

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost - Year B

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Job 38:1-11

Psalm 107:1-3; 23-32

II Corinthians 6:1-13

Mark 4:35-41

06/25/2018

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark:

35When evening had come, [Jesus said to the disciples,] “Let us go across to the other side.” 36And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. 37A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” 39He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. 40He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” 41And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

The Gospel of our Lord

Prayer

Let us pray,

Amen

Storms

Good morning! Have you ever been on a cruise? Or maybe you've spent time on open waters where there was no piece of land in sight? One of my favorite things to do when I'm on a cruise is to walk along the deck at night and stare out at the sea and pretend I'm the only person around. It's a strange feeling, both incredibly liberating and terrifying at the same time. What starts out as something peaceful changes when you look down into the waters, when you realize how remote and alone it could be...

In the movie "Adrift," in theaters now, Shailene Woodley and Sam Claflin play the lead roles in acting out the true story of a couple who were caught alone after a terrible storm damaged their sailboat in the middle of the ocean. I haven't seen the movie, so I have no idea if it's any good. But I know one little detail that is terrifying. In the movie you see the boat heading towards a massive wave, the wave to end all waves. And what blew my mind was that this isn't just another example of movies taking a story and embellishing... No, that giant wave is supposedly the same size as the one that our two sailors actually came up against in real life. I grew up on the Ohio River, a big wave for us was from a passing barge and was usually about 2 feet tall. Even on a cruise you're insulated from the rough waters, let alone a hurricane!

Storms have always had the ability to humble us. When you come up against something that powerful it has a way of putting your tiny little existence into perspective. One of my favorite passages in the Bible is in Isaiah where God arrives from the distance in a storm. Can

you imagine what it would have been like to confront a storm before the modern technology we have today? There was no meteorologist to tell the disciples that it might be a bad night to try and cross the sea. In the First Century they had very little to help them predict the weather, to know what was coming. So storms just showed up, signs of God-like power.

We often think of water as a symbol for life, especially with the promises we are given through the waters of baptism, but water was just as easily as symbol of death and power for the Israelites. They weren't a nautical culture, so the little bit of fishing on the Sea of Galilee wouldn't have prepared them like those who lived along the Mediterranean. In fact to fully understand the significance of what we see Jesus do in the story we need to go back to a much older story in Israel's history.

Jesus calms the storm with nothing more than the power of his voice. "*Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?*" they ask. But if you turn your Bibles to the very beginning, Genesis 1:1 we see another story where power is conveyed with nothing more than the power of a voice. God creates the whole universe by subduing the chaos with the power of God's voice. We have heard that story a thousand times and so it starts to sound boring and expected. But in the first creation story in Genesis we have a wonderful example of the Bible being tricky... I love it when the Bible gets tricky.

When the story we have in Genesis 1 first hit the scene, the world was chock-full of other religions' creation stories. The Mesopotamian stories talk about gods killing other gods; the Egyptians had a story about one god who was a goose and another god who was a gander laying an egg together that became the sun. The gods fighting was a common one though. The creation

of the entire world was usually born out of great work and pain, whether it be blood or warfare, on the part of whichever god or gods were taking part.

Now, for the 13 year old boy deep inside, those stories sound a heck of a lot cooler than the Genesis story, where someone narrates God just talking, but like I said, the biblical writers were being tricky. The whole point of the creation story was that our God, the God of Abraham, of Jacob, of Israel... that God didn't need to work very hard to create the whole universe. It's a slap in the face at all the other creation stories. "How many gods had to die and shed blood to create the world?" They could mockingly ask. No, our God is so powerful that God only needs to speak and creation happens.

The power of one's voice became the measuring stick. We've all known someone who could hold the attention of a whole room. The famous revivalist preacher from the 18th century George Whitefield, was supposedly so loud that he could be heard preaching to a crowd of 30,000 people. But all of that pales in comparison to the power of a God who speaks creation into being. That's why I love that passage of Job we have today:

"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? 3 Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. 4 "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone 7 when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? 8 "Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?— 9 when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, 10 and prescribed bounds for it,

and set bars and doors, 11 and said, "Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped"?

We really know nothing of God's power. And in the Gospel lesson today the disciples are given a glimpse of that majesty again. In the face of something as powerful as a storm Jesus simply speaks and the waves calm, the clouds disperse, and, as the text says, they are confronted with "*dead calm.*"

Wow... That's the type of power Jesus Christ can bring into our lives. One of my favorite little details is that Jesus commands "Peace!" to the chaos. Jesus Christ doesn't just calm storms, he brings about true peace, the peace of creation responding to its creator.

If you have paid any attention to the news lately I'm sure you feel like the storms have taken over. Chaos seems like it reigns, everywhere we turn we hear the story of those storms. But I'm here to tell you that our God is more powerful than any of those stories. While the storms rage our God isn't even afraid. Where we run around the boat in terror, our God isn't even disturbed. Uttering three simple words God changes everything for us... "*Peace! Be still!*" *Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.*" Amen.