left time for Jesus to eat, prompting concern from his mother and brothers. The day at hand brought such a multitude that it had worked best to teach from a boat as the people filled one of the natural amphitheaters on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. Part of his teaching was the Gospel of last Sunday with the parables of the growing seed and the mustard seed.

After concluding his message Jesus dismissed the crowd. He had been busy and needed some rest, which reminds us that Jesus was a true human being. He also knew someone on the other side of the lake needed him, so he and the disciples headed across the sea in a boat. He took the opportunity to grab some sleep.

Then the problem struck. A storm arose. It was not your average passing rain shower. The terrain around the Sea of Galilee with its high hills forming a trough for winds contributed to a sudden and powerful storm. "A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped." Matthew's parallel account used the word for earthquake to describe the violent upheaval. Picture the waves towering high, then crashing down to fill the craft with water. The travelers were in serious trouble.

Several of the Twelve had been professional fishermen on this lake so had surely encountered storms before. Yet they knew they could not handle this situation. They were scared. The storm had great power that they could not control or counteract; their skills were useless. They felt helpless and fearful, definitely not calm.

We can note some good in their reaction. They went to the right source, to the Lord Jesus, despite the logic that might have prevented them from doing so. They were the experienced seagoers. Jesus was a carpenter and may not have sailed before. But they recognized he was more than the carpenter's son and could do something about the weather. Yet we must feel some discomfort in their manner of approach. "The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?'" It seems like a rebuke. Don't you care? Here we are in trouble and all you are doing is sleeping! We're going to drown. That is the result they were expecting and he wasn't doing anything about it.

We understand where they were coming from, for we often have similar feelings. We encounter problems, many and great. Situations seem impossible. We struggle and fail. Rather than rely on yourself, go to God. And don't make him your last resort after you have exhausted all other options.

Think of the storms that rage in your life. There are physical dangers like the disciples encountered on the sea. There is family strife. Maybe it's impossible conditions at work. You have a difficult boss or conniving co-workers who undermine your efforts or seek credit for successes that were really your doing. Maybe you face financial troubles, with more of the month left than there is paycheck to cover it. Health issues afflict many people. You thought you finally made some headway and then something unforeseen and catastrophic happened. Yes, we have numerous types of problems and sometimes they all seem to come at once. Prayer is the right action, but then what? Do you still worry, fret or despair? Remember to whom you took your problems. Let him deal with them. Be calm as you await his answer, knowing that he can handle anything and will do so in the right way and time. Take a cue from Jesus here, asleep in the boat. A psalm notes, "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Trust your Savior. When we pray we are not dictating to God what and how to answer. We let him decide. Waiting on the Lord is not laziness. Be ready to act as he directs. If it's bail water, do so. Also recognize trouble may bring you to your end, which means heaven for you as a believer, which is even better. Still

you can be calm. Know that he is with you, even though he is not visible as he was for the disciples.

II.

Because he is present in your life you will be safe with Jesus. He provides physical help. After being awakened Jesus rescued them at once. "He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still (literally, 'Put a muzzle on it')!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm." Amazing! The power of his word! The results were instantaneous. People have tried to control nature. The story is told of ancient king Xerxes who had the sea whipped. It made no difference: his fleet was destroyed anyway. Jesus, on the other hand, brought results, and they were exactly what was needed.

It was a clear demonstration of his divine power. He is supreme over all. As God he created the universe by his word. Here he controls it with his word. All those questions that God posed to Job in today's First Lesson reminded us of his wisdom and power. He uses it still.

He uses his power to protect us. He does so even when we wonder where he is or if he is listening to our cries for help. Angels are his special agents to protect us. They keep many potential threats away. They rescue us in times of danger. In certain dramatic instances you may realize they were at work, but often we do not because they are invisible and do such a good job of preventing what could have been a disaster. God is at work guiding events that happen and using troubles for our good until his purposes are accomplished. We recognize that our lives really are filled with goodness. You are safe with Jesus.

We look to Jesus for spiritual safety. He addressed the faith problem of the disciples. (Note he didn't delay or withhold the physical care but used the situation to address the more important issue regarding their souls.) "He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'" His words reminded them that they had blown it when they were so fearful. He was right there at their side. They had not just been introduced; they had a history together. They had witnessed miracles of many sorts, had heard his teaching and received private explanations of more, such as the meaning of his parables. They failed to apply to the conditions at hand what they had learned previously. Doesn't that sound familiar? How much do we forget when we are tested?

It is also striking that Mark (who likely had Peter as his source for the information) reports, "They were terrified." That comes after the miraculous calm, not while the storm was still threatening. Seeing the clear demonstration of their Lord's almighty

power made them aware of their sin and weakness. They were ashamed and felt unworthy as they uttered with awe, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" They were seeing that there was something much bigger than the stilling of a storm. How true it was!

We are safe with Jesus eternally. He came to our world to address a bigger trouble than storms at sea or any other earthly woe. He came to solve the problem of sin that plagues us all and is the cause of every other problem in life. He came to deal with our sins of weak faith and doubt. He addressed our sins of rebellion against God's ways. He dealt with our sins of mistreatment of the people placed around us.

His way of dealing with them all was to take them away by enduring the worst of all troubles. He suffered the pains of hell when he was separated from his Father and his love and instead received the full fury of his anger and punishment that our sins deserved. That came as he died on the cross. It was followed by his resurrection on Easter and return to glory. He won the victory for you.

With that problem of sin solved, you will be safe with Jesus forever in heaven, with no more problems ever to bother you. Imagine it! Have it. It is yours by a different fear, the fear of faith. Remember Luther's explanation of the First Commandment in the catechism? "We should fear, love and trust in him above all things." It is a respectful awe that recognizes not only his power but also his immense love for you. The Holy Spirit produces such faith in your heart through the gospel message in God's Word and sacraments. Use them and grow in faith.

That is advice not just for storms. It's for every day and every condition. Turn to Jesus in faith. Be calm and enjoy safety in daily life and forever in heaven.