

June 26, 2022 HE IS LORD! Mark 4:35-41

Context. At the beginning of Mark chapter 4 Jesus begins to teach a crowd that has gathered to hear him. Mark says, "And Jesus began to teach by the Lake." My instinct is always to turn to the KJV in the expectation that I will find more detail, or words that are more specific. And I did. "And HE began to teach again by the sea side." Both our pew Bibles and the KJV make it plain the crowd was big. And Jesus got into one of the boats on the shore to teach the crowd. The setting is the Sea of Galilee. To us it may be the size of a small Northern Lake, but in Galilee, in Judea, it was and is the biggest source of fresh water these people including Mark have ever seen.

And Jesus teaches a bunch of parables. The parable of the Sower. The Lamp on a Stand. The parable of the Seed. The Kingdom of God is supposed to be a growing reality. The parable of the Mustard Seed. A little faith, is a lot of faith, if it is focused on God. As the day began to wane, Jesus says to the disciples, who are fishermen, and owned the boat Jesus had been sitting in, HE says to them, "Let's go over to the other side." It occurred to me that I have experienced that. On our second trip to Israel when we went out on the Sea of Galilee, we were headed to the other side of the lake where we would have lunch at restaurant that served St. Peter's fish...the wriggly little thing that filled the nets that were about to break. Cooked to perfection.

I've told you the story before of how the storm came up. That was a new experience. Our vessel was much larger than the fishing boat of Jesus time. We were never in danger of peril. But it was not an enjoyable ride. Galilee can get rough. Really rough. Rebekah and I held hands in the bow of the boat and water continually washed over the prow and drenched us.

This little portion of Mark is a really important one. It is about life. Real life. Storms come. No matter how many warnings they send out...severe Thunder storm watch in your area...you are never prepared for what happens. And sometimes it just doesn't. But real storms do come. They are one of the realities of life. The tree that falls on a house, punching a large hole in the roof. The damage that can be done by real storms of wind. The damage that can be done by torrential downpours, sever blizzards. Or Arctic cold. Especially if the power goes out.

And then there are the other kinds of storms that invade our lives. Someone you love dies. A friend is diagnosed with cancer. It is stage 4. They always have a plan of treatment, but sometimes they deliver the news no one wants to hear. It's terminal. And the shock leaves us feeling lost, upset, emotional, angry. The loss of a job. The bend in the road where the future suddenly looks dangerously unknown. Moments when the peace rug is torn out from beneath your feet. We know, because it is suddenly undeniable, our world is one in which we have no control. What shall we do? What if anything can we

do? And so often it feels like the answer to those questions is nothing...hold on to the rail at the side of the boat, watch the waves, listen to the wind, get wet and uncomfortable, and feel the boat pitching in the grasp of the wind and the waves.

Not quite! "Leaving the crowd behind, they (the disciples) took him along, just as he was, (that's Jesus). There were also other boats with him." And then the storm hit. I can tell you one thing about the Sea of Galilee. It can be sunny and calm one moment, and the clouds can roll in and the suddenness of the storm is undeniable. They did not start across to the other side in stormy weather. Neither did we. It rolled in, overtook us, and it was scary. This is one of those little bits of the Gospel that came to life for me that particular day. One moment I was enjoying the ride...and the next my daughter and I knew we were living something that Mark had written about.

Jesus was with them in the boat. Sort of. He was tired from the days work. I understand that too. Teaching and preaching and leading worship is tiring work. That is why when I go home and turn on the television and try to watch a baseball game (the Blue Jays if it is possible) or a football game, I fall asleep in my chair. Barbara can tell you that would happen when I was 23, serving Nestleton, Millbrook and Ballyduff, over near Port Perry in the Presbytery of Peterborough, as a student at Knox College. The disciples woke Jesus up. They were frantic, for all their experience of Galilee. "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

It is not a question to which they really wanted an answer. They were terrified. They were afraid their boat was going to sink. They were afraid that their lives were in peril on the sea. They saw life swirling out of control at the heart of a storm that had enough power to cause their deaths. They want Jesus to do something. And this is where it gets really sticky, they do not even know and cannot verbalize what they want him to do. They want to be back on the beach, dry ground. They want it to be over and somehow safe. They know one thing. They are not in control, of the boat, of the waves, of the wind. And they understand life is in danger.

I do not think they expected Jesus to do what he did. He got up on his feet in this pitching little craft, “and he rebuked the wind, and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still.” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.” (Mark 4:39)

Jesus was always one to seize the teachable moment. “To his disciples HE said, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” And they were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” (Mark 4:41)

When my children were very young, there was a day in Pickering when we were under a warning of sever Thunder Storms. We had survived a violent downburst of wind in the wilderness 200 miles north of Thunder Bay. Rebekah as the youngest was always thereafter, fearful if the weather turned sour with grey, dark skies and mounting wind. Well, I saw her

becoming emotional as the storm approached. The wind began to swirl in the tree tops. And I said to myself...the Holy Spirit is in you. You really ought to try. So I went out in front of our house and I addressed the storm. I commanded it to do no harm in the name of Jesus. And I went back inside and I told my children what I had done. Rebekah sat on my knee, and we watched. It did not grow calm and still. But no harm came to us or anyone else in the community either.

This is really important. I am not claiming I did anything of an extraordinary nature. I am not trying to claim for example that I did a miracle. What I did, was I dared to speak in the name of Jesus. That name the scripture tells us is a powerful name. Jesus.

For me this is the point. The disciples asked themselves a very good question. Who is Jesus? Who is this man? There is a sense in which the world is still asking that question, and the tragedy is that all too many have not arrived at an answer, or have simply decided HE might have been a human being like you or I. You can only come to that conclusion if you set aside all the eyewitness testimony found in the New Testament. As greater scholars than I have said, there is more evidence that Jesus was who Mark says HE was, than there is for the existence of Julius Caesar.

Mark tells us that the disciples who were in that boat, and the people who were in the other boats saw Jesus as the one whom the wind and the waves obeyed. In other words

Jesus is the Lord. The One and ONLY who can grant us peace in the midst of the storms of life. All of the storms of life.

Mark's final words are these: "After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them (the disciples) he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it. Jesus. HE is LORD.

Let us pray;

Lord Jesus, we are tempted to say that we have not seen miracles, signs and wonders. In most cases we have but we describe them in other words, we tend to make them common, as though they were natural. Heighten our awareness that you love us, abide with us, watch over us and keep us as the sheep of your flock, and the lambs that you shepherd. Touch our lives with the power of your love and the peace that is beyond understanding. Give us eyes to see, and ears to hear, and the conviction to tell our story of being touched by your presence in the midst of the storms of life. YOU are the LORD. And YOU are our LORD. Amen