

Mark 4:35-41 Year B
June 24, 2012

It's all too easy to hear our gospel text and convict the disciples for their apparent lack of faith. After all, we know something they have not yet figured out - who Jesus truly is. At this point in Mark's gospel Jesus' identity has not fully been revealed except to the unclean spirits He has cast out and rebuked to tell no one whom He is. Yes, the disciples have watched Him cure many people of their ailments but now Jesus does something altogether different. He calms a raging storm as he states to the sea, "Peace, Be Still!" and the chaotic waters and wind cease instantly creating a dead calm. He saves them, although it seems as if they did not expect that based on their initial question to Him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

They have watched with amazement as Jesus has healed a paralytic, the man with a withered hand, and many others but now they are the ones who are in trouble. However, the storm they are facing is on a totally different level and I wonder who wouldn't respond, as the disciples did following Jesus' calming of the storm. In some ways, it appears their fear wasn't so much from the storm that was threatening to capsize their boat; but, rather from the act Jesus has just performed. "Who is this? Even the wind and waves obey him!" we are told they ask one another. The NRSV describes their emotional state as one of awe but the thrust of the word is more of fear and terror. The New Living Translation (NLT) translation states "the disciples were absolutely terrified."

After all, the only one who can do an act such as this is God. I imagine they recalled the story of creation in Genesis 1 where God created the earth and sky from a watery chaos or the story of the Exodus where God used Moses to divide the chaotic waters of the Red Sea in order for the Israelites to safely cross but then ordered the waves down again drowning the Egyptians. I imagine they recalled the words of the Psalmist that speak to God's power and authority such as 65:7, "You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of the waves, the tumult of the peoples." Or, 89:9, "You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them."

Today's text is an epiphany. It is a revelation of Jesus' identity. He has the power and authority of God so they have every right to be scared and ask, "Who is this?" Who is this man that is in the boat with them that even the wind and the sea listen? The answer, of course, is this is Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus has been given this power and authority to still even the forces of nature from His Father.

I want to share a story with you. A story about a young boy in the midst of a storm; not a physical thunderstorm like the disciples, but nonetheless a chaotic storm that brought him much fear. This storm happened several years ago as I was doing chaplaincy. I was called to the E.R. where I learned a young boy was being brought in who had been hit while riding his bicycle. As I arrived the paramedics were rushing him in on a stretcher. His parents followed and all the doctors and nurses frantically began circling him and checking his injuries. The boy was crying and in obvious pain. He was bleeding and it appeared his leg might have been broke. After giving the medical staff several minutes to stabilize the situation I

entered the room and introduced myself. As I explained to his mom and dad I was a chaplain, the boy looked up from the bed and said, "Like a pastor." "Yes, like a pastor." "Well, will you pray for me then?" We did and afterward being so moved by this young boy I asked him, "Why did you want me to pray for you?" He said, "Because I know Jesus is here with me and hears our prayers." He had stopped crying and I asked, "How do you feel now?" "My leg still hurts, but I am not as scared anymore." Here was a young boy in the midst of a storm but he knew what the disciples did not yet know and what the church often struggles to perceive in the midst of the storms of life. Jesus is present and has the power to calm our fears and bring peace to whatever it is we are facing. Yes, like the boys injuries, we may not be miraculously healed physically; but, the promise in this text is that the kingdom of God Jesus has been proclaiming and teaching about plays out in the midst of daily life. This is not some parable but this is real life stuff the disciples encounter. The kingdom of God is Jesus being in the boat with us as the waves threaten to overwhelm and overtake us. The kingdom of God is a relationship with the Son of God and being able to call upon Him in the midst of our fears, heartache, pains, and yes, even doubts, and hear the words "Peace, be still!" Jesus is our anchor in the midst of swirling winds, high seas, and raging waters. And this text gives us some helpful hints at how best to ride out the storms of life.

Notice the disciples are all in the boat. They are scared together and they respond to Jesus together. We are in the boat together. We journey together. When one gets scared we all feel that fear as the body of Christ. We don't abandon ship

and leave our fellow brothers and sisters to go it alone. Sure, we may have differences in how to best steer the ship during the stormy waters because ultimately notice Jesus does leave this task up the disciples. He trusts them to get him safely across the sea to the other side. After all, several of these disciples were gifted fishermen and would have been excellent sailors. But in the face of fear even the best of sailors get scared and need help. That help is always near. So, as we move forward in our ship, even in the midst of differences that arise, the key thing is to remember we are united in our Baptism to Christ. We are one in Christ and when the going gets rough we don't lose faith, point fingers and try to place blame, but rather look to Him who is with us. We pray and we unite. The storms may not cease but when we turn to Jesus we are promised that He is with us and that He will bring peace and calm the fear and storms that lie within.

Main Point: Jesus is our anchor and he has the power and ability to calm our fears in the midst of whatever it is we are facing.