



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN!**

A few years ago, now, we had an incident on Tuesday morning during quilting. I was sitting in my office and the women were in the Fellowship Hall working on their quilts. All of a sudden, I heard screams coming from them. A mouse ran out of my office and into the ladies' room. I never saw it and have no idea what it was doing in my office, nor did I want to know what it was going to do in the ladies bathroom. Well, I went in to see if I could find it and no such luck. Amazing how such creatures can just seem to disappear. Not sure any of the women used the bathroom the rest of the day. Well, mice don't creep me out, but snakes, well that is a different thing. Came home from church one afternoon and I asked how Rodney's day was and he said that he probably should not tell me. So, that aroused my curiosity, and I bugged him until he told me he found a snake in the living room that afternoon. Not a clue where it came from, but he took care of it and threw it out the porch door. All night long every time that vertical blinds wiggled, or my plants fluttered or windchime made a sound, I picked up my feet, took a deep breath and then went looking in the direction of the sound. We never saw it again, thank you Lord.

So how many of you have fears? Don't have to raise your hands. And I know that some are warranted and other are not, but I think most people fear something. Even the big husky guy's guy is fearful on occasion, whether it might be of dying or the dark or a mouse or a snake. We all are fearful at times in our lives. And how do we deal with that fear? Are we paralyzed, frantic, traumatized, or just plain scared.

It is true that things happen in our lives that come along unexpectedly, and we end up feeling a bit scared or whatever emotion you want to attribute to it. I bet there are a few of us here this morning who could stand up right now and give testimony to some aspect of their lives where they feel a bit like that. And maybe even a bit like the disciples in the boat in our Gospel story this morning.

It is normal to have fear, fear that sets in when something we cannot control happens to us. What is next? How will I survive? What will the future look like? Such fear is an issue in today's reading from Mark, but it is not the most important issue. And remember when those times come, we are to "Fear Not!"

This year as we have been reading through the Gospel of Mark, we have seen that there is a theme of discovering the "Messianic Secret" or who Jesus is. Mark uses stories and parables of Jesus to

show us just who Jesus really is. And today's story is another in a list of Jesus' teachings where the disciples are exposed to who Jesus is. They had a personal experience where their fear clashes against their faith in Jesus. And guess what? Yup that is right, they still don't get it. They just keep missing the point and sometimes we get a glimpse of the fact that Jesus is getting frustrated with them. They just don't see the tree for the forest or is it the forest for the tree?

Many questions can be found in this parable. Why were they going to the other side? What does that other side represent? Has Jesus led us down a dangerous path? And then Jesus sleeps in the boat, more questions surface. Why is he sleeping? Is he too tired to care? When the disciples need him the most he is not there? And then the response Jesus gives about the disciples not having enough faith. Why would Jesus say such a thing? How much faith can they have as they are about to perish?

Is not this whole scenario a situation we all too often step into? Remember last week when I talked about parables and how they can only have meaning to us if we can see ourselves in them. Well, here it is. How many times have we uttered the words, "Why is God letting this happen to me?" Or where is God when I need Him the most? We are those disciples out in the boat, on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus did not create that storm. Nor did Jesus leave the disciples alone. Jesus was always right there. So why are they, why are we afraid? Are the disciples wrong to be fearful? Absolutely not!

Their fear is normal. In fact, fear can often be a good thing. It can keep us safe; keep us from doing something stupid. In fact, in our story, 4 of these men are fishermen and should know how quickly a storm can come up. They should understand the lake. In fact, most of these men had been in storms before and obviously survived. But it is not their fear that separates them from Jesus here; it is the fact that they do not understand who Jesus really is.

If they really realized who Jesus was, they could have gone to him and said something like, "Jesus we need a little help here. Could you make these waves calm down?" But instead, they ask if Jesus cares about them. So back to the question of "why are you letting this happen to us"? How can Jesus not care?

In order to get past their fear, to overcome it, the disciples have to first recognize that Jesus is not some ordinary human being who just happens to have these unusual abilities to preach and heal. They have to understand and acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God.

This is the story that is the turning point in Mark's Gospel. Up until now Jesus has performed miracles, or maybe we should say that he has given signs, signs that point to Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. The disciples see His work as miracles. And as we know these same disciples go out later on and heal people and do miracles of their own.

So, what makes this different today? The difference is that Jesus is God and He can do more powerful things. He can save the disciples. He calms the wind and the waves with three words, "Peace, Be Still". Jesus could have added a few more words here to make it clear. "And know that I am God." By now we know that without a doubt, Jesus is the Son of God. The disciples still do not get it and our text ends with their questions, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Verse 41 And even though they were filled with great awe, they still were not sure who Jesus really was.

I imagine that Jesus' frustration continues. Don't you want to just whap the disciples on the side of their heads with a baseball bat? Ah one of my favorite sayings, . . . but if we did that to the disciples to get their attention, we would have to do it to ourselves too. As we look into that mirror of the words and works of Jesus, we find ourselves right there.

True that we know more of the story. We know that Jesus was put to death on a cross for us. From this we are granted forgiveness of our sins and doubts. Then He rose again in three days to overcome death and the devil, giving us the promise of eternal life. So, we do have an advantage yet, we often times still do not grasp the whole truth either. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus has saved us. He is right here with us today protecting us, walking with us in our struggles. God rides in our boats and in our lives as well.

And some of you may have heard this story or joke before as I think I first read it on the Internet, but it has a good message especially with all the rain and flooding that is going on around us today.

There was a man named Clyde who tried to ride out a flood in his home. As the water climbed higher, Clyde climbed the step of his flooded home to the 2<sup>nd</sup> story. Looking out his window he saw his neighbor paddle up in a canoe. The neighbor shouted, "C'mon Clyde, climb in and I'll get us to dry land." Clyde waved off his neighbor and said, "How could God let this happen, why doesn't he save me?" The water continued to rise, and Clyde climbed to the roof of his house. Pretty soon a helicopter flew up to his house and the pilot offered to pull Clyde aboard. Clyde waved the helicopter off and muttered, "How could God let this happen, why doesn't he save me?" The water continued to rise, and Clyde drowned. When he got to heaven, he said to God, "How could you let this happen, why didn't you save me?" And you know what God said? God looked at Clyde and said, "I sent a canoe, and I sent a helicopter. Why did you not trust me enough to get in?"

God is not responsible for the chaos in our lives, but he is there to help us overcome the chaos Satan continues to try to wreak havoc in our lives. God tells us again and again as if we need constant reminding that he is in the boat riding the storm of life with us. If we let him, he uses those storms to strengthen us and bless us. He reminds us that God is not out there somewhere or sleeping in the boat, but he is right here in the midst of the storm with us. He is in the fear with us, and since he is not subject to human fear, He will guide us.

But the fact remains that whenever Jesus heals, walks on water, teaches, feeds, feasts, rebukes, when he is born, is resurrected, it all scares the bejeebies out of people. The disciples were not only scared by the storm, but they were concerned about Jesus' apparent indifference in their safety and the fact that He could actually calm the storm. No wonder the disciples and the people were so afraid not to mention confused. Would not you be afraid in such a crisis?

With all the things happening in our world today, I believe that people are fearful about their lives, their children's lives. The world seems out of control with the prices of everything skyrocketing, wars in the middle East, and the uncertainty of politics in the US, not to mention the severe weather across the globe. I hope you won't run or put your head in the sand and try to hide away? God offers us each an abundant and wonderful life here on earth. I am sure you don't want to miss it. God has blessed us by enriching our lives with immeasurable joy. Just have faith and remember that Jesus is God, and he can and will walk with you at all times. Our faith must be strong so that we can see the crisis in our lives with the His perspective. For the power of death can no longer enslave us, but we are moved to see the wonder of life, and how it prevails through the crisis, with

faith the size of a mustard seed. Abundant life and the promise of eternal life are ours through Jesus Christ.

He will whisper in our ear, "Quiet, be still and have faith to know that He is God." **AMEN**