

## Sermon on Mark 4:35-41

June 20, 2021 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pentecost

Please pray with me. O Heavenly Father, who hast given us a true faith and a sure hope; Help us, we pray thee, amidst all the things that pass our understanding, to live as those who believe and trust in the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection to life everlasting; and strengthen, we beseech thee, this faith and hope in us all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

While reading today's gospel to prepare this sermon a memory of an adventure in my childhood came back. I have read this gospel many times but had not remembered this event I am about to tell you.

This happened when I was around 14. My parents wanted to take us from our cottage on the Huron river in Huron, Ohio on a boat trip to Pelee Island, Ontario, Canada. The trip was around 42 miles via my dad's 18' boat. The trip over was very nice and uneventful. For those of you that don't know, Lake Erie is a very shallow lake of only 62'. We had a nice day on the island and left to head to Cedar Point Marina for supper and then back to the Huron River and our cottage up the river about 6 miles or so.

We were not far from the island when the lake started to have some swells. The swells started to get very large and soon we were seeing just water on both sides of our boat while we were

in the bottom of the swell. About half way to Cedar Point the Pelee Island steamer was heading to the island. This steamer was very large and painted black and reminded me of a smaller version of the Titanic. There were people on the deck looking down at us as we were bobbing up and down in the swells. We made off to Cedar Point and had our supper and then headed towards Huron. We made it despite the rough seas. We had faith in my dad's ability to get us home.

I tell you this because the Sea of Galilee is also a very shallow lake and is about 700' below sea level and because of this, hot air rises from the lake surface and cool air from the higher elevations is always wanting to change places with the warmer air. This action frequently results in high winds and waves that can top 30 feet.

Archeologists digging on the north shore of the sea found the remains of a boat from the time period of this gospel reading. It is doubtful that this is the boat the Apostles were in; never the less it gives us a good idea of what the boats were like back then. The boat measured 26.5' long and 7.5' wide and 4.5' high. You can imagine how the boat was bouncing around in high waves. I have empathy in how the Apostles felt in that small boat going up and down in the swells and waves.

Jesus and His apostles left the western shore to go to the eastern shore after a long tiring day of teaching crowds of people. A reminder here for you is that the eastern shore is the

Gentile side. Jesus must have fallen asleep shortly after they sailed away from the shoreline. After all He was human and got tired like all the rest of us.

The wind suddenly picked up and the little boat started to bounce around in the heavy seas. The apostles started to panic and woke Jesus. They were afraid of losing their lives. They had no faith that Jesus would take care of them even while he slept in the back of the boat on a cushion. Jesus woke and, in His Divinity, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" It was a small boat that carried the humanity of Jesus, but it was the power of the Godhead that carried the boat and all those who were in it. When Jesus calmed the sea, He was acting God acts. He was invoking Godly powers by doing Godly work.

You may find as you read this Gospel that there are some similarities between Mark's story and the story of Jonah. Each story has a journey towards Gentile territory, a great storm endangers the boat and threatens to sink it, and there is great fear of the boat's passengers, and lastly Jesus and Jonah are asleep in the stern. There is sharp disapproval or criticism of the main characters, the principal characters take action in calming the waters, Jesus calmed the sea while Jonah asked to be picked up and thrown into the sea and that calmed the sea in his story.

While preparing this sermon I ran across something St. Augustine preached in one of his sermons. "When you have to

listen to abuse, that means you are being buffeted by the wind. When your anger is roused, you are being tossed by the waves. So, when the winds blow and the waves mount high, the boat is in danger, your heart is imperiled, your heart is taking a battering. On hearing yourself insulted, you long to retaliate; but the joy of revenge brings with it another kind of misfortune—shipwreck.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, who lived from 354-430, tells us this happens because Christ is asleep in us, meaning that we have forgotten His presence. We should wake Him up, remember Him, and let Him keep watch within us. We need to pay heed to Him. When a temptation arises, it is the wind. It bothers us: it is the surging sea. This is when we should awaken Christ and let Him remind us of these words: “Who can this be? Even the winds and the sea obey Him.”

After Jesus rebuked the waves, the Apostles were amazed and asked “Who is this? Even the wind and the wave obey Him!”

So far in Mark’s Gospel Jesus has healed a man with an unclean spirit, He healed Simon’s mother-in-law and later healed many after her. Later He healed a leper, then a paralytic. He then healed a man with a withered hand. Yet the Apostles still didn’t understand who Jesus was. These miracles are called healing miracles.

Thomas after hearing that Jesus had risen from the grave did not believe it. He said “Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into His side, I will never believe.” Then eight days later Thomas sees Jesus and said “My Lord and my God!” Jesus responded with “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Mark’s Gospel shows us the apostles did not yet demonstrate any faith in Jesus. They had witnessed many healings and nonhealing miracles that Mark had written in his account of the Gospels. Nonhealing miracles would include the feeding of the five thousand in Mark 6:30-44, Jesus’ walking on the water Mark 6:45-52, Jesus fed the four thousand in Mark 8:1-10, and the curse of the fig tree in Mark 11:12-13. None of the miracles were enough to convince them.

Our take-a-way from this Gospel reading today is:

1. Only God has power over the seas and storms. Psalm 107:29-32 says, “He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.”
2. This story can be seen as a type of epiphany story in that Jesus is revealed as God incarnate. His identity will

continue to become clearer all the way to Peter's confession in chapter 8:29.

3. It took a lot for the disciples to realize who Jesus was. They had no Bible other than the Old Testament. We are blessed to have the Bible and to be able to share it with others.
4. There are two motifs in this Gospel reading. We have the calming of the storm and the relation of Jesus to His disciples, who still didn't get it. They didn't understand the nature of Jesus but were still protected from ship wreck despite their lack of faith.

One final note from my reading from *Interpretation A Bible commentary for The Teaching and Preaching Mark*. "The corporate dimension of this text's significance is embodied in an early Christian symbol adopted by the World Council of Churches at its formation during the dark days of World War II. The church universal is depicted as a storm-tossed boat with a cross for a mast. The stilling of the storm continues to reassure the church in every time of persecution and distress that Jesus Christ is Lord, that he is ruler of nature and history, and that he is present with his disciples in their anxiety."

Let us all keep the faith and share it with our friends and neighbors. Gregory the Great said, "Faith is the proof of

what cannot be seen. What is seen gives knowledge, not faith.” AMEN.