Rev. Beth J. Costlow

4th Sunday after Pentecost/Lectionary 12/Proper 7

Mark 4:35-41

June 20, 2021

Prepared for: Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Greenville SC

* Summarizing today’s gospel:
	+ It’s evening, the end of a long day for Jesus and the disciples.
		- A day spent telling stories—we call them parables—to a crowd.
			* Even explaining the purpose of these parables: They’re teaching stories.
	+ Finally, exhausted, Jesus and the disciples climb into a boat, “To go across to the other side.”
		- Exhausted, Jesus curls up in a corner of the boat and falls asleep.
	+ A storm comes. Big enough to make the disciples—some of whom are experienced fishermen—anxious.
		- Jesus sleeps on.
		- Until they wake him. And his words bring the storm to an end.
* It’s a familiar story. Maybe so familiar it’s hard to hear it anew. But it is my vocation to try!
* By this point in Mark’s Gospel the disciples have already witnessed Jesus’ care for those in need. Miraculous care. Even for strangers.
	+ He expelled an unclean spirit from a man.
	+ He healed Simon’s mother-in-law, and a whole bunch of others
	+ He cured a leper.
	+ He made a paralyzed man walk.
	+ He fixed a man’s withered hand.
	+ Clearly, Jesus cares about others.
		- You’d think the disciples—the ones closest to Jesus—would trust that he will care for them at least as much as for those people.
* Nope. When their own lives are at risk, the disciples’ immediate response is not to trust that Jesus has them covered.
	+ Instead, they come at him with an accusation
		- It’s veiled in the form of a question: Don’t you care that we are dying?!?
		- But make no mistake about it. This is an accusation of indifference.
	+ Jesus’ ***first*** response: Rebuke the wind.
		- Be silent! Be muzzled!
			* Stronger language than usually translated.
			* Storm ends.
	+ Jesus’ ***second*** response: What the heck’s wrong with you? Have you no faith?
* Repeat: Jesus’ first response is calming the storm.
	+ Right?
	+ Well, maybe not. Jesus’ real first response is the simple act of waking up.
	+ Just as important is this: Jesus’ second response is to remain calm in the face of the storm.
	+ It is only third? He stills the storm (and not gently!)
		- He says, “Shut up! Be muzzled!”
	+ And only after things calm down does he turn to the disciples with his question about their faith.
* This matters. As we experience the storms that occur in our own lives, this matters.
	+ It matters because you need to know that Jesus’ first response to the storms in your life is not to rebuke you for a lack of faith.
	+ Jesus’ first response to the storm is not to chastise you when you wonder where God is the middle of a crisis.
		- Jesus did that very thing when he hung, dying. “My God, why have you forsaken me?”
	+ When a mom sits in the waiting room of a hospital emergency department waiting for news about her small child who was life-flighted there after an accident….
		- Jesus is in the chaplain who sits holding her hand.
	+ When a father sits beside his cancer-riddled, dying son’s bed….
		- Jesus is in the friends, neighbors, and family members who let him cry on their shoulders.
	+ When a newly widowed husband or wife prepares to crawl into bed alone for the first time in many years….
		- Jesus is in the sons, daughters, and others who walk with them in grief.
	+ Jesus is in you, every time you’ve been the quiet, calm, reassuring presence during someone else’s crisis.
* I have no doubt that Jesus does sometimes facepalm and feel frustrated with our lack. “How many times to I have to show you I’m here before you stop asking!?” But that’s not his first response to our crises. Nope. Jesus is right there in the storms with us. Amen.