

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 5
Saturday, June 22, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, June 23, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

“Be Still, My Soul”

Mark 4:35-41

As the disciples experienced, you never know when the Lord will say, “Let us go. . . It is time to go.” Fifteen years ago, I didn’t know a thing about Quincy. I knew there were a few LCMS churches in town, but I couldn’t name them. But the Lord said to the Eden’s, “Let us go across to the other side” (of Illinois).

Thankfully, my journey has been much smoother than the disciple’s journey across the Sea of Galilee. I thank all of you for making this such a smooth ride these past 15 years.

During this Pentecost Season, we are going to follow the disciples along their journey with Christ. In last week’s Gospel reading you already witnessed the manner in which Jesus is going to teach His people: He will only speak to them in parables, except for the 12 apostles to whom He explained everything in plain language when they were alone.

But as we will witness, even though the apostles had everything explained to them in plain language, they still did not understand who Jesus was or what He was going to do for the sake of His people.

For this week and next week, we will witness two common themes: the people's lack of faith and the power and authority of the Lord's Word. In today's Gospel, as Mark recorded, the disciples and Jesus were caught in a storm on the sea of Galilee. The waves were crashing over the sides of the boat, and with Peter, Andrew, James, and John all being professional fishermen who would have been very use to the wind, waves, and sudden storms that are characteristic of the Sea of Galilee, this must have been a big one for them to be as frightened as they were.

These experienced men of the sea, who grew up fishing on those waters were faced with this mighty tempest. As the storm was approaching, they most assuredly put into use all of the knowledge and skill that a lifetime on the boats had given them; but all of their efforts were futile and vain.

It was only when it seemed that hope was lost, their efforts had failed, and their doom was certain that the disciples searched out the Lord. To their amazement, and with some indignation, the disciples found the Lord peacefully asleep on a cushion in the stern of the boat.

At this point in the disciple's development, they were still relying primarily on their own sense and abilities. "They were relying on sight, not on faith" – to paraphrase Paul from last week's Epistle reading. And with the question they ask the Lord after rising Him from His slumber, we see that they did not understand who Jesus was or what His purpose was for coming into the world.

They were still blinded by the incorrect belief that the world is governed by

the whim of fate, and that events such as storms happen by chance. They asked, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” Don’t you care if we drown? They panicked, and they frantically tried to communicate their panic to Jesus.

Sometimes our prayer life and thinking follows the same pattern. In times of trouble, we frantically try to communicate our panic to God, as if He were not in control and did not know what was happening in our lives – as if the events of today are a surprise to Him.

We often cry out, “We are in a desperate situation. We are headed for disaster. Are you asleep?” We may not use those exact words, but the sentiment is often there.

Now, there is nothing wrong with being frightened or sad when we are confronted with loss, or with difficult or troubling situations. But to lament or be angry as if all hope were lost; that is a problem. Instead of rushing to communicate our panic to God, we need to allow Him to communicate His calm to us.

The storm was not the only thing that Jesus calmed that night out on the water. Just as the storm was told to be quiet...to be still, so too were the disciples. The disciples were raging and out of control. They had no confidence in God. They had no understanding of Christ. They were still living by sight, not by faith. Jesus essentially says, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

God was in control all along, and it is God who “guides the future as He has

the past” – as we will sing later this morning. And since God was sleeping in their boat, and His time to die had not yet come, fear should not have overtaken them.

Some may say, “Well, that’s easy for you to say. You weren’t there. A boat in a storm is a scary place. Haven’t you watched ‘Deadliest Catch?’” But Jesus called their fear a lack of faith.

What does that say about us as we approach the wind and waves of our lives. To be frightened, frustrated, or sad is a natural response. When confronted with certain situations, we are hard wired from birth to be frightened or to mourn. Even Jesus wept at Lazarus’ tomb – and He knew what was about to happen. Lazarus’ resurrection wasn’t a surprise to Jesus.

However, to panic, or to lose hope, or to rely on a lifetime of knowledge and skill to get you through the storm can only lead to disaster. You need to approach the difficulties of this life with the confidence to say to yourselves: “Be still, my soul,” and allow God to communicate His calm to you through His Word, through His Sacraments, and through His Holy Spirit.

No matter how confident or accomplished we think we are, all struggling and fighting against the sea of trouble is futile and vain. Only through the comfort of the Gospel, only through the peace and joy of the forgiveness of sins and the hope of the resurrection that Christ has communicated to us – only through this will our hearts be still. Amen.