

July 1, 2012
Pentecost 5

"Jesus Calms the Storms"

MARK 4:35-41

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" ³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. ⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" ⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

You just don't know when your life will suddenly change. Jesus and his disciples were peacefully sailing across the Sea of Galilee. Suddenly the wind came down from the mountains and whipped up waves large enough to swamp the boat. Even experienced fishermen were afraid of dying.

You just don't know when something will happen that will totally change your life. A couple weeks ago, Sunday afternoon, Father's Day, my wife and I were driving south on Miller Street in Santa Maria. Susan was driving her little red car. She stopped at the stop light on Battles and Miller. The light turned green, but she was deep in thought. I was about to tell her the light had turned green, but then out of the corner of my eye I saw large white truck speeding through the red light. If she had actually gone forward when the light had turned green, we probably would not be here today. How quickly your life can change.

You cannot make it through life without experiencing some storms. Some storms, like the weather, are predictable and some are not. What a joy it is to know that Jesus is with us whatever the storms may be. In the Lord's Prayer we pray, "Deliver us from evil." Let's look at how Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee to help us believe that he will calm the storms that come in our lives and deliver us from evil. First we will see the calm before the storm, then we will see the calm in the midst of the storm, then the calm after the storm and finally the storm that comes after the calm.

The calm before the storm

Could anything be more peaceful and more idyllic? "The evening came, he said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side.' Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were other boats with him." They took Jesus with them in the boat, just as he was, tired and exhausted after a long day of teaching and talking to people. The crowd was so large that Jesus had to stand in a boat on the edge of the Sea of Galilee and teach the people as they sat on the shore. He told them stories about the kingdom of God to show them his love for them. The people could not

get enough of Jesus. They got into boats and followed him as he went across the Sea of Galilee.

This past week we experience the exhausting joy of teaching children about Jesus at our Star Bible Camp. We were blessed to have our building filled with children hearing God's Word and singing his praises. During our closing on Friday the children amazed us with their singing. The parents were so happy and pleased with what the children learned and how well they could sing. Jesus saw the joy on the faces of the adults and children who listened to his teaching. He is fully God and fully human. He experienced the human emotions of peace and joy at having the opportunity to bring his Word to so many people, along with the exhaustion.

There is a wonderful calm that comes to us as we see Jesus sleeping on a cushion in the back of the boat. The boat sails through the water. The sun sets in the west. There is Jesus tired and exhausted as he often was after a long day of helping people. We look at his head and one day he will wear a crown of thorns. We look at his body and one day it will be badly beaten with sticks and a whip. We look at his hands and feet and we know they will be nailed to a cross for us. We look at his face and see the blood that would stream down his face as he prays to his heavenly Father "Father if it is possible let this cup pass from me, not my will but yours be done."

The Savior that we see sleeping and exhausted is the only hope we have of being saved. I could exhaust myself in trying to please God and I will always come short of his glory. I cannot pay for one single sin that I see everywhere in my life. What calm and peace we find in Jesus as we think of the words of 2 Corinthians 5, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." What calm and peace comes to us as we think of the words of Isaiah 53, "The punishment for our peace was upon him." The people wanted to be with Jesus. They wanted to go across the Sea of Galilee with him because they found in him a peace and calm this world could not give.

The calm within the storm

The peaceful conditions on the Sea of Galilee change quickly. "A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?'" The storm came up suddenly. Such sudden gusts of wind were common on the Sea of Galilee which is actually a fresh water lake that is the lowest fresh water lake in the world at 682 feet below sea level. Winds rush down from the cooler mountains of Lebanon and hit the lake with a fury creating large waves. Think of the wind that blows through the Gaviota Pass.

What is Jesus doing during the storm as the waves crash over and start filling the boat with water? He is sleeping on a cushion in the stern. The disciples are upset with Jesus. "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" How could they ever accuse Jesus of not caring? They had seen him care about people. They had seen him take children in his arms and bless them. They had seen him heal people who were sick and cast out evil spirits. Every word they heard from the mouth of Jesus communicated clearly how much he loved people, and especially those who were his disciples.

Where is Jesus when the storms of life hit you? Does it ever seem as if he is sleeping and doesn't care? In our first lesson for today we heard the Lord remind Job that he was still in control. Job wondered if God was sleeping and didn't care about him as experienced huge losses in his life. The God who created the heavens and earth certainly has the power to help us in the storm and bring calm into our lives. The God who sent his Son to die for us, is not a God that we can ever accuse of not caring about us.

In all the storms of life, there is a wonderful calm and peace that comes from knowing that Jesus is in control. As we said in Psalm 46 "God is our Refuge and Strength, An ever present help in time of trouble." There is a calm and peace that comes from knowing Jesus' love never changes. Romans 8 says, "Neither height nor depth, nor anything in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus did raise himself from the dead. Jesus did ascend up into heaven. He is at right hand of our heavenly Father carefully managing every moment of our lives for his glory and our good. He hears our prayers and he knows the perfect time to deliver us.

The calm after the storm

The disciples woke Jesus up. What happens next is truly amazing. Look at the amazing calm that comes when Jesus quiets the storm. "He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!'" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm." You can tell your dog to be quiet and he keeps on barking. Parents can tell their children to be quiet and they keep on talking. Jesus tells the storm to be quiet and the waves to be still. Immediately there is a complete calm. Immediately the water goes from washing over the boat to being as calm as a sea of glass.

The disciples had seen the wind stop blowing and the lake become calm, but nothing ever like this. Normally, if the wind stopped blowing it would take some time for the waves to stop bouncing back and forth. But this is Jesus the creator of the water in the lakes and seas, the creator of the winds that come down out of the mountains. He speaks and millions of horsepower of wind force and millions of gallons of water are suddenly subdued into a great calm. He stills this storm by the power of his Word and stills the storms of our lives as well the power of his Word.

The disciples would later see Jesus display even greater power at the cross. Think of the calm Jesus has established for you by the power he showed at the cross. By a miracle of his grace and power he was able to take all your sin upon himself. We used a sponge in our Bible camp to illustrate how Jesus took our sin upon himself, just as this sponge absorbs water. He paid for sin of the world by his precious blood that was shed. We heard how we think we have the power to pay for our sins by our feeble attempts to improve our lives and show kindness to others. Even our best efforts have no power to remove one single thing we have done wrong. When Jesus died on the cross he cried out "It is finished." Jesus paid it all. In that miraculous power of Jesus we have the calm and peace that comes from knowing we are forgiven and we are loved. As our children sang, "Living, loving, dying, rising, Jesus did it all for me."

The storm after the calm

What strikes us about the disciples is the lack of peace and calm that they had after Jesus stilled the storm. "He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'" They were afraid of dying when the storm hit and now they are even more afraid after this great calm. They saw the raw power of the Almighty God who spoke to the wind and said "Be quiet" and to the waves "Be still!" One moment they are shaking Jesus to wake him up from a deep sleep and the next moment they are shaking with fear as they see his power as God.

The disciples do not jump out of the boat but stay with him. They would see even more miracles that took their breath away. Their faith in Jesus become even stronger as they realized he was using his power as God to rescue them. The storms of life will come to us, but Jesus is always there with his power as God to deliver us. Some day he will use his power as God to take us home to himself in heaven. Then we will not have to be afraid of the storms of life that come to us. Amen.