

What can Jesus possibly be thinking here? He sends His disciples... "*He made them,*" it says, get into the boat and cross over to the other side, yet knowing that they will encounter a dangerous situation. He sets them up to fail. Not only this, when He comes out to them, walking on the sea, He intends not to come to their rescue, but "*to pass by them,*" it says. Again, we ask, what can He possibly be thinking?

We are going to see today that what Jesus does to His disciples, He does also to us. And it can have us scratching our heads. It can even terrify us as it did the disciples. Yet, as Jesus gets into the boat with His disciples and brings a great calm, so also for us there is always hope even when it appears that everything, including God, is against us.

The journey across the water to Bethsaida is very short. It crosses over just a small bay. The disciples leave before sundown. They should easily reach their destination. But there arises a gale force windstorm. And it pushes their boat out into the sea. It is now 3:00 in the morning. They are struggling. They are exhausted. And they are fearing for their lives.

The disciples would not be in this dangerous situation if they had simply told Jesus: No. He made them go we're told. Does this not indicate that they were opposed to going? But they go because Jesus makes them. And so, the only reason why "*the wind was against them,*" as it says, is because they are doing what Jesus wants them to do.

This is the same reason why the wind is against you. Are you a Christian who desires to follow God's will? Then the wind is against you. Do you delight in coming to the house of God to hear His words and receive His Sacrament? Then the wind is against you. Do you strive to love others as God has loved you? Then the wind is against you. Do you set aside a portion of your income for the Lord? Then the wind is against you. Do you volunteer your time to serve here in His church? Then the wind is against you.

But I am only telling you what you already know. You already know that the wind is against you. I am simply pointing out that it is against you because you are doing what God wants you to do.

How tempting it would have been for the disciples to say, "This is so not worth it! Even though Jesus wants us to cross over to the other side, let's turn around and go with the wind and not against it."

And it is the same with us. Every day how tempting it is to say to ourselves, "This just isn't worth it!" How much easier for us to go with the wind, go where it pushes us, instead of going against the wind.

And let's throw this into it. We expect the wind to be against us. But other Christians? We are supposedly all together in the same boat. We are supposedly all struggling together against the wind. How sad, therefore, to see us struggling against each other. Some of you are giving sacrificially of your time, your treasures, your talents to serve the Lord here in His church. You do not serve without faults because you are sinners. Yet you serve willingly. So, you expect the

wind to be against you. But when other church members here are against you, it is very tempting to say, "This is not worth it!"

As it is in every congregation, there is too much division here. Too much anger and separating ourselves from others. And even a little bit is too much. The easiest thing in the world is to be angry and stay angry. It takes no effort at all. It is easy to stay away from the church, to keep our distance from those members we don't like. Because this is going with the wind and not against it. But if we do what Jesus wants us to do... not being angry, not dividing and separating ourselves, then it takes effort, a lot of it, and the wind will be against us.

But not God. Oh, I know it can appear that even He is against us. When we struggle, when we become hurt, when we see everything going wrong in our life, in our congregation, how easy to say, "Not only is the wind against us, so is the Lord against us. If our church is not making headway, not moving forward, then not only are we against each other, and against the wind, but even God is against us."

No, my friends. Following Jesus' will, can and does push us out into the sea. It can and does make it appear that our little boat is not going to make it across to the other side. But Jesus comes to us as He came to His disciples on the sea. And at first this will and should terrify us as it terrified the disciples. Because we have all been disobedient. We have all either been angry at others or given others reason to be angry at us. We have all been deserving of God's righteous wrath.

Yet hear what Jesus says, "*Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.*" "I am not against you," He is saying. How can He who gave Himself up for you on the cross be against you? How can He who made you His own in your baptism be against you? How can He who gives His very body and blood to you in His own Sacrament be against you?

But I have been against my fellow church member here. I have been angry, and I have let my anger control me. Why, therefore, should not Jesus be against me?

Because He forgives you, my friend. He forgives you. And it is not because of what you do. He forgives you, every one of you, because He poured out His blood on the cross for every one of you.

That right there can have us scratching our heads. Why would Jesus do that...for me? Ours is not to fully understand, but only to believe. We do not know why we make headway painfully in life. We do not know why the wind is against us for doing what Jesus wants us to do. But there is a good and loving purpose for it, and God knows. And we do not fully grasp how this God could suffer all that we deserve, and then turn to us and say: you are forgiven of all your sin. But He does. He is merciful. He is love itself. And He is forgiving. And no matter what, my friend, He is never against you. Amen.