

"Even the Wind and Sea Obey Him"

21 June 2009

Mark 4:35-41

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

[Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church](#)

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On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Prayer.

On February 18th of this year
 I found myself on a boat on the Sea of Galilee;
 At the very location of our Gospel lesson for this morning.
 The morning was spent on the shore and surrounding hillside
 Touring various sites where Jesus taught, healed, and visited.
 The afternoon was damp and overcast, with winds gusting from the west.
 About 40 of us had boarded a boat near Capernaum
 And set off into the middle of the lake,
 Where our Jewish captain cut the engine and allowed us to drift
 Silently, and alone with the wind and the waves.
 I let the moment sink in and resonate with each pilgrim on board.
 After a few minutes I rose, as planned,
 And began to preach,
 Drawing upon all the Gospel narratives of Jesus on the lake.
 After reading each,
 I asked the group,
 "what is the take-away?"
 I came to our passage for today,
 Read it allowed at the top of my voice
 Such that the words were carried over the sound of the wind and waves.
 I got to the place where Jesus spoke,
 Turned my back to the people,
 Faced the lake, and boomed like I imagine Jesus did,

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"Peace! Be still!"
 And there was peace,
 And there was stillness.
 The waves subsided
 And the wind ceased.
 Please know, it wasn't me.
 It wasn't anything I said or did.
 I cannot take credit for the circumstances of peace and stillness.
 It was all God.
 I was so startled
 I wouldn't have believed it myself,
 Except others came to me afterward
 Proclaiming what they heard and saw.
 Peace!
 Be still!
 Skeptics may try to explain it away; but
 I know this story is true
 Because of my personal experience
 On the Sea of Galilee four months ago.

This sermon is about Jesus,
 Not about Todd.
 So, I ask you the same question,
 As I asked my fellow pilgrims in February:
 "What is the take away?"
 What does this Gospel narrative
 Do to you?
 How does it change your life?
 (field questions)

The take away for me
 Includes the following four points:

1. Jesus is Lord over the cosmos.
 The Lord created the earth and the heavens
 And all that is in them.
 The Lord transcended from heaven
 And stepped into the earth
 When we failed to remain faithful to his covenant
 And failed to follow his laws.
 The Lord sent his Son, Jesus,
 Who is one and the same as the Lord of creation,
 And one and the same as the Holy Spirit with us.

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Everything is the Lord's.
 Everything.
 Nothing is beyond
 The authority
 Or sovereignty of God.
 The Lord knows all things,
 Loves always,
 And seeks for the best for each of his children.
 Wind and waves?
 Mere trivial details
 In the sight of God.
 Physics, geology, and meteorology?
 Biology, mathematics, and the scientific method?
 Tools the Lord uses to keep the world ordered.
 If God has the power and creative intelligence to
 Attach two hydrogen atoms to each oxygen atom to form water,
 Is there any question that God could cause the waves to be stilled?
 Peace!
 Be still!

2. The second take away for me is:
 Jesus is Lord over our fears.
 What are you afraid of?
 The disciples feared for their very lives.
 It was dark,
 They were in the middle of a storm,
 And they were taking on water.
 What are you afraid of?
 Losing a job?
 Having cancer return?
 A child who is making some poor decisions?
 A parent who is frail and vulnerable?
 Anticipating the death of a loved one?
 Are you afraid of dying?
 What are you afraid of?
 You may not feel his presence
 But Jesus is with you.
 You may not be aware of his power,
 But know that Jesus loves you,
 Wants the best for you,
 And works to bring about the best possible outcome.
 How can this be, we ask,
 When we see the terrible suffering and pain of this world?

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Jesus knows the bigger picture.
 God has greater plans,
 The Spirit is at work in the lives of others
 Which stretch beyond what we will ever know
 Or what we could ever fathom.
 Placing our trust in God
 May be the most courageous act of faith
 Any person may undertake.
 Placing ourselves in the hand of Jesus,
 During those times of greatest anxiety,
 Fear, and despair,
 Reflects a faith
 Far greater than the size of a tiny mustard seed.
 We know that when the storms of life are raging
 Jesus will wake, speak, and still the wind and the waves.
 Jesus is Lord of our trials.
 He bears our burdens.
 He suffered himself
 To take away our suffering.
 What are you afraid of?
 Peace!
 Be still!

3. Turning to Jesus builds faith.
 We have the luxury of choice,
 As western, affluent Americans,
 We have a choice
 Where we spend our time,
 What we invest in,
 And where we place our trust.
 One can choose to believe in nature and creation,
 The Buddha or Mohammad,
 We can choose to stay at home,
 Wake late and read the Sunday paper,
 But we choose,
 - We choose -
 To follow Jesus
 And place our whole trust in him.
 We choose to turn to him
 In times of plenty and in times of need.
 Jesus! Wake up! The disciples cried.
 "Do you not care that we are perishing?"

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Of course he does.
 He cared enough to get up and save their life.
 It takes faith to first turn to him.
 Once you turn to him
 Faith builds,
 More is added to what God first planted.
 Faith begets faith.
 Faith builds upon faith.
 Turning to Jesus
 Not only builds faiths
 But transforms one from being of this world
 Into becoming one of God's world.
 Turning to Jesus
 Turns one into becoming more like Jesus.
 Peace!
 Be still!

4. Turning to Christ fills one with awe.
 We are flesh, born of this earth.
 But when we turn to Christ
 When we approach our Savior
 We come to a God who has shown
 A propensity to have one foot firmly planted in heaven
 And one foot firmly plant on earth.
 It wasn't possible for God to have created
 And to adopt a hands off,
 Transcendent approach.
 Our God isn't like other gods,
 Content to remain in a distant realm.
 Our God has chosen to be approachable
 Relational
 Connected to all God's children
 Excluding none.
 The God of the cosmos is just as interested in you
 As he is with the creation of the next galaxy.
 You are just as important
 As the biggest issues that our Lord faces.
 When Jesus commands the wind and waves
 Peace!
 Be still!
 He is making a stand,
 Taking a stand,

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For you and for me.
This realization is humbling
And should want to drive even the strongest to their knees.
It is simply awesome.

Peace!
Be still!
Jesus commands.
The wind and the wave obey.
What is the take away?
Jesus is Lord of all creation.
Jesus is Lord over all our fears.
Turning to Jesus builds faith.
And turning to Jesus fills one with awe.
Amen.

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