

These disciples know well the story of Jonah in the Old Testament. When the great storm threatened to destroy the ship, in which Jonah was sleeping at the time, he told the sailors to hurl him into the sea. And when they did, the storm ceased.

Now these disciples do not pick Jesus up as He is sleeping and hurl Him into the sea to stop the storm on Galilee. But they are terrified as were the sailors with Jonah. And they do cry to Him for help as the sailors cried to Jonah.

This storm on Galilee can be stilled with a mere word from Jesus' mouth. But the storm that is coming to Golgotha on Good Friday will demand more of Jesus than just a word. It will demand Him. And like with Jonah, He will be hurled into the heart of this storm, His body being thrown onto a cross, and with that, this greatest of all storms will cease its raging.

We're told that it was God who sent the storm against Jonah. His prophet was fleeing from Him, and God used the storm to turn Jonah around. But Jesus' disciples are not fleeing. It's Jesus who tells them to get into the boat and to go across to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Do you suppose the disciples are thinking that they are being picked on? That they are the targets of God's anger for some reason?

The way St. Mark relates this story to us can give that impression. "*Other boats,*" he writes, "*were with Him.*" Yet he says that the "*waves were breaking into the boat.*" Not into all the boats that are with them. Only the boat carrying Jesus and the disciples is being tossed about by the great storm. This is the impression that is given based upon the wording of the text. And so, yes, the disciples might well be wondering why God is sending this storm against them.

Have you ever wondered that? "Why me, God? Why are You picking on me?" We all have to endure the storms of life in whatever form they come at us. And sometimes the storms are so fierce, or they come in waves one after another, that we wonder what God has against us.

What benefit to the disciples is this storm on Galilee? Some might say: "to make them stronger." But it doesn't do that. It causes them to cry like babies, screaming at Jesus to "wake up!" "*We are perishing!*" they cry. But in the Greek, it is better to read it this way: "*We are going to perish!*"

Could they be more afraid? It seems not. But we would hope so. What if Jesus was not in the boat with them? That should be a reason to panic and be truly terrified. Yet doesn't it seem to you as if the disciples are behaving as though Jesus is not with them, even though He is?

Shame on us when we act like them. When we behave as if Jesus is not with us. Or if, and this may even be worse, that Jesus is with us, but that is no comfort to us at all; it doesn't change anything.

God sent this storm to the disciples precisely because Jesus was with them in the boat. And perhaps they tried everything before crying out to Jesus. They tried to navigate the boat through the storm. They tried bailing out the water. And when they were convinced that they were going to perish, then they went to Jesus for help.

Isn't that why God sends storms to us? Not to make us stronger and better Christians. To make us weak. To make us fail at our efforts to navigate ourselves through life. And to send us crying to Jesus for help.

And does He help? Well, look what He does for the disciples. He stills their storm. But then He says this: "*Do you still have no faith?*" What a question to ask: Do you still have no faith! Well, they do not have faith like Jesus. He can sleep in the midst of the great storm. Even Jonah had more faith than the disciples. He was sleeping, too, while the storm was raging.

What about us? "Do we still have no faith?" Too many Christians have faith in their faith. In other words, when storms come, they look within themselves to their faith, or what they think is faith. But faith never looks to itself. It only looks to Jesus. To have faith, therefore, is to have Jesus. To believe that He can still our storm if He chooses to do so. And if He doesn't calm it for us, that's okay, we still look only to Him, and trust that He will help us through the storm even if it takes us to the other side of life, the side we know better as death.

When storms come at you, God is not against you. He proved this by sending Jesus into the greatest storm of all in your place. He suffered the storm of hell, of God's righteous wrath. The storm we deserved on account of our sin. But as with Jonah, after he was hurled into the stormy seas, the sailors were safe, for the storm ceased – when Jesus, on the cross, was hurled into hell for you, God's anger against you ceased, and you are safe from that deadliest of all storms.

Friend, Jesus is with you. Are you not baptized into Him? Is not this His promise to you? As Isaiah puts it: "*Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name (in your baptism); you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.*"

There is no storm that can separate you from Jesus. In fact, when storms come into your life, He holds you even closer to Himself. Believe it because it's true. You never need to cry like the disciples: "I am going to perish!" No, you're not. Your sin cannot make you perish because your sin is forgiven. No sin you have done can cause you to perish. It's all forgiven. You are all forgiven.

In fact, God sends storms to you so that you don't perish. So that you keep your eyes on Jesus. He is the One who saves you. He is your strength. He is the reason why you will not perish. And Jesus is here with you in the boat of His Church.

The storms will come as we sail in life to the other side. Let them come. We have Jesus. Amen.