

Sermon Proper 7 2018

June 24, 2018

Mark 4:35-41

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Gospel Lesson which was previously read.

**“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”** It seems like a fair question, doesn't it? Apparently, these windstorms, these squalls with hurricane force winds can appear on the sea quite suddenly. And it seems this was such an occasion where one did. The ship with the Lord on it, and others with them, vessels about 25 feet long, 7 ½ wide, and 4 ½ tall, these boats would certainly shrink in comparison to the waves which were pouring in over their sides. Such conditions can seemingly rightly induce panic. And that's what the disciples did. They panicked. They freaked out.

And so do we, don't we? Don't we look around us and freak out? Don't we look at the demise of our culture and assume the world is going to hell and in a hand basket? Don't we watch the news and see shootings in schools, shootings in the city, hear of robberies in our own neighborhoods? Don't we see the sadness of children separated from their families, or famous people committing suicide, and worry? We do, don't we? We look at all of this, and we see sadness, the injustice and the brokenness of all of this, and it weighs on us to the point that we cry out, “Lord, **do you not care that we are perishing?**”

Just personally, I find myself tempted toward this as I look around at how much our society has lost its sense of rationality. As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, we see all kinds of division in our society which can be tied to the influence of Marx and those who came as students of his after him. Well, sort of in that same vein, I read an article that someone I knew posted on Facebook. The article said that the younger generations in our country are expressing a real interest in the possibility of adopting communism. I read that and it freaked me out. How can these people have an interest in communism? Do they not see the oppression that communism brought to the people of the Soviet Union, to China, to North Korea? Do they see how in the sinfulness of man when you create a collective a small group will take charge? And then what's going to happen? They're going to make sure they take care of themselves and their friends. And they're also going to make sure that they keep

anyone else from dissenting their rule. Which is exactly what we have witnessed. We witnessed it with the deaths of millions, millions of people, in particular millions of Christians in those places. This is what happens, and we have a generation of kids who are considering this? “Lord, **do you not care that we are perishing?**”

And as I speak in my own life, I am sure you all have many other examples you can think of in your own. Perhaps cultural too. Or perhaps more individual. The diagnosis of a loved one with a terminal illness, ““Lord, **do you not care that we are perishing?**” The loss of a loved one suddenly: “Lord, **do you not care that we are perishing?**” The anxiety of losing a job, or fear that our needs will not be provided for: “Lord, **do you not care that we are perishing?**” The loneliness that comes without a spouse or without children nearby: “Lord, **do you not care that we are perishing?**” ”

There are so many storms that appear. These squalls that come up and they bring great fear to us. Fear for our lives. Fear for the lives of our children. Fear that things are bringing peril to us, and we might not survive.

And coming back to the disciples, what made it that much worse when the storm came? What made it that much worse when they turned and looked at Jesus? Where was He? Well, He was there on His comfy cushion calm as can be. In fact, He was so calm, He wasn't even awake.

And that's something you can probably relate to also, isn't it? You can probably relate to those times when you are being overcome by these storms, when you are afraid you're going to be cast off the ship, or worse that the ship is going down with you in it, and you cry out to God and it feels like this. It feels like you're calling out to Him and He's asleep at the wheel. You don't get any notable response. You don't hear comfort, you don't see relief. You don't get a reprieve. Instead, what do you get? The sense that you're crying out and God's just asleep at the wheel. But still it gets worse doesn't it?

When Jesus does wake up, how does He respond? Well, to be sure He takes care of the problem. He demonstrates just how much power He has. He demonstrates that just as God spoke at the beginning and the heavens and the earth were created, so now He speaks, “**Peace! Be still!**” and His word does just that. It silences the winds, puts a muzzle on this storm. In fact, when it says that the wind ceased there's a connotation there that the wind demurs from Jesus in fear. So, sure, Jesus demonstrates this great power which keeps the disciples safe. But how comforting is

that really? Obviously not that much, because they all talk amongst themselves **“filled with great fear,”** and say, **“Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”**

And if all of this isn't bad enough, how did Jesus respond to all of this? Does He gently say to them, “Wow guys, thanks for waking me up, that was getting really bad! You must have been so scared!”? No. He says, **“Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”** He says to them, “I am God, I've got this well in hand. Why would you think I didn't?” In fact as we look at this response, you can see why it's paired with the reading from Job, can't you?

In fact, I always think that passage is hard to hear. It's one of those where if we as people were writing this, is that how we would make God out to be as appealing as possible? And I say that using that wording intentionally. After all, in our day with the Church in decline I think we have this mentality that we have to be as appealing as possible as the Church. As Christians, we have to make the faith look as attractive as we can. As believers, we feel like we have to defend God and His commands in as winsome a way as possible. Not to say that we shouldn't strive for winsomeness, but is that God's approach with Job? Look at that. Job, if you recall lost his ten children in one fell swoop. If that wasn't enough he lost the livelihood of his animals. He lost his health, he was ill and had boils all over his body. And in the midst of all of that, his wife and friends all tell him how rotten he must be that God would curse him like this, and so he should just curse God back, die, and be done with it. And yet Job remains faithful. Sure, He tells God it doesn't seem fair, but he never curses God. And what does God come to Job and say? Does He say, “Well Job, you sure did a good job!” To be fair, He does tell Job's friends they were wrong for what they said, that Job was right, it wasn't as though there was something in particular he had done. But in response to Job's claims of unfairness, what does God say? “Sorry?” No. He says, **“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. ‘Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.’”** In other words, He comes to Job and He says, “Are you God? No. I am God. I have the wisdom and the knowledge of having created this whole universe. Don't you tell me what you think is right. Don't you tell me what you think is fair. I am the LORD the God of Sabaoth. I will say what is right and fair.” In other words, He is telling Job what Jesus, **“Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”**

And Christians in your trials and your fears, He says the same to you. He confronts your question of “Lord, do you not care that we are perishing?” with His own question: “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” He says to you, “Look at me. Look at my nail scarred hands and feet. Look at my spear-lanced side. Look at what I have done for you, dying for your sin. Look at that. If I have done that, would I not certainly care for you in all things? Will I certainly not abide with you, remain with you in every trial and storm? Haven’t I told you, never will I leave you never will I forsake you? Haven’t I been raised from the dead to show you the victory that is yours? And if you were afraid this wasn’t meant for you, haven’t I baptized you, haven’t I fed you even my own body and blood? I have. I have done all of this for you. Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”

So Christians, why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? You must ask yourselves that. I must ask myself that. We all must ask ourselves what inhibits us, why the storms draw us to doubt. Why it upsets us so when it seems like Jesus is asleep on the pillow in the boat. Hasn’t He proven that this isn’t arbitrary; that it isn’t by happenstance? Hasn’t He proven that this is all under His care? And more importantly, hasn’t He proven that you are under His care? Hasn’t He even proven as He died for the sins of the whole world that He loves even those who reject Him far more than any of us ever could? So where is our understanding? Where is our wisdom? It’s all for naught. Rather, we are in the hands of the God who has spoken the whole creation into existence, who speaks silence to it. And He speaks silence to you as well in your worry, the silence and peace of His promise to care for you, His promise to work all things to your good. He is the God who sent His own Son for us, so He will surely do this in Him. As the Psalm says, **“Our help is in the Name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”** It certainly is. It is our help now and eternally. Amen.