

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Today in the Gospel lesson we hear Jesus and the disciples are in a boat being tossed about on the sea during a storm at night. According to the Greek, we hear Jesus say, “Why are you such cowards? Do you still have no faith?” Then we hear that the disciples were filled with great fear. I mention this particular part of the Gospel lesson because this lesson can be found in all three of the synoptic Gospels. However, in Mark’s Gospel the words exchanged between the disciples and Jesus are harsh and softened by Matthew and Luke’s take on this story. Either way, this story tends to leave us scratching our heads, wondering, and maybe even panicking and thinking, what must I do when I find myself in a storm?

I have no doubt about the historical perspective of this story of Jesus in a boat on the Sea of Galilee...but again, like last week’s Gospel lesson, I think we are being challenged to look past the historical perspective and look at this story metaphorically in order to gain a clearer view of the Good News. If we simply look at this story historically it confines the story to the boat being tossed about in a storm on the water. This context then causes me to ask, how many of us have our faith challenge when we are in a boat in a storm? Is this story merely telling us how to deal with a sinking boat when we find ourselves in one? *So, what are we to learn here?*

We learn quickly that the story of the disciples in the boat with Jesus is not just about us as we like to think it always is, nor is it actually about what we must do when our boat is sinking. So, let’s get into our boats called imagination or our boats called opinion or perspective and let us go to the other side of this story. In other words, instead of crying out from our historical perspective, teacher, do you not care that we are perishing because we cannot figure out what we must do to save ourselves, let’s think about this story from the other side, and ask ourselves, what is God doing through Jesus Christ in this story rather than what must I do? And as we look at this from the other side or another perspective, we see what GOD does and what GOD has given us that saves us and not what we have earned.

Today in our Gospel may we learn that through Jesus Christ, God’s heart is open to us and more importantly, God has opened His heart to us all. If we understand that God’s heart is opened to us through Jesus Christ, may we then understand that God has given us all His love and that love does not fade, nor is it sunk when we are tossed about in the challenges we face each and every day. In turn, we become God’s love, we are that same love, in that we are those whose hearts are then opened for others as well.

Looking then at the story metaphorically, we can all say we are in our boats called life, and there are storms of chaos and evil within our culture that challenge us. Our storms begin to churn up the water of injustice only to find that the storm of injustice is actually our ugly authoritarianism that is undergirded and verified by our bad ideas. In other words, our authoritative attitude and assumptions about others are stirring up the waters and making our life miserable and in our self-righteousness, we assume that if others would see things our way, it would calm the storm. Likewise, our storms seem to rise and become more violent because in our little boats we are becoming oversensitive in our victimized culture.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Maher, *What This Comedian Said Will Shock You*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004. Not a direct quote but Maher’s commentary on the state of our society in the introduction of this book was used in this paragraph.

I think we see the waters rage and foam because we claim that those who are stirring the waters as those who disagree and do so with their opinions they call facts, and they begin swamping our boats. We have convinced ourselves beyond a doubt that the global storms of indifference would be calmed if the other side would think like us, worship like us, love like us, vote like us, and look like us. Nonetheless the storms of indifference continue to toss us about on the rough sea and as we turn to ourselves in our great fear, we begin bailing out the effects of the other side that is swamping our boat, rather we assume we are bailing our boats by canceling “them” out.

But then again, if we go to the other side and look closer at the other side, we will only find a reflection of our selves...we will find out that our ways, may be swamping their boats as well with our opinions that *we call* facts. As we keep looking, we soon discover that we are all tossed about in our boats, we are just like the other side because we support our own side with our opinions that we speak of and act upon with great confidence rather than listening and seeking genuine facts. In other words, instead of seeing the similarities we have with the “other side,” we only see that *THEY* are swamping our boat with their difference and we turn to ourselves and search our hardened-self-centered egos and attitudes to resolve the difference by bailing out the very things that keep our lives afloat.

Similarly, today we look at the church through the lens of this storm on the waters and we claim this culture of indifference, narcissism, and fear is swamping our boat...the church. We then say, if *THEY* would be like us our church pews would be full and our storms would be stilled and our lives would be calm. So, we set out to jettison the things that identify the church and we turn to things that entertain us thinking this will calm the storm, rather this will appeal to that very culture we claim is sinking the church in the first place. But in our thinking, we only turn to ourselves and our opinions that we hope will change those out there and we assume then this will calm our storms.

But turning to ourselves only leaves our faith sound asleep in our church. Maybe some of the things we threw overboard were the very words of Jesus saying, love your neighbor, love your enemy and pray for them. Jesus did not say love just yourself and cancel your enemy. We think in our humanness the things that are causing the storms to rage are the things that disagree with us or that things that are different and threaten us are sinking us. But we are the ones who become frightened of the difference and through our panic, we ourselves are sinking our own boat with a storm we ourselves are causing. In our panic, in our boat, we want to bail out that other side, those who disagree, those who are different, those whom we assume are threatening us, we want them out of our boat or rather, we want to cancel the other side all together...and we think this will save us from perishing...but what are we left with after we throw it all over board? We don't consider this because, we think we have the advantage...we have Jesus in our boat and he will awaken and save *OUR* boat from perishing. Listen again to verse 36 in our Gospel lesson today.

<sup>36</sup> And leaving the crowd behind, they took [Jesus] with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. (Mark 4:36)

Other boats were with him! Yes, salvation or the calming of the seas is in Jesus Christ, a salvation which God prepared in the presence of *all peoples*. Jesus Christ is the light of God

that shines on all peoples. In other words, the others in the OTHER BOATS are in that same storm...they too receive the same benefit from Jesus calming the same storms that are tossing all of us about. Those who disagree, those who are not like us, those whom we fear, those who do not live like us, love like us, or vote like us, those we would like to cancel from our existence, they too are confronted by the same storms we are confronted with, and they too are tossed about, AND YES, they too share the same calming of Jesus Christ as we do on our stormy seas.

Anyone familiar with Scripture knows that only divine power can subdue chaotic waters and all on those waters share in the calming that Jesus Christ is. Once again, what *are* we to learn here? May we see that even when it seems that we are overwhelmed by this culture and that “THEY” are churning up the waters...our salvation is with us even when it seems to be sleeping.

God’s love for us through Jesus Christ is always with us...but Jesus Christ calms “their” storms as well. Likewise, when we discover that God has opened His heart to us all, may we then learn that we are that same love, we are those whose hearts are then opened for others as well. Our hearts are the boats that are provided for Jesus to get into and to us the other side, where we then discover Jesus doing the same for them as he does for us...calming our storms of sin and death. Our hearts remain steadfast in the very faith that has been poured into us by the Holy Spirit, and our faith is what calms our storms and our faith is always with us. Our faith is what is revealed when we share God’s love and grace with the other side. And yes, there are times when it has to be awakened during the storms of our lives that confront us, but rather than denying it or claiming it just doesn’t care that we are perishing, let us remember and be thankful that our faith is always present and ready for us whether it is sleeping or awake. Moreover, our faith does not JUST save our own souls, our faith is then reflected in our care and our faithful responsibility for others.

We are, through our faith, the very body of Jesus Christ, the one who calmed the storms, NOT JUST for those in the boat with him, but for all the other boats with them on that water. The Rev, DR. Martin Luther King Jr. pointed out something very basic during very stormy and tumultuous times in our modern culture. King would proclaim that we do not overcome darkness with more darkness, nor do we overcome hatred with more hatred...we overcome darkness with light and we overcome hatred with love. We learn today that we do not calm the storms with more storms or by causing more storms by canceling others out. We do not calm our storms by causing more storms for others.

We all face many and various storms in our lives, but may we learn through this lesson today that our boats are not exclusive to the advantage of the presence of Jesus Christ. Today, the Good News for us is that God has calmed our storms, and that God has awoken in us, a faith through Word and Sacrament. Through our faith God has blessed us all with, God give us the power to reflect and to act humbly, to act kindly, to act responsibly, and to be the grace in the world...to act in a way that does not perpetuate the storms or the chaos...but through acts of kindness and grace we may still the chaotic storms that arise in our world.

The salvation of this human world sleeps within all of us and lies within our faith right where God has placed it...within our hearts amongst the chaos of this world that seems void of any form of decency...within the very souls of each one of us...God has placed the faith that saves

not just us in the boat, but those with us in the other boats that confront that same storm. May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ given to us this day to calm our seas in this bread and wine, be the peace we take from here and share as freely with the others who are on the same sea as each of us.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*