

Sermon on Mark 4:35-41 Sunday, March 10, 2019 First Lutheran Church, Aitkin
Pastor Doug Larson

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen

“Why are you cowards? How do you have no faith?” If you walked into this conversation, how would you react? Would you slowly back out and run? Come back another day perhaps? These are the words of Jesus to His disciples: cowards! The translation I read from the Gospel, from the NRSV uses “afraid”, why are you afraid. That is a kinder, gentler word but it isn’t the exact meaning or correct word here. Coward is. Pretty tough word for Jesus to use on His disciples.

We should look at the context of this story to get a better picture of why Jesus says what He does and the disciples act the way they do. In Revelation 21, the writer John says that he saw a new heaven and a new earth coming down from heaven. The old has passed away and the “sea is no more”. For the Israelites, the Jews the sea was a scary thing. They were not water people. In the Bible, the sea is a symbol for chaos, the unmanageable. The Sea of Galilee, tho a lake is a dangerous body of water. Storms can come up suddenly and be very violent. The boat where Jesus and the disciples are in is taking on water, over the sides. Even Peter, Andrew, James and John, experienced fishermen are scared. It appears to be a bad situation. They had reason to be afraid of perishing, as they tell Jesus. Were they really cowards?

Or did they see their situation like the banner that hung in the basement of my first church, “O Lord be good to me, the sea is so big and my boat is so small.” How big is the sea in your world, your life? What’s going on in your world, your life, the sea in which you live? What is happening in your home, family, work, faith, church? Does your world seem like a great sea with lots of waves, swamping your boat, is there a sense of chaos?

Is the sea of your life manageable? AA talks about how we came to realize that our lives had become unmanageable. How is your money situation? I know what it’s like to not have enough. I also know there are those who make or have lots of money but it is all gone in this way or that way and they feel like they have no control over it. What about the goals and hopes you have, are they just memories of what you want to happen? Do you feel like the person who was up to their waist in alligators and remembered their original goal was to drain the swamp? Or the church, is it the way we want it to be or something different? In this interim time is there an unsettling, unknown feeling of being in the middle of nowhere and wondering what will be happening, what changes will happen that you aren’t feeling good about?

How manageable is the sea in your life? The disciples didn’t think it was manageable. To Jesus they say, “Don’t you care that we are perishing?” Jesus wakes up, tells the wind and the sea to be still and calm. Then He turns to the disciples and says, “Why are you cowards?”

But the word for coward also means timid. Why are you timid, asks Jesus. How do you have no faith? To us today, Jesus may ask, why are we timid? Why should we have no faith when Jesus is with us? Isn’t that what Jesus is saying to the disciples and to us? Isn’t Jesus telling

the disciples that because He is with them, they shouldn't be timid or cowards! There is a saying that goes this way, "Dear Jesus, between you and me there isn't anything we can't do today!" As the disciples watched Jesus rule the wind and sea, calm the storm, they were awed by His power. If Jesus can do that, then what else can He do?

What are your hopes and dreams for the sea of your life? For it to remain nice and calm? Can't blame you for that. No one wants that call in the middle of the night that brings news of a serious accident or a death. Or your company telling you that to keep your job you have to move someplace new and uncomfortable. Or the tests that come back and the news is not good. Or the kids that as they get older and into more activities, which you may want for them it also means that life becomes more hectic and chaotic. There are many seas in our life that are calm—and stormy.

Stormy seas, scary and unwanted tho they may be are at the same time opportunities to step out of our timidity. I have been in enough sad places, ER rooms, ICU units, places of broken dreams and seen people break out of their timidity. They want to be different and they call out to Jesus for help. Sometimes it moves to a new life and major changes. Sometimes it retreats back to the old. I think of one family, new to the church that starting coming every Sunday, not telling what happened, but only that they had a situation and they were going to change their lives. And they did .

Jesus says to us, I am here, I will help you. You don't have to be timid. Jesus encourages us to do as an Anne Murray song says, "Sing, sing your song, don't worry that it's not good enough for anyone else to hear, just sing, sing your song." Studies show that 100% of the things you don't do, you will fail at. William Glasser who developed Reality Therapy and Control Theory says that the fastest way to having your life the way you want it is to act—act, do something that will get you closer to the life you want. What is the picture of how you want life to be and what do you need to do to get there. And then do those things. We can because Jesus is with us. That's what He told His disciples.

In this interim time at the church, it is a time to try out new ways of living in this community of faith and action. Try out new things here at church, at home, in your family, your business. Martin Luther told us when contemplating what to do that we should pray, read our Bible, study, research and then make the best choice you can and go with it! See what happens rather than doing nothing because the waves seem too high. Hang on to Jesus in that stormy sea.

Is this a time in a stormy or even a calm sea to take hold of Jesus' presence and try some new things in your life? Jesus may ask each of us why are we timid? Don't you know I am here? Let's work and walk together with Jesus. Amen