

Sermon – Matthew 8.24-27 (Epiphany 4 – 2022)

Lord God, heavenly Father, in Your divine wisdom and fatherly goodness You cause Your children to bear the cross, and send many afflictions upon us to subdue our sinful flesh, and to enliven our hearts to faith, hope, and unceasing prayer: We beseech You to have mercy upon us, and graciously deliver us out of our trials and afflictions, so that we may perceive Your grace and fatherly help, and with all the saints forever praise and worship You; through Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

<sup>23</sup> Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. <sup>24</sup> And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. <sup>25</sup> Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"

<sup>26</sup> But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. <sup>27</sup> So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

When they entered the boat and took off across the sea, the sea was relatively calm. Jesus shows His humanity, by taking a nap in the boat. Though, within Him, was the divine might to continue in His work without needing any rest or sleep, He did not make use of that power, and thus in His humiliation, He became tired, and needed to rest and sleep.

The sailing of the boat across the Sea of Galilee was surely left to the pros. At the very least, Peter, James, and John, being fishermen in their former profession, were skillful at navigating the boat. All seemed to be going well.

But then a great tempest arose, the wind pressed upon the lake, the waves began to billow. The boat was being overcome by the waves, and the situation was beyond the skill of the experienced sailors. There was nothing that they could do. They were at the mercy of the waves, and they feared the very real possibility that those waters would swallow them up

and become their graves.

In fear and panic, they look to their Teacher, though, it seems as though He is not able to help at the time since He is sleeping.

Jesus rebuked them for their weak faith.

It's this weak faith we will look at today. Why was it weak?

First, we should define faith. Faith simply is trust. Knowledge is part of that trust. We know the truth of the Apostles' Creed, that God is One God in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is the knowledge that the Son became flesh, and saves mankind by His righteousness and atoning sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Faith not only know this, but also trusts in the truth that He has done this for me. Another way to put it is that faith is a trust in the gracious promises of God which are ours for the sake of Christ's saving work for us.

The disciples had little faith. But was their faith little because of the storm? The storm may have weakened their faith some, but their faith was already weak. It was weak when they entered the boat. The storm simply exposed their little faith.

The disciples should have known and trusted that God is almighty, omniscient (or all-knowing), and that He loved them. They should have known and trusted in Jesus, the eternal Son of God in the flesh, who was in the boat with them. They should have known and trusted in the promises of God that even if their bodies would end up at the bottom of the sea, their souls would safely remain with the Lord, enjoying paradise, waiting for that body to rise from the depths of the sea to perfect life.

But little was their faith.

It is true that times of trouble and trial are threats to faith. Think of the parable of the sower and the seed, and particularly of the seed sown in the rocks. The faith withered and died in the heat of trial. But before the trial had even arrived, the Word was already held in shallow faith.

Times of ease and plenty are also threats to faith. It is easy in such times to put our faith in

ourselves, or the things of this world. When the wind and waves posed no threat to them, they seemed to have everything in hand. All was under their control. They were reliant upon themselves.

Isn't this always a threat to us? We have other examples in Scripture. Before the Israelites entered into Canaan, God warned them that when they enjoy their prosperity there, that they remember that it was a gift of the God who had redeemed them, and not think that it is theirs by the work of their hands. But what did they do? They forsook the Lord, and enjoyed the fruits of the land they believed they earned by their own labor.

Or what about the rich man? He trusted in his abundant wealth. It became a god to him. His faith rested in his riches.

And so also our faith may rest in ourselves, or abundant blessings we may have especially in times of ease. When life is going swimmingly, and we seem to have everything in hand, we may give ourselves a pat on the back, and trust that we got it. Like the rich man, we may trust in our riches, or it might be anything that we would have an abundance of, whether health, work ethic, abilities, cleverness, intelligence, resources, popularity, or social standing. We may forget that such times and blessings are a gift from God, that we do not deserve such things, and that they could easily be taken away from us.

It is at such times of plenty, that our focus might turn more to the things of the world, because there we can perceive and enjoy our abundance. The Word of God may become less important to us. We may think that not only do we have our lives under our control, but we think that we have our relationship with God in hand. How dangerous it is to think that I do not need the word of God to sustain and nourish me, but my faith is well secured in my hand?

Beware of the danger in days of calm and tranquil waters. Beware of the danger in days of prosperity, when you feel like life is all under your control, because it isn't.

Consider the faith of Job. The devil claimed that Job only believed in God, because God had prospered him so greatly. The devil said, that if everything was removed from Job, then Job would curse God. And so God allowed the tempest of the devil's destruction to come upon Job. Job lost so so much. He lost his children, his livestock, his health, his social status. But what did Job say, "**The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord.**" And even though he may also lose his life, Job knew His Redeemer lives, and that he too shall rise, and with the eyes of his resurrected body, he shall see his Lord.

Job's faith was great even in the days of his prosperity, and it showed its strength in days of adversity. Recall the same great faith that Jesus praised in the centurion from our gospel last week, and also the great faith of the Syrophenician woman, whose daughter was demon possessed.

And so let us not puff up our chests, and seek to have such great faith as though it is a work of our own determination.

Rather, we instead bow our heads in humility, for we are sinners. We have put our trust in ourselves, and in the things of this world. We have built our hope on sinking sand. In response we may be tempted to boast of our faith. But to do this is to put our trust in faith, which is a misplaced faith. Faith is not the object of our faith.

But in times of calm and prosperity, and in times of tempest and trial, our lives, both earthly and spiritual, rely upon God, who is merciful to you. That our faith may be sustained and strengthened, God gives us the promises of His Word.

And the truth and promise to you, is that as one who is baptized into Christ, you dwell upon the boat of Christ's kingdom, and He is your Captain. He who, even in His humility, exercised His power over the wind and the waves to save the disciples, now is exalted on high at the right hand of the Father, ruling for the sake of His Church.

And He loves you. Jesus said, "**Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for His friends.**" He gave His life for you, that you may be freed from your sins, and that you may be restored to the righteousness of God and have life in His kingdom.

He assures you with these promises of His grace. And He does it not only with Word, but He even confirms His promises to you by giving you His very body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. Through the Sacrament He grants you forgiveness, intimate communion with Himself, and the surety of eternal life.

There will be times that during the tempests of life, it may seem that Jesus is sleeping, inattentive to our troubles. But He knows our troubles, and He arises to come to our help and salvation.

And in this world, the tempests will cause us sorrow and grief. But you need not fear, because the One who borne our griefs and carried our sorrows is with us. The disciples cried out, fearful of death. And death will come for each one of us, but, Christ who conquered death, and rose victoriously from the grave is with us, so we need not fear.

It is not our faith, our strength, our ability in which we boast, but our boast is in Christ. He is the foundation of our faith. He is our refuge and strength. A very present help in trouble. We dwell in His boat, and He is our gracious and mighty Captain. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now , and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.