

Who is This?

Pent 4 June 24, 2012 Church of the Reformation – Lutheran, Affton, MO

By Rev. David C. Pelsue

Mark 4:35–41 ³⁵On that day, **when evening had come**, [Jesus] said to them, **“Let us go across to the other side.”** ³⁶And leaving the crowd, **they took him with them** in the boat, just as he was. And **other boats** were with him. ³⁷And a **great windstorm** arose, and **the waves were breaking into the boat**, so that **the boat was already filling.** ³⁸But **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?”** ³⁹And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, **“Peace! Be still!”** And **the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.** ⁴⁰He said to them, **“Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”** ⁴¹And **they were filled with great fear** and said to one another, **“Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?”**

This week we continue in Mark’s gospel but there is a change of venue for Jesus and the disciples. Mark wraps up a section on Jesus’ teaching in parables and begins a series of miracles of which this is the first. It is Jesus’ idea to depart, but it seems His disciples had to pry Him away from the crowd exhausted as He must’ve been. Our text says, **“They Took Him With Them just as He was . . .”** – probably falling asleep. The disciples see Him as a man with limitations as they have. (which is true according to Jesus’ human nature). And Jesus does settle in on a cushion in the stern of the boat and promptly falls asleep. The important thing, for now, is that *“they took Jesus with them.”* That phrase makes you stop and think – when you leave in the morning for work, for school, even vacation on Monday, Tues., Wed., or Fri., do you take Jesus with you? Do you pause to read Portals of Prayer, or listen to KFYO 850 AM, or read an e-mail devotion from LHM? Do you “take Jesus with you” when you leave? Perhaps for you it’s like He’s asleep in the stern, but do you realize He IS with you. We all have a tendency to “leave Jesus behind” when we leave church on Sunday a.m. Through the week our prayer & devotional life tends to slip away. We often fail to realize that Jesus is with us never to leave us nor forsake us and working all things together for those who trust Him. We forget Jesus is with us just like the 12 who had Him in the boat, but forgot about Him asleep in the stern.

We also can relate with the disciples in our text when the fierce windstorm quickly blows up (as they are apt to do on the Sea of Galilee) – after all, there’s a 10,000 ft. drop in elevation from the Mountains some 30 miles to the North. Storms develop very quickly there as they tend to blow up in our life. One minute it’s smooth sailing, the next minute we’re swamped. In our text the waves are breaking into the boat & the boat is filling with water and the

disciples are in a panic trying to find Jesus who is asleep in the back of the boat.

They wake Him shouting, **“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”** That’s a pretty serious question, rolled up with an accusation, they fire at Jesus! If ever a question could be fashioned to strike at the very heart of Jesus’ purpose, this is it! The very reason Jesus came is to give His life that they (the discs’) and we might not perish – not just physically, but eternally! The storms come up quickly in our lives too - A mom & dad with a child diagnosed with serious illness; the breadwinner of a family loses their job; a loved one languishes in a coma; a family threatened with foreclosure; - “Lord, don’t You care!?”

We all in the midst of the storms of life are guilty of the same sin as the disciples, namely assuming or thinking that Jesus does not care if we perish. Still, these questions filled with doubt and unbelief as they are – they are still requests, petitions, prayers directed at the one and only One who can do something about it – the Creator of heaven and earth in the person of Jesus (though the disciples are ignorant of this so far). At this point Jesus awakens & does not start upbraiding the 12 for their bad seamanship, nor does He shout orders at them regarding what they are to do to secure the swamping craft, rather, Jesus directly orders the wind and the sea what to do, **“Peace! Be still!”**

Let’s freeze frame right here and ponder this. If Jesus is a mere man and ordinary guy, how ludicrous is it to shout to a storm & say, “cease and desist!” hoping to accomplish something? What we would expect the text to read next is, “and several of the disciples fell overboard laughing.” Instead, we read, “the wind ceased and there was a great calm.” When in the real world would you ever expect THAT to be the outcome? This is not some X-men movie. This is what really happened on the sea of Galilee early 1st century AD. Then Jesus rebukes the 12 saying, **“Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”** (vs 40)

Flash forward to the storms in our lives. Just when we think it will never end and our prayers become fervent and frantic, finally and suddenly the storm ceases and the great calm occurs. Our prayer is answered usually in ways unexpected and unforeseen. And we suddenly

recognize our lack of trust in God throughout the ordeal and as we look back we can now see that hand of God in it which we had not seen before. With eyes of faith opened we are immediately aware of the presence of God to save us. The fear of our previous circumstances, like the wind changing directions, transforms into the fear of God – in light of direct evidence of His working.

The disciples witness creation responding to the word of the man in the boat with them, Jesus. The fear of the creation becomes the fear of the creator. The words of God to Job in our O.T. reading come to mind.

who shut in the sea with doors

when it burst out from the womb,
⁹ **when I made clouds** its garment
and thick darkness its swaddling band,
¹⁰ and prescribed limits for it
and set bars and doors,
¹¹ and said, ‘**Thus far shall you come, and no farther,**
and **here shall your proud waves be stayed**’?

So, in our text, the 12 look at one another and say, “**Who then is this? that even wind and sea obey him?**” they haven’t quite put it all together, but the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom is starting to dawn on them. You and I have the benefit of knowing the end of Mark’s gospel at the foot of the cross, Jesus having breathed His last and the centurion says, “Truly this is the Son of God.”

Take out your bulletin and look at the cover. What is it that the disciples are clinging to in the picture? The mast and boom of that square rigged boat . . . It’s a cross. And that is where we need to go in every time of need - - to the cross. For sin, there is forgiveness; For doubt, there is faith; In Baptism the cross was placed on your forehead and heart; Under the shadow of the cross Jesus feeds us His own body and blood. The cross of Christ is the real evidence

that Jesus is with you in the storm and He will bring calm in the end . . . in His way, and in His time. Together we can proclaim with the Psalmist in our gradual for the day,

“Great is the LORD, and greatly | to be praised,*

and his greatness is un- | searchable.

On your wondrous works, I will | meditate.*

and I will declare your | greatness” AMEN