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.