

Mark 4:35-41

I am pretty sure the first sermon I ever wrote in seminary was on this text. Thank the Lord you don't have to hear it. The only poor people of God who had to hear it were the 20 or so others in my homiletics (preaching) class. And I had to sit through all their first sermons, so I suppose we are even.

As I worked on a sermon for this text again this week (and, yes, I've preached this text at other times in my 11 years as a Pastor), I couldn't help but feel somewhat unsatisfied with it.

Which is odd, because it seems easy enough: a scary thing is happening, they call to Jesus, he saves them! Boom! Jesus is shown to be the strong Lord of creation, but he is also merciful to save. Law and Gospel. Viola! Just have to fluff it up a bit and we are getting to brunch early today.

But not so fast, sorry!

What about Jesus rebuking them for their lack of faith? You might think: "Oh that's easy, pastor. Go back to seminary. It comforts us to see Jesus will save even those with doubt and fear like us!" Amen!

And then we make the application point: he may not calm all your storms here and now, but this shows he is the one to look for for ultimate deliverance and who is strong and merciful to see us

to his eternal kingdom where wind and wave or fear will never hurt us again. Bada boom, who's having the pancakes?

Congratulations you just heard the same sermon 20 of us wrote in homiletics 1. And you know what? Those points are pretty good, aren't they? And true!

So why was I unhappy at 11pm last night? Because something bugs me about this text... Jesus rebukes them for their lack of faith, and yes it's beautiful to see he still saves them, we will find comfort in that again. But let me ask you this: if they were faithful (instead of faithless as we see they were) what *would or should they have done?* They should have not be afraid right? Which means: they wouldn't have woke Jesus up! And how does that play out? If they didn't wake him, does he wake up when the water reaches the stern? Or would God had delivered them before then? But if so, then these seasoned fisherman were scared for no good reason and it was just a short squall? Or, I dare say: *should they have not been afraid even as the boat sank and even as they drowned in the dark waters, faithful and trusting their God would see them even thru that?!*

“Why are you so afraid?” Jesus asks them.

“I don't know Jesus, maybe because of the scary storm!” Jesus says, “no, that's not a good enough reason to fear.”

What about us. Why are we so afraid. And we might answer: “Because of inflation and culture wars and real wars and cancer and car accidents!” And I wonder if this text invites us to think that *maybe those aren't reasons enough to be afraid either.*

And now this text is anything but simple.

It's a challenge. It's an exhortation. It's a rebuke.

And now we are afraid of our faithlessness, “maybe God will be mad at me now, and not save me because I am so afraid of other things which means I have little faith!” But don't you see that's not even a good enough reason to fear because Jesus already saved them in their faithlessness and fear. He will save you. So what are you afraid of again?

It's an ironically scary proposition to be un-afraid because we can't really control it. Seems a bit unfair to be honest. “God, I don't want to be afraid, but I can't help it!”

But the teacher who challenges the winds and waves and us... don't we know that he knows more of this scary world than we do? He drank the cup of wrath, he sweat as blood in the garden, and yet from the stern in the storm to the cross and tomb he remains the faithful One. Brave through nails spear and lies and corruption and betrayal and insults and painful slow death. Yes this One bids us to not be afraid.

For he has triumphed over wind and wave and grave! There is truly nothing that can keep us from his saving work and therefore there is nothing to truly fear.

The disciples figured this out, by grace. They were so scared of a storm today in our text, but then are each so brave to die for him. Yes, they knew he never promised some miraculous escape from each imprisonment each execution. Other than the miraculous escape to eternal life. That is promised. That they had seen in Jesus' resurrection and that drove out their fear. The Risen Lord drives out fear.

And we are not promised that all our storms will calm here and now, but we, in the face of the scary world, have everything we need: we have Jesus. He does care that we are perishing even in the midst of the storms when he seems to be dozing, because, he has already worked to save! He has already shed his blood! He would not do that if he didn't care. He does care that a world is dying and so he has worked and is working to save. And that saving work is yours - all Christ's promises are yours. You have ears, hear. You have been seen through the waters of baptism, and his blood is for you. You need not fear.

But if you do find yourself afraid, and you want to say that guilty prayer "Lord I know it's been a while and I haven't said enough 'thank yous' and I only pray a lot when something is wrong..." You know that prayer? I do to. When that comes along- pray it! Say that prayer. Confess your guilt and fear, confess you aren't as faithful as you ought- and find the Faithful One, Jesus, with mercy and power to save even sinners like us. And you just may find then, in the storms, this good teacher is making you stronger, or making you lean on him more. That doesn't mean it's

fun or easy, but he has walked a hard road to Golgotha before, he can see you through yours. He will do it, he is the faithful one, he has taken your place. So be brave out there in a scary world. And I dare say, in a scary world - rest easy in the storms. There is no need to fear. The faithful One has done all that is needful and will see you to an eternal home. Amen.