

Sermon for June 23, 2024 - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 4:35-41(EHV)

Theme: Yes, Jesus cares.

- 1) He cares enough to allow the storm.
- 2) He cares enough to deliver you from it.

*<sup>35</sup>On that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, “Let’s go over to the other side.” <sup>36</sup>After leaving the crowd behind, the disciples took him along in the boat, just as he was. Other small boats also followed him. <sup>37</sup>A great windstorm arose, and the waves were splashing into the boat, so that the boat was quickly filling up. <sup>38</sup>Jesus himself was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. They woke him and said, “Teacher, don’t you care that we are about to drown?” <sup>39</sup>Then he got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” The wind stopped, and there was a great calm. <sup>40</sup>He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still lack faith?” <sup>41</sup>They were filled with awe and said to one another, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”*

A tornado destroys your home. Your friend dies in a car accident. Your doctor informs you that you have cancer. Unexpected evils like these might make you wonder: “Why is this happening to me, Lord? I am a Christian – one of your faithful followers. Don’t you care?”

With the example of Jesus calming a stormy sea, let us learn that – even during a disaster - **Jesus cares**. 1) He cares enough to allow the storms you face in life. 2) He cares enough to deliver you from them. In everything, he is working for your everlasting good.

Part One: He cares enough to allow the storm.

In our sermon text, we find Jesus by the Sea of Galilee. He had spent much of the day preaching about the kingdom of God. Wouldn’t it have been wonderful to see and hear him preach? Jesus’ disciples certainly considered it a privilege. They were proud of the relationship they had with their Rabbi.

However, Jesus knew that his disciples’ faith in him needed strengthening. Even though they confessed Him to be the promised Christ, they still did not quite understand what that confession meant. They knew Jesus to be powerful, but not all-powerful. They trusted in him as the Son of God, but not as God the Son.

Therefore, Jesus had a plan to strengthen the disciples’ faith. We read: *<sup>35</sup>On that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, “Let’s go over to the other side.” <sup>36</sup>After leaving the crowd behind, the disciples took him along in the boat, just as he was. Other small boats also followed him.*

The disciples were more than happy to obey Jesus’ request, allowing him to get some needed rest in the back of the boat as they sailed onto the other side of the lake. All seemed well until: *<sup>37</sup>A great windstorm arose, and the waves were splashing into the boat, so that the boat was quickly filling up.*

How suddenly the situation changed for the disciples! In mere moments, they went from sailing in safety to being in peril. Picture the disciples working hard to navigate the ship against the powerful wind, coughing up lake water that kept spilling into their boat. These experienced sailors were scared to death! Jesus, however, *was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion.*

“How could Jesus sleep?” the disciples must have thought, “Doesn’t he feel the waves and wind? Doesn’t he hear our cries? We’re dying here!” So, *they woke him and said, “Teacher, don’t you care that we are about to drown?”*

What the disciples did was both good and bad. It was good that they turned to Jesus for help because the LORD himself says: *“Call on me in the day of distress. I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”*<sup>i</sup> The bad is that they didn’t ask Jesus in faith - trusting in his compassion and power to help. Instead, they woke him up out of terror and desperation – even going so far as to question Jesus’ concern for them!

Did Jesus care that the disciples were drowning? He most certainly did – so much so that He slept through the storm! You see, Jesus recognized a far greater danger threatening His disciples than the wind and waves. Together with all people in this world, they were in danger of perishing from sin and unbelief. Worse yet, they did not fully recognize that danger!

Yes, Jesus certainly did care about his disciples: so much so that he took on human flesh and blood to save them from the hell that threatens all humanity. He came to live the perfect life of obedience to God’s law that we all fail to live – thereby winning the righteousness we need to stand before Him. He came to suffer the death we deserved so that His Father might declare us forgiven and acquitted of all sin! This is the mighty rescue Jesus came to accomplish. But here is the thing: this rescue does not do anyone any good unless it is received in faith!

Jesus understood how the devil, the world, and the disciples’ sinful flesh were trying to prevent them from believing in him as their true Messiah. That is why he allowed the storm on the lake: to test and strengthen the disciple’s faith.

But what purpose did Jesus’ deep slumber during the storm serve? It demonstrated his confidence that his loving Father would guard and keep him - regardless of how bad things got. Jesus wanted his disciples to have that same confidence in Him as well. Sadly, the disciples did not display such trust. While confessing Jesus as their Rabbi and master, they failed to recognize him as their all-powerful God. They even questioned his love.

Regrettably, we often act like the disciples did during the storm. When difficulties arise in our lives, we are tempted to question why Jesus allows evil to affect us and seems to ignore our prayers for protection. We might even begin to wonder whether God loves us, what we did to anger him, and if he still cares for us.

Dear Christian: Yes, Jesus most certainly cares for you. He sees the greater spiritual dangers that threaten your soul – risks of which even you might be unaware. He knows how the devil, world, and your sinful flesh are trying to get you to love and trust in other things more than him. For this reason, he might graciously take away the things that compete with Him in your heart. He may

allow severe storms to arise in your life to test you – teaching you to turn to Him in repentance and rely on him alone for salvation. And once those storms have accomplished his purposes, Jesus cares enough to deliver you from them, as we read next in our sermon text:

Part Two: He cares enough to deliver you from it.

<sup>39</sup>*Then he got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” The wind stopped, and there was a great calm.* The wind and the waves recognized and obeyed their Creator after He spoke just two words<sup>iii</sup>! Contrast this to the disciples, who heard Jesus speak on many occasions but still did not fully recognize who he was. Now they began to understand.

Then <sup>40</sup>*He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still lack faith?”* Notice that Jesus does not berate the disciples for failing to trust him. Rather, he points out that all their anxiety was for nothing. Didn’t they understand who he was from his miracles and preaching? Didn’t they believe him to be the all-powerful Son of God who loved them so dearly that he would not allow any evil to befall them unless it served their everlasting good?

Let us apply Jesus’ question to us. Why are we so afraid when great difficulties arise in our lives? Don’t we trust in God’s promise to work in all things for the good of those who love him?<sup>iii</sup> Since we have Christ, what are we afraid of losing?<sup>iv</sup> Do we still have trouble believing in his power and love?

Jesus never promised us smooth sailing through life. He said that we should expect trouble in the world.<sup>v</sup> Jesus allows it. Why? To strengthen our faith in him. The suffering we endure is discipline meant to teach us.

No discipline seems pleasant at the time it’s administered.<sup>vi</sup> The storms you face in life are hard and scary, but Jesus asks you to trust in His power to see you through. He will calm the storms you face in his good time. How can you be sure? Look at the cross and remember what Jesus did there for you. If He willingly sacrificed his own life to save you from your sins, how can you think Jesus does not care? How can you imagine that God does not love you – as the Scriptures say: *Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?*<sup>vii</sup> Jesus’ death and resurrection are historical facts that can never be changed. They proclaim your reconciliation with God the Father. They are a Christian’s confidence that Jesus will deliver you from every evil you face in life and bring you safely into his kingdom.<sup>viii</sup>

As Jesus was with the disciples through their storm, so he is with you through yours. He promises: *“Surely I am with you always until the end of the age.”*<sup>ix</sup> Through the prophet Isaiah, Jesus says: <sup>9</sup>*I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, ‘You are my servant’; I have chosen you and have not rejected you.* <sup>10</sup>*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*<sup>x</sup> With promises like these, is there any reason to fear?

But someone might ask: “What if my storm is a terminal illness like cancer or the death of a Christian loved one? Why doesn’t Jesus deliver me from those storms?” Who is to say that He

does not? God never promised that the difficulties we face would not end in death. And if they do, this does not mean that Jesus did not fulfill his promise to deliver us from evil. How so? Because even death is a blessing for the believer, as God's Word says: *Precious in the eyes of the LORD is the death of his favored ones.*<sup>xi</sup> And again: *The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil.*<sup>2</sup> *Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.*<sup>xii</sup> What better calm is there than being at eternal rest with the LORD, where no evil can touch us? Because of this, we Christians can be fearless in both life and death - trusting in Jesus' loving power to save.

The demonstration of Jesus' power and love had its desired effect on his disciples: <sup>41</sup> *They were filled with awe and said to one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"* Yes, just as all the prophets of old were filled with terrifying awe when the LORD made his presence known, so also the disciples as they began to recognize who Jesus truly is. And who, exactly, is he? He is God in the flesh - for only the LORD can still the storm to a whisper and hush the waves of the sea.<sup>xiii</sup>

So, you, dear Christian, can also know from Scripture that Jesus is more than just a man. He is your Saviour God, who loves you and works in all things for your everlasting good. There is no reason for you to be afraid when disaster strikes. Cling to the LORD in faith, and He will see you through the storms you face. He cares enough to allow difficulties to arise in your life. He also cares enough to deliver you from them once their purpose has been served. In all things, He is leading you to Himself so that, through repentance and faith, you may receive the everlasting peace he won for you through His cross. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Psalm 50:15 EHV

<sup>ii</sup> The three words in English are only two words in Greek.

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. Romans 8:28

<sup>iv</sup> Cf. Romans 8:32

<sup>v</sup> Cf. John 16:33

<sup>vi</sup> Cf. Hebrews 12:11

<sup>vii</sup> Cf. Romans 8:32 EHV

<sup>viii</sup> Cf. 2 Timothy 4:18

<sup>ix</sup> Matthew 28:20 EHV

<sup>x</sup> Isaiah 41:9-10 NIV84

<sup>xi</sup> Psalm 116:15 EHV

<sup>xii</sup> Isaiah 57:1-2 NIV84

<sup>xiii</sup> cf. Psalm 107:29