

Mark 4:35–41

³⁵On that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, “Let’s go over to the other side.” ³⁶After leaving the crowd behind, the disciples took him along in the boat, just as he was. Other small boats also followed him. ³⁷A great windstorm arose, and the waves were splashing into the boat, so that the boat was quickly filling up. ³⁸Jesus himself was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. They woke him and said, “Teacher, don’t you care that we are about to drown?” ³⁹Then he got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” The wind stopped, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still lack faith?” ⁴¹They were filled with awe and said to one another, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”

Sermon for Pentecost 5, June 27, 2021 St. Paul’s Green Garden

Text: Mark 4:35-41

Theme: “Storms Come from Jesus’ Love”

In the name of Jesus, my dear fellow redeemed,

Storms can take you by surprise. They can happen unexpectedly. Even if we try to get out in front of the storm, so to speak, by insuring our cars, our homes, our property, we often are still mentally unprepared for them. When we go outdoors, fishing or camping, we try to prepare for storms by taking rain gear, and perhaps extra food and water. When we think of a storm no matter what kind, we often think of them in terms of how to survive them. We often think of storms as being something bad. But could it be that God thinks of storms in terms of his love for us. Even when they are especially destructive storms, God causes storms out of his love for us.

Nearly 20 years ago, on a certain Labor Day a powerful earthquake struck the small town of Ladysmith, WI where my parents lived at the time. Most of the town was leveled. By God’s great mercy no one was killed and most injuries were minor. Thought my parents’ home was spared it suffered minor damage and their garage was leveled. But because they were required to have insurance on their home they were able to rebuild an up-to-date larger garage to meet their needs. Now I am sure that my parents’ new garage was not the most important item on God’s list of good that came from that storm. But when you look back you could see the good that came from it, and as believers we can see God’s love in all of it. The people of the town pulled together. There was a spirit of cooperation as the town slowly rebuilt. Whether we like them or not, storms of all kinds are good because even in the worst

of them, as believers we can see God's love in them. They are part of God's love for us because in them we find he raises storms to expose our doubts and he stills them to remove our doubts.

It was early in Jesus' ministry. He had just finished a long day of teaching many parables by the Sea of Galilee. Obviously his disciples had been with him. It is likely that Jesus was out in a boat using it as a pulpit to preach to the crowds on the shore. It was probably late afternoon and Jesus directed his disciples to come along with him to the opposite shore. He had a storm prepared for them, and out of his love he wanted them to experience it. But why? What purpose could he have? Even after knowing Jesus for only a short time, these disciples may have thought they knew Jesus pretty well. But deep down in their hearts they doubted. Perhaps they didn't even know it. But these disciples needed to have their doubts exposed.

Now remember, these disciples are believers. When Jesus had told Nathaniel that he had seen him under a fig tree Nathaniel had told him, "**Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel.**" All 12 of them shared that faith. They had seen his power to make people who were blind to see and deaf persons hear. They had seen his power to help others by changing water into wine. They believed in his truth and that his teachings came from God. But DID they believe that Jesus had the power to control danger as well as to rescue and save them in time of need? In his love, Jesus allowed his disciples to go through this storm to strengthen his disciples faith in him to take care of them.

Imagine you are one of the disciples in that boat. You've been rowing had for more than an hour when the fierce storm comes up; wind, lightning, thunder. Waves are tossing your boat and filling it with water. You cant imagine how Jesus could be sleeping through all this. Finally, you and the other disciples cry out to Jesus, "Teacher, wake up! Wake up! Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" What a terrible accusation. Do you see how these disciples doubted Jesus' power to control the storm and to save them from danger. In the middle of danger they had the almighty Son of God right there with them in the boat and they were afraid. But then, Jesus allowed this storm because of his love. He wanted them to see that he is always present and takes care of us in any danger. And he wanted them to see their own doubts and how foolish they are. He wanted to make them come to grips not with the power of the storm, but their doubts about him. Their faith was small as long as they thought Jesus was small.

But even their doubting cries found their way to Jesus' heart of compassion. He heard their cries, he saw that the situation was life threatening. He spoke only two short commands and the waves quieted. Their air was calm again. Jesus has the final word. He has the ultimate control and power over every force and law of

nature. Human beings sometimes trick themselves into believing that we have such power.

About 450 B.C. the mighty Persian King Xerxes had the Mediterranean Sea whipped with chains. He was angry because he had build an enormous pontoon bridge and planned to have his army cross his bridge to gain an advantage in battle. But a huge storm had broken up his bridge. Because of that destruction his army did not defeat Greece as Xerxes had planned. Do you think that storm was just a coincidence? No, it was part of God's love. Xerxes failure to conquer Greece was just one more reason why Greece continued to have a major influence all over the known world well into the time of the Roman empire. Later Greek became the world language of trade, politics and education. It was also the original language of the New Testament. Even in secular world affairs God shows his love so that his gospel will be spread.

It often rolls off our tongues very easily, but God shows his love for you in your life and for our congregation as well. The disciples make Jesus look very small, as if he didn't care about them at all. Do we make Jesus look small? Do we really believe in his love for us and his power to get back, upright in the water when the ship of our lives, or our congregation is tilting? How often doesn't the Lord expose our doubt and fears in situations of the past in our personal lives, or within our congregation. We did not know how we would be able to fix our organ, but in his love our Lord gave us the necessary funds to do all necessary repairs and upgrades. Our Lord wants us to confess our doubts and let him take them and put them out of his sight forever, covered by his blood shed on the cross. Then in true repentance with the rest of your fellow Christians, turn to the Lord, trusting in his forgiveness. For it is in repentance and trusting in Him, that our Lord wants to make us into the ministering congregation he intends us to be.

One thing is true about every hurricane, every tornado, every thunderstorm. Hurricanes blow themselves out and thunderstorms lose energy and come to an end. So do the storms in our lives. An injury in an accident may be life-changing. But the storms in our lives do pass. Do we look at that as something natural? How could it be? Even when life's storms end, it is because of Jesus' love. Just as he raises them to expose our doubts, he also stills the storms of our lives to remove them.

You and I see from a distance what the disciples saw close up. A great calm followed Jesus' commands. The word of the almighty God is powerful. It is the same word of God that rescued the people of Israel at the Red Sea and supplied manna for their food in the wilderness. It is the same word of God that has protected you from a crippling accident. It is the same word of God that has

powerfully strengthened your faith. The king of the universe has the power to stop any storm.

But the disciples still doubted. **“He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still lack faith?” They were filled with awe...”** We should understand that Jesus was not rebuking them for the unbelief they had just displayed by their terror in the boat and their accusing question which implied that he didn’t care about them. Actually, he is asking about the fear and unbelief which he reads in their hearts after the storm is over. He asked, “Why ARE you so afraid? Do you STILL have no faith?” Fear and a lack of trust in Jesus to save them from earthly harm still loomed in their hearts. Here the disciples saw but still didn’t believe that Jesus has power over every storm, that may happen in our lives.

Does the fear, terror and unbelief of the disciples surprise you? Perhaps you’re thinking right now, **“If I saw a miracle like that I would never have another doubt that Jesus will always take care of me.”** But just think of how often you have seen God’s miracles—miracles that give us regular evidence that God does calm the storms of our lives. We have seen it in his mercy to Pastor Martens as he not only spared his life, but is now bringing him through recovery. And although it may be slow, God is granting him recovery. You can surely recall instances in your own life in which God’s power to save is evident. I have seen it first hand in the God-given faith of a young native Alaskan man who had a serious respiratory illness along with pneumonia. As his wife was weeping by his side he said to her, “I have Jesus, what more do I need.” I have seen God’s power to save when he saved a bus full of teenagers and adult chaperones on the way a WELS international Youth Rally from a serious accident that surely would have resulted in serious injuries and perhaps even death for some. Do we have any reason to doubt Jesus’ power to bring an end to any storm we may be experiencing in our lives right now, or in the future?

Jesus did this miracle to take away his disciples’ doubts and replace down with confident and bold trust in him. But how did he want them to trust in him? Simply as the one who would provide them with food and take away every painful moment in life so that nothing would ever hurt them? Is that the kind of trust he wanted them to have in him? No. Rather he wanted them to trust him as the Lord who plans and sends storms to our lives that are for our good and that will teach us the lessons he wants us to learn.

I remember one of those storms in my younger years. Back then someone told me, maybe God is allowing this trial in your life because he want to strengthen you for something much more difficult. At the time I dreaded that thought. But as the years have progressed I realized that what my fellow Christian said not only might be true, but I have also learned that God is my strength. Was God preparing me for the trials of covid and the difficulties and tension we had to deal with, and what

government regulations we had to follow? God works all things for the good of those who love him. Because of what we see here in Mark's gospel we can safely say God has brought us through earlier storms of life because of what he has done for us in crucifying his Son to save us from hell, I am confident he will bring us through every trial. It is part of his love for us.

You see, Jesus showed these disciples his power to save them from this storm because he wanted them to see him as the God who could save them from anything and everything. He wanted them to see the power of the almighty God displayed in him. One of the things we don't like about storms in our lives is that they almost always bring about change in our lives and we don't like change especially when we can't control it. Our sinful self likes smooth sailing. We like to think we don't need God." But Jesus was really preparing the disciples for a day in the future. One day they were going to see him die on a cross. And no doubt they said, **this was it**. This was beyond Jesus' power to overcome. But on that day, that Easter day they were going to see HIM risen from the horrible, maiming, disfiguring death of the cross. Then they would know and believe in his power to bring good from evil. Then they could see that it was all part of God's love for all people, his love that wants to bring us to heaven.

Jesus has stilled storms in our lives before. Now he has the same questions for us. Why are you so afraid that Jesus is not with us in our trials? What do you put your faith in? Do you think Jesus is sleeping right now? I can assure you he is not sleeping. He does not want us to give up the ship, because he has not given up. If he had he never would have died for us. Can you tell what he will do to still the storm you are now enduring in your life? No, we can't see the future. But we know that he is the only storm-stiller we can trust.

Now it is time for us to put our trust in him alone and do his work. There are other people who need to know as you and I do, that the storms of life are part of Jesus' great love for us. Amen.