

Prayer of the Day:

O Lord, our God, govern the nations on earth and direct the affairs of this world so that your Church may worship you in peace and joy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. Because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Alleluia. (Galatians 4:6)

Sermon:

Last week, we considered the words which directly precede our lesson today. As we plumbed the depths of that section, we saw that our God was always in control when it came to the work of His body, the Church. Today, we will dial in the microscope a bit more and see that it is not just the corporate organization of the Church, nor the important public work that goes on within it that grabs God's attention. He actually pays attention to and cares for each one of us. Even as the storms of life rage around us, pointing us back to His promises and demonstrating His unsurpassed love for us. As Jesus calms the storm, we will steal the words of our next hymn as Jesus speaks to us all, **Be Still, My Soul, the Lord Is on Your Side!**

As our lesson opens there is nothing that is at all out of the ordinary. Jesus has been teaching as usual and as evening approaches, it is time to move on. Jesus knows the demoniac is in need of help on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, so he tells the disciples, men who have seen a boat or two, "*Let us go to the other side.*" They gather a little fleet, enough to get everyone in the party across and head out.

Of course, that is when everything goes south. Whipping over the tops of the hills down into the valley is a furious squall a storm and the waves do not just make the water choppy; they break over the boats filling them with water. The experienced fishermen know that they are in trouble. Panic begins to set in and faith, well, let us just say it is shaken a bit. They have seen Jesus do remarkable things. He might be able to help but as they look around, He is sleeping in the stern. They wake Him up and instead of begging for help seem to chastise their Lord, "*Teacher, don't you care if we drown?*"

It is always easy to beat up on the disciples and the questions that come from Jesus are very legitimate, "*Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?*" But perhaps we are not the best finger pointers when we survey this lesson. After all, you've been there? No, not on the sea of Galilee in an old school fishing vessel taking on water in a storm, but in the storms of life. It's no fun! No fun, to try and figure out what the next step is when the doctors say, "cancer". No fun when the news comes down that the paycheck is no more because the company has folded quicker than a bad hand in a poker game. No fun, when the squalls of life storm in over the hills of our

Mark 4:35-41

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. 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?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. 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!"

comfortable existence and swamp the boat we figured was unsinkable. How do you react in those moments? Ever find yourself turning to the creator of all things and demanding answers? “Hey God, wake up already! Don’t you see that the troubles down here require Your attention? Don’t you care about us in our struggles, in a world that is upside down and crazy?”

Fact is, the disciples should have known better. Back in chapter 1 of the book of Mark, Jesus had called them to come and follow and He would make them fishers of men (1:17). That’s going to become increasingly difficult if they are at the bottom of the sea of Galilee. Jesus has healed the leper and the paralytic, cast out demons and demolished disease wherever He has gone with them. Yes, even recently, Jesus had told them those parables on faith and trust in God Who held everything in His almighty hands.

Ah, but then, perhaps we too should know better. We have blessing the disciples could only have dreamed of. God’s Word readily available at our fingertips, digital or paper copy. All of the truths of the New Testament carefully spelled out by the inspiration of God, the entire history of our salvation played out and written down, regularly recalled and emphasized in worship, applied to our lives should we open our eyes or ears in sermons and countless commentaries and Bible classes. And what does God promise there? In Job, he flexed His muscles this morning, for all the times we question His wisdom with puny human minds which struggle to see past ourselves and our selfish needs. In 2nd Corinthians, He reminds us that the Gospel message changes everything. The World and its storms no longer matter, no longer will win not since Jesus’ cross has already won for us that we would live every moment for Him. There is no reason to fear, for even if we close our eyes in death, yes even that storm is a passing blip on the radar of our eternity, lived in paradise with God forever.

While the disciples fell into full tilt panic on the sea, Jesus stood up. God doesn’t need to sleep, He had always been aware of what would happen as they crossed the sea. Who knows maybe he had even dreamed all of this up, certainly He had allowed it to happen, to test the disciples and to teach them a lesson which can only be learned at the edge of disaster and struggle, their ultimate help is was in Him.

“*Quiet! Be still!*” the wind and the waves completely calmed. Things were never out of the control of God even as surely as they were never in the hands of the disciples flailing in the storm. Jesus words are meant for the storm. But as we hear them, perhaps they have a similar effect on our hearts and minds.

Are you at all concerned these days? Maybe you wonder if the love of most has grown cold. Maybe you wonder if Christianity is on the brink of collapse as the wolves of unbelief press in on every side decrying its existence, shaming it for holding to the teaching given by none other than God Himself. Perhaps you are concerned for Your kids and the world they will grow up in, the storms which may rage against them. Perhaps it feels like the boat is about to go under swamped in the brokenness of life. None of it means God doesn’t care. The opposite, perhaps he letting you struggle so that You will stop relying on yourself and start trusting in Him, His love, His forgiveness and salvation won and provided for you whether you struggle or not. After all He once said, “*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world* (John 16:33).”

It's not an easy lesson to learn. It's one we will need to work on every bit as much as we will need God's gracious reminders of all His promises, of the eternal love for us which He displays in the cross of Jesus Christ. In all things, in joy and in sorrow, may we sing as we will in just a few moments. **Be Still, My Soul, the Lord Is on Your Side!** Amen!