

Mark 4:35-41

No little storm would do. It had to be a big one. Mega is the Greek word here in our text. This thing was monstrous. The disciples could handle little storms, just as we can handle little problems. They're annoying, but we push through them. Little storms don't do much for our faith. They don't really scare it out of us, but then they don't make us stronger either. It's the big storm that we need. The one that turns us into cowards. Until it comes, we think that we're the best Christians, with the strongest faith, and that everything in our life is as it should be.

That's where these twelve disciples are...before the storm comes. They're sailing along, crossing over to the other side...they think. Life is good. Jesus? Oh He's asleep in the stern. But, hey, who needs Him up here with us anyway? We can handle anything that comes along.

No they can't, and neither can we. But it takes a mega storm to teach this bit of wisdom. And so God pounds these twelve disciples with such a massive windstorm -- waves crashing over the boat so that it's filling up with water -- that they completely lose it.

They don't have what it takes to outduel this storm. They've met their match. They don't think...they know they are about to perish. Oh, wait! There's Jesus, still sleeping. "*Teacher!*" they cry out, "*Don't you care that we are perishing!*"

Have you ever prayed in that way? "God, it's obvious You don't care about me because You're not helping. This storm has come into my life, and You? You're off sleeping somewhere. You're supposed to be rescuing me, but You're not. Amen." Not the best prayer, is it? We see unbelief in it more than we see faith. That's where these twelve disciples are. They believe, but they are sure not acting like it.

Storms are not meant to make "us" stronger. Their purpose is not to show us how strong our faith is, but how weak it is. These disciples come crying to Jesus, and their unbelief shows itself by their assumption that Jesus doesn't care that they are perishing. But their faith shows in this way: they despair of themselves and of their efforts, and they turn to Jesus for help.

You know what our Lord says about children...infants. Unless we turn and become like them, we will not enter the kingdom of God. Infants are weak, helpless, always needing to be cared for. They are not sure of themselves. They cry a lot. They easily get into predicaments, but they constantly need help getting out of them.

Our text narrates for us twelve grown men in a boat navigating across the sea. But picture this story not as twelve men, but as twelve little babies trying to cross the sea in a boat, and then a massive storm comes. These infants are not going to rise to the occasion. They're not going to pull through because they have what it takes. They're going to do nothing but cry. Their little eyes will fill up with tears. Unless these infants are rescued, they will without a doubt perish.

"Unless you turn and become like infants..." God sends this storm to His disciples to turn them into babies. He doesn't send the storm to make them say, "Okay guys, we can do this. We just have to give it our best effort." Oh no. He sends the storm to turn them away from themselves to Jesus. To make them despair of themselves and scream like babies and say, "*Our help is in the name of the Lord.*"

Sometimes our faith gets in the way of Jesus. We say, "I can push through this storm in my life. I'm a Christian after all, with a strong faith. I'll make it across to the other side." What infant would say that? No, infants are always crying for help. They're always looking for mommy and daddy to rescue them. Their faith is not in themselves, but in mommy and daddy.

Jesus tells you and me where to look for Him. Asleep in the stern of the boat. His church is the boat. And tucked away, not visible, but hidden from view, Jesus can be found in His Gospel: in Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, Holy Absolution. He appears to be sleeping, but in truth He is active through these holy things.

But quite often our faith gets in the way. We have too much faith in ourselves; faith in who we think we are. We have faith in our faith. If we're not constantly in prayer crying to Jesus for help, then we are not the helpless infants we need to be. In the midst of the storm, God does not want us to reassure ourselves: "I can push through this. I have faith." No, He wants us to say, "I don't have this, but Jesus has me. He is my Helper, my Rescuer. I can't, but He can."

Friend, God sends mega storms into your life because He loves you. If we're going to cross over to the other side, we must remain helpless babies. We cannot sail or row ourselves across the sea of life. We must constantly be turning to Jesus in our Baptism; turning to Jesus in Holy Communion; turning to Jesus in Holy Absolution. And always He rises in these holy means and says, "*Peace! Be still!*"

That storm on the sea - it was a mega storm says our text. And now our text uses that very same word to describe the great calm. "*Peace!*" says Jesus, "*Be still!*" And there was a mega calm. That is the peace, the calm that Jesus gives to you.

There isn't anything in your life that He cannot handle. In fact, everything He already handled. This is what His cross means for you. He endured the mega storm of God's wrath; the storm that was intended for you and me. We deserve this storm because of our disobedience. We do not deserve to make it across to the other side, but we belong in the midst of that furious mega storm for all eternity.

But Jesus took that away from you. He was thrown into the midst of the storm. And He came out and made a way across to the other side. That's why He is in the boat with you. He is the way across to the other side.

What storm can stop you? No storm, because Jesus is with you. Let your heart be at peace therefore. Your sins are forgiven. The storm of God's anger is gone. For Jesus' sake He is at peace with you in His heart.

We can learn from the narrative in our text. Jesus did not rebuke His disciples for crying to Him. His rebuke was because they assumed He did not care about them. That's not why infants cry. They cry to mommy and daddy because they believe mommy and daddy do care; that mommy and daddy know their horrible predicament, and they will help them out of it. That's strong faith. Crying to mommy and daddy for everything.

And that's what we want with Jesus. Not to be sure of ourselves, but to be sure of Him. Not to handle our storms on our own, but to trust that He does handle each and every one of them. Not to cross over to the other side because we're such good sailors and rowers; to believe that Jesus will take us there because He does care. Amen.