

Written Copy: Mark 4:38-41 “Who Is This Man to You?”

5th Sunday @ Pentecost: Proper 7

Sunday, June 23rd, 2024

Text: Mark 4:38-41

³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

The Text's Intent:

To show us that Jesus is the God who controls all of nature by His powerful word. That He is God incarnate who comes to protect and save, and things are never out of His control even when He is asleep. To show that Jesus is the God who cares who does all that is necessary so that His disciples as well as us have saving faith that protects us from those enemies that would seek to destroy us now and for eternity.

Focus Statement:

Who is Jesus? He is God incarnate, the One who created and sustains all things by His powerful word. He is the One who used the waters of the flood to cleanse and purify, and then commanded them to return to their place. He is the God who showed His disciples how much He cares by ending the storm with a word of command. He is the God who came to save them from the greater enemies of sin, death, and the devil by becoming the atoning sacrifice for all mankind. He is the God who uses the waters of baptism to cleanse us from our sin, making His atoning sacrifice for me. He is the One who rose again and thereby promises us that Garden of eternal perfection to come and makes us good enough to be welcomed there.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Who are we? We are those who can be slow in our prayer life to turn to Him every day for direction and guidance. We are those who live in a fallen world cursed after the Fall, where problems and suffering will certainly arise, yet we think that all should be perfect, or at least not as bad as it is now. We are those who when overwhelming problems come, and He doesn't remove them or deal with them in the manner we think He should, wonder and accuse Him of not caring. We are those who are slow to remember and thank Him for all the ways in the past He has helped and protected us.

What the hearer should do as a result:

We are His children who will still suffer through problems in this world, both great and small. But we are those who have His protective power and presence watching over us 24-7. We are those for whom He allows troubles to come to keep our heads and hearts turned toward Him so we live with Him now and will live forever with Him in the Eternal Garden Paradise.

Subject Sentence: Jesus is Creator God Who Comes to Save Eternally

Introduction: Who Are We?

In our Gospel Lesson the disciples ask an intriguing question: **Mark 4:41** “**Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?**” As we hear this, what are we, living in the 21st century with the complete witness of the New Testament in front of us tempted to answer? “C’mon guys! This is Jesus, the Son of God! Haven’t you all figured this out yet? He can do all kinds of supernatural stuff!” But in their defense, if we were there in their shoes, on that boat, after that storm, we would probably be wondering and saying the same thing. Even today, as we live out our lives in a sinfully broken world, it’s a worthy question to ask, “Who is Jesus to me, and for me?” And to answer that question accurately we need to first dwell on another question, “Who are we to Him?”

So, who are we? We are like the women who lost the love of her life, her husband of many years. She sits at home alone, her kids seemingly too far away to visit her. Her body is growing old, and her mobility is greatly decreasing. Her eyesight is beginning to fail. She wonders who this God is who took her loving husband from her, left her all alone, and is slowly taking from her the ability to see and get around.

We are like the man who lost his job due to downsizing. He looks and looks for another one that can support his family, but there seemingly is nothing available. He works two part time jobs and barely makes ends meet. But that leaves him with no time to spend with his family. He wonders “Where is this God?” when he prays for help.

We are like the young adult who, after graduating from college, can’t find any work in the field they went to school for. They feel like God guided them down this path but now has abandoned them. They look around at all the problems facing the world, and all the violence and crime, the natural disasters, and wonder where God is in all this. They wonder who this God is who would leave things in such a mess and can’t seeming to lift a finger to help make things better in the world around them or for them personally.

Who are we? At times we are somewhat like each of those people. We are also like those disciples in the boat with Jesus. And perhaps what God had to teach them in the Gospel Lesson is something He wants us to learn and hold fast to as well.

Who Is Jesus to the Disciples in the Gospel Lesson?

Our Gospel Lesson begins in the same setting that our lesson last week takes place. Jesus is teaching alongside the sea and a crowd is gathering. So that He can better address them, and all can hear Him, and so the crush of people doesn’t push Him into the sea, He commands a boat and has them push off a little from the shore. This makes Him a little higher than the crowd, and sound travels better over water. From this vantage point He begins to teach them.

He begins teaching them parables about the Kingdom of Heaven-the reign and rule of God among them, which is what He comes to bring. He teaches them that His reign and rule comes when the Gospel is planted like a seed in hearts that have been worked up by the Spirit and made ready for them to hear it. It grows in hearts and lives like a seed planted in the ground. It grows many times with no outward sign through the mysterious yet powerful work of the Spirit working in those who believe. It starts out small like a mustard seed, yet it grows to become the most important thing in our life and is used by Him to create and sustain faith in those around us that we share it with.

When evening comes, He tells them **“Let’s push off and head over to the other side of the sea.”** They send the crowd away and take Him with them, just as He is, probably tired from His long day of teaching. And as they head out, this very human Jesus of Nazareth lays His head down on a cushion at the rear of the boat and falls asleep.

Even though it is evening, they are accomplished fisherman who are used to navigating a boat at night on the Sea of Galilee, since that was usually the best time to fish. They head out in confidence, but soon their confidence disappears. A sudden storm comes up. Now they would be used to sudden storms since the geographical features of the Sea of Galilee makes it prone to them. But this one comes very fast and hard. The wind is blowing violently, enough to threaten to capsize their boat. And on top of that the waves are huge and powerful, crashing into their boat and spilling over the side. Quickly they begin to take on water. These experienced fishermen are now scared that they are about to perish in this storm. That these experienced fishermen are fearing for their lives tell us just how bad this storm had gotten so quickly.

They look around and there is Jesus, in the back of the boat, still asleep on His cushion. They think to themselves, “C’mon now Jesus! How can you sleep through all this crashing and tossing about?” With irritation that is fueled by their fear they go back and say to Him **(Mark 4:38) “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”** You can go ahead and read into this question sarcasm and irritability.

Now the question is why did they wake Him up and say this? What did they expect Him to do? As we consider their reaction at the end, it’s safe to assume they didn’t expect Him to do anything miraculous. Perhaps they wanted Him to man a bucket and help shovel water back out of the bottom of the boat or help with the oars trying to keep them from capsizing. Perhaps at the very least they wanted Him to pray for help to the Father, seeing Him as having a connection to God that they did not have.

But Jesus reacts in a way that they did not expect. **Mark 4:39** ³⁹ **And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.** This is truly amazing! This is powerful! This is supernatural! All Jesus has to do is give the voice of command, and everything changes. The wind immediately stops trying to capsize the boat. The waves immediately stop battering and overflowing into the boat. And what was a chaotic and life-threatening situation immediately becomes peaceful, calm, and safe.

This leaves them understandably amazed, flabbergasted, and terrified. **Mark 4:41** **And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”** Now don't think they are missing the implications of what they have just witnessed. This Jesus standing before them is clearly a man. Yet He has just done something that no man has the power to do. He has demonstrated the power and authority that belong only to God. It's the same power and authority that the LORD God rhetorically brings to Job's mind in our Old Testament Lesson. This is the same power that created and sustains this earth. This is the power that created the land and the sea, and still controls them no matter how violent they may become. This is the power that moved water to cleanse the earth in Noah's flood, and then at His word of command made it to recede according to His timetable. This man standing before them has exhibited a power that no other man has ever had or will have again. And it makes them terrified, and confused, because Jesus is something that has never been before nor ever will be repeated. He is the Creating and Sustaining God who has cloaked Himself in humanity, becoming truly human while at the same time remaining truly divine.

Who Is Jesus to Us and For Us?

Who is this Jesus to them? Who is He to us? He is the Creator God who has come to save, who has come to restore peace to us, His Creation. That is the reason He comes and brings His reign and rule to us.

Now we need to understand that this peace is often not what we expect or think it should be. Even after Jesus gave this command on the Sea of Galilee, storms would continue to pop up and happen. A little while later in Mark's Gospel you can read of another storm on this same Sea where Jesus walks on water. Jesus came to bring the peace and restoration that showed itself in the healing of all kinds of sickness and diseases. Yet people would continue to get sick after He ascended, just as they do today. Jesus came to cast out demons, yet people continue to be afflicted to varying degrees by the Satanic foe who is still at work among us. Jesus brought people back from death to life. And yet all those people whose lives He touched would still, in the end, suffer bodily death, just as you and I will.

Who is this Jesus? He is the Creator God who took on humanity to bring the peace, healing, and restoration that is far greater than anything we face in this world. He came to use all the supernatural powers He possess as God to do the greater miracle of becoming the atoning sacrifice for every man, woman, and child who has ever lived, is alive now, and are yet to be born. He did this by taking upon Himself all our sins, all the ways we doubt who He is, doubt His love and care for us, all the times we accuse Him of being unloving and uncaring. He took them all to the cross where He suffered and died to remove them from you. He came to take all God's wrath that you and I rightly deserve and be crushed by it in your place. And He came back to life, rising from the dead, never to die again, so that you might know His sacrifice on your behalf was accepted by the Father, and you are now right with God, and that there is the resurrection in your future too because of all He has done.

Who is this Jesus? He is God Almighty who created and controls all water to work for His good purposes on your behalf. He is the God who sent the Holy Spirit to make the waters of your baptism a cleansing flood that continues to wash your sins to the cross as fast as you can confess and repent of them. He is the God who came to take up residence in your heart and life. He is watching over you 24-7, never falling asleep on the watch. He knows what you will face today and tomorrow and is already at work preparing you for what you will face. He is the God who has protected you from disasters you never knew were about to befall you if not for Him and His mighty angels protecting you. He is the God that uses all His mighty power for your benefit to make sure you join Him in the eternity to come.

Who is Jesus? He is the God who does allow troubles and afflictions to come upon us, but not without reason. He is the God who to this day moderates their severity and is using all the nastiness that the world and the devil want to heap upon us. They want to move us to fall away from faith in Christ. But He is using these things not for our detriment but for our good. According to the work of His mighty hand those bad, hard, painful things become our reason not to fall away but to turn back in faith toward Him. Certainly, Jesus could've kept that storm from coming, or at least made it not as severe. But that storm which threatened their lives moved the disciples from fear to faith. They would begin to see Jesus in a new light, not just a Rabbi, but as something much more. It was all part of His continuing work in their lives so that after the resurrection they might finally get it, so that they would come to understand that this human being called Jesus of Nazareth is truly the mighty Creator God who knows what is best for them and allows all that need to happen for their eternal good. And that's who He is to you and me as well. He is the God who does care so very much that He gave His life for you and sent His Spirit to call you into the Father's family. He is the mighty God who is to this day walking with you through all the problems that are besetting you. He is walking with you all the way to eternal life to come.

As His Disciples Who Are We Called to Be?

So, who are we? We are His Church, those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, sent by God the Father, who also sent God the Holy Spirit into our hearts and lives to create and sustain faith in all three members of the Trinity.

We are His precious and beloved children who are called to realize that in this world we will continue to face hard, difficult, times of suffering and sadness. We will experience the loss of things and loved ones, and these things will hurt, making our hearts ache at times. We will face things that will cause fear in our lives and make us worry. All of these things continue to happen in a world that is fallen in which nothing works as God originally intended them to work. A world that is filled with death which God never intended to happen. A world which is filled with hate and violence which God never wanted His creatures to experience. A world where storms and drought and famine and sickness continue to happen, none of which were part of God's original plan. A world that is filled with sinners, of which you and still are on a daily basis, adding to the dysfunction, pain, and grief all around us.

But you and I are those who are called by faith in Jesus Christ. We are those who have a Lord and Savior who loves us so much He gave all that He had to save us. We are those whom He calls to turn to Him daily, lifting our problems, fears, and cares to Him, while also lifting our thanksgiving for all our prayers of healing and saving that He has answered. We are called to maintain our end of this faith relationship we have with Him by reading and studying His Word. We called to come and be fed by Him and restored by Him in His Real Presence here in the Divine Service. We are called to be His hands and feet as ministers of His love and care to others. And we do all this through His Spirit who remains in us and with us.

Conclusion

Who are we in Christ? We are that woman who is mourning the passing of her husband and dealing with the loneliness that comes with his passing. But we don't suffer this alone. We have a God who knows the pain we feel, as He watched His own Son suffer and die. We have the Holy Spirit with us who comforts us through the words of Scripture and is still at work providing for our needs. We are like the man who is struggling to make ends meet and care for his family, yet we don't do this alone. The Holy Spirit is with us, and by His hand and supernatural working, some of which we may see, but most is beyond our comprehension, we do make ends meet. By His work and power our family is cared for and protected. We are like that young adult who looks around and sees all the dysfunction in the world through sad and cynical eyes. Yet we hold fast to this truth, that our Lord Jesus Christ is at work in all these things in ways that are beyond our understanding. He allows bad things to happen and uses them to call people to faith and to sustain faith, turning them back to Him as the only One who can help with storms of life that are beyond us.

Who are we? We are the believers in Christ, His Church. We are called to reach out to each other and struggle through these life issues together. We are called to use what He has given to us in our hands to help our brother and sister, who in return is to do the same for us. We are the Church who in all things is being kept in faith so that we confess Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the One who is reigning and ruling over all things now, and will return on the Last Day in all His glory to open the door for each one of you to a paradise that is beyond our imagination, where all the hurts, and pains, and fears are gone forever. A paradise that will be yours forever. Amen.