

Mark 4:35-41; Pentecost 5

June 23 & 24, 2024

When were the disciples most afraid that night? As the storm raged and the hurricane-force winds filled their boat with water? Or when Jesus calmed the storm and set everything at peace? It really is the second one. Like a teacher who claps her hands twice to silence a noisy classroom, Jesus spoke two words -- **“Quiet! Be still!”** – and the storm obeyed. I can’t imagine that Jesus needed to yell. But that’s when things got scary. Upon seeing Jesus exercising absolute control over creation, Mark said: “They were terrified and asked each other, **“Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”** or literarily: *They feared a great fear.*” What were they afraid of?

What makes you afraid? You might have some very common fears – fear of heights, fear of flying, fear of spiders, fear of snakes. There are also fears of failure – fear of public speaking, fear of not getting accepted to a school, fear of underperforming at work. Maybe it is a financial fear – fear we will not have enough to retire, fear that our medical bills will bury us, fear of taking on more debt. Maybe there are social fears – the fear of being alone, the fear of losing face, the fear of missing out. Maybe there are the fears that we have for others – that our children will not turn out right, that our parents are failing, that our spouse is uninterested. What are you afraid of?

For many people, we fear what we cannot control. We can’t control the weather. We try to predict it, make plans around it, warn others about it, but we cannot control nature. God controls the storm. We see that vividly in our text today. **“That day when 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 also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.”** The chief challenge of this storm was the powerful wind bringing waves crashing of the sides of the boat. Many of these men had experience in handling a boat in a storm. But even with all of their strengths, it wasn’t good enough. They were desperately trying to keep the boat afloat while Jesus is sleeping in the back.

The disciples’ fear on the lake that night was entirely legitimate. Have you ever been out on a lake at night? Have you ever been out on a lake at night in a boat with no power—no motor, no lights, no radio? Have you ever been out in a boat on a lake at night with no moon or stars and hurricane-strength winds crashing waves into the boat and filling it with water? If there is ever a time for fear, this would be it.

Yet, Jesus rebukes them. **“Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”** The words of Jesus here remind us of some other words he spoke in Matthew 10:28 – **“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”** Who is he talking about in those words? He is talking about God. The storm was scary, but the worst the storm could do would be to end their lives. Financial trouble is scary. Family problems are scary. Heights and snakes and chemo are all legitimately scary. But there is something much more worthy of fear than these.

Standing face to face with the God who made the universe, the God who knows all things, who has power over all things, who rebukes hurricanes like kindergartners is ultimately the only true reason for being afraid. Encounters with this God in the Scriptures rightly terrified Moses, David, Isaiah, Peter, and Paul. We saw it in our first lesson today with Job.

“Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm. He said: “Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone?” Just like the disciples in that boat in the middle of the storm thought who woke Jesus to tell him: **“Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”**, Job had made the same accusation to God: **“Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense—let the Almighty answer me.” (Job 31:35)**

Have you ever felt the same way? Have you ever given God a list:

- *This is **what** I would like*
- *This is **when** I would like it*
- *This is **how** I would like it*
- *If you can't do that God, then you must **not care** about me.*

Sometimes, it is easier to talk about have peace with God, than to live at peace with God. Sometimes, it is easier to talk about living in faith than doing it. Sometimes, we might be tempted to think that God really doesn't care for me. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth. Even though he rebukes his disciples for not having complete faith in him, he also wanted to show them what he can do. He is willing and able to save us from perishing. He showed it to his disciples in our text. He wanted his disciples to know the answer to that question: "**Who is this?**" He wanted them to see him as he is: "**Even the wind and the waves obey him!**" He wanted them to see that he was for them and not against them. He showed it to them not only when he saved them that night, but also in his resurrection. His reign is absolute, and he cares for us and saves us. He has given us his word on it.

There are many different things that we fear in life. My fears are not your fears. Your fears are not my fears. Let us not fear the Lord. Let us trust him for "**even the wind and the waves obey him!**" That God is for us! May God grant it. Amen.