

If you follow pop music at all, you have probably heard Kelly Clarkson's hit from a few years ago, "What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger." But she did not come up with this phrase herself. If you know something about philosophy, you will recognize that the title of the song originated with Friedrich Nietzsche, the nineteenth century German philosopher. Yet maybe even he got the phrase from someone else. One thing we know for sure, the phrase, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger" did not originate with the disciples of Jesus.

Here they are out on the Sea of Galilee. They know this sea and how to navigate through it, even when storms arise. Quite a few of these disciples are experienced fishermen. Getting into a boat for them is as normal as getting into a car for you. But this night is different. The mother of all storms arises. The Greek uses the word *mega* to describe it. It is so furious that the waves are breaking into the boat so that it is filling up with water. These disciples don't just think, they know they will die. We can be fairly certain that these disciples are not singing, "What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger." Instead, they are screaming to Jesus, "*Do You not care that we are perishing!*"

You have all been in storms. Have you ever been in a mega storm like the one the disciples were in? And feel free to broaden the scope of that word storm. Not just rain and wind, hail and lightning. Include anything in life which shook you so terribly, so mega was it, that you were tempted to say afterwards, even with trembling lips, "What doesn't kill me only makes me stronger."

But did it? Did the storm make you stronger? It did not make the disciples stronger. Three times the word mega is used in our text. Once to describe the storm. Once to describe the great calm after Jesus stills it. And once to describe the great fear in the disciples, not during the storm, but after it is stilled. Seriously? Yes! The storm does not kill them. But instead of growing stronger and wiser, they become just the opposite.

We have to ponder a question at this point. Why did God send this storm? Was it to make these disciples stronger? So, on Father's Day their kids could buy them shirts, "I survived the mega storm on Galilee!" And on the back of the shirt, "Yay for Dad!"

The Apostle Paul knew why God sent to him a "thorn in the flesh" as he calls it. For him it was a mega storm. And he tells us why God sent it. It was to make him, not strong, but weak.

Is this not why God sends the storm to the disciples in our text? Not so they will dig down deep within themselves and find the strength to weather the storm. But rather so that they will go running to Jesus, who is asleep in the stern of the boat, and cry like little children, "Help us!"

How blessed is the Christian who learns, not strength, but weakness through the storms that God sends. Who prays not, "Lord, make me strong so I can weather this storm," but, "Lord, have mercy on me, for I am too weak to handle this storm in my life."

You are not God's adults who should be able to handle anything in life. You are God's children by virtue of your baptism, who cannot handle anything; whose lips often tremble; yet who know

where to go when the storms come. To Jesus. To come crying to Him like children, “Lord Jesus, I’m perishing! My loved one is perishing! Please help!”

When the disciples cry to Jesus, the storm become His crisis and no longer theirs. The storm does not frighten Him. But because it frightens His disciples, He rebukes it. He speaks to it as though it is a living being. “*Peace! Be still!*” But really, “be still” is not what He says. The Greek word here can rather be translated, “Shut up!” “*Peace! Shut up!*” He tells the storm. And like an obedient servant, the wind ceases and there is a mega calm.

What storm is in your life right now? What is it that frightens you, that greatly concerns you? Do you see Jesus in the stern of the boat? He is not unaware of your storm. He is fully aware of everything that troubles you. Are you in the habit of running to Him for everything? Like little children, crying to Him at all times day and night? Or do you think of yourself as God’s adult, so mature in your faith that you are strong enough to weather most, if not all the storms that come into your life?

Jesus rebuked His disciples for their lack of faith. We deserve the same rebuke. And it’s because we have faith in our faith, which is really faith in ourselves.

When God sends storms to you, it is to make you weak so that you run to Him. And He will never turn you away. Think of His outstretched arms on the cross. He took your storms there, all of them. He accepted your sins. And He became weak there for you, and He died. But He rose in power. And He speaks to silence your storms, but to comfort you. He cares for you. And He forgives you, all of you He forgives. Even for your lack of faith He forgives you.

The most furious storms in life are really the sins that we have done in the past. Maybe even just in the past few days. They can greatly trouble us. They can ruin relationships. They can make us fearful. But Jesus tells your sins to shut up! He speaks these words in your baptism, in Holy Communion, in the word of forgiveness to you. “Stop frightening My dear child! Stop troubling My child!” And for you there is only a great calm because your sins, all of them, are forgiven.

Who, then, is this that even wind, and sea, and sin obeys Him? He is your God, your Savior. The one to whom you run day and night. He who speaks fiercely to that which troubles you, but to you He speaks lovingly and comfortingly. Amen.