

St. Mark 4:35-40

Dear Friends in Christ,

It's in the 23rd chapter of Jeremiah that God uses the following words to address false prophets who think they can hide their deception:

“Am I a God at hand (that is, limited only to a small area or specific place)...and not a God far away (that is, above all things)? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord.” (vv. 23-24)

The point? Nothing is hidden from Him. Just as dramatic is what God says recorded in the 57th chapter of Isaiah:

“For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.’” (v.15)

The point? When the morning services are over, we will go our separate ways. We will each pursue our **specific agendas**, deal with our **thoughts**, our **worries and fears**, our **looking forward to something or our want to avoid something**. We will go our separate ways but we will never go alone. The fact is . . .

THE LORD IS IN YOUR BOAT. AND MINE.

I. He Cares.

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat... And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (vv. 35-38)

That's the big question, isn't it? “Do you not care that we are perishing?” Isn't that the question that chokes us when we're staring at what appears to be an impenetrable wall of gloom? “Lord, do you not care?”

And there's another question based on “He was in the stern, asleep...”. I know, we wouldn't ask if God's asleep but I'm guessing some have asked, “Is God aware of my situation?” That's why I put the Jeremiah verses in front of us at the beginning of the sermon. God asks, “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” (Jer. 23) He's everywhere at the same time. He's aware of everything!

And God said, “I dwell...with him who is of contrite and lowly spirit.” (Is. 57) Well, the contrite and lowly are those hurting from sin and guilt. That would be...everyone here! The storms of sin's consequences can be overwhelming. The broken and contrite heart always looks to Jesus for comfort and help. And it's always there. In the Word. At Calvary. At the empty tomb. These words of our Lord: “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.” (Is. 43:25)

Every time you and I walk into this Sanctuary we are greeted by a Crucifix standing on top of an Altar. Both are vivid reminders of the love of God. A blood soaked cross fit only for the worst criminals. An Altar of sacrifice. Jesus was sacrificed for the sins of the world. He willingly went to Calvary for you. For you. Me. Individuals. He always cares. He's always aware. In the boat!

But, I suppose, there is a question looming there in the back of some minds based on the statement from our text: "the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling." The question: Why such difficult and frightening moments? I suppose most here know the answer, but it's good to review.

II. No Matter Who You Are.

I came across this insight given by the late British pastor F. B. Meyer: "Earthly prosperity is no sign of the special love of heaven; nor are sorrow and care (worry) any mark of God's disfavor, but the reverse. God's love is robust and true and eager - not for our own comfort, but for our lasting blessedness." What Meyer wrote strikes a powerful blow against the thinking that prosperity and worldly contentment are proof of God's love. There are countless wicked people in this world who are very prosperous and very content with their world! They will die in their wickedness and spend their eternity screaming!

Our understanding of a stormy ride in a boat filling with water begins with this Word of God from the Apostle Peter:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy (not according to our goodness or thinking that we are so lovable), he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (He caused it! We didn't earn it!), to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you...". (I Peter 1:3-4)

You see? It doesn't make any difference who we think we are or what we are. It is God's mercy alone that has worked faith in us to receive the blessing of His love in our Lord Jesus Christ. And no matter who we are in this world, we each have an eternal inheritance. And it won't go away. It will always be there. It will never lose its joy.

III. A Problem. A Resolution.

But there is a problem. It's within us. It's the on-going struggle with sin. It's living in a world that pulls and tears at us with its perversions, incessant deception; its 24/7 godlessness in every way shape and form. It's too easy to get sidetracked. So, the Holy Spirit had Peter go on to write:

...you, by God's power are being guarded through faith for (for what??) a **salvation** ready to be revealed (to be revealed when??) **in the last time.** (I Pet. 1:4b-5)

You see? God guards us through faith. Strengthens that faith through use and knowledge of His Word. And there's another way He strengthens us. He has Peter write:

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith...may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (that is, the revelation of His return, or the revelation we receive at the moment of earthly death).

But, you caught those two words Peter used, didn't you?? ***Trials. Tested.*** Your faith and mine will be tried. Tested! We will ride the boat in, sometimes, very severe storms. The water will pour in! We will either run away from God or cry out and run to Him!

Listen, please! The writer of Hebrews says, "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." (Heb. 12:1) And the Holy Spirit has him quote this from Proverbs: "...do not regard lightly the

discipline of the Lord...For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." (Heb. 12:5-6) And then this: "...(God) disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness." (Heb. 12:10b) You know? Be with Him forever and ever in uninterrupted joy! What we don't have here...at all!! You will be tried. You will be tested. So will I. There are and will be storms. Let's not ask, "Why is God doing this or letting this happen to me?" Let's understand this . . .

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!"
And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" (vv. 39-40)

Would the questions Jesus asked be any different to any of us when we question why God is doing what He is doing? "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" Do we clearly understand the goal of **Biblical** Christianity? It is not about what you think or feel. It is not about what you have or don't have of this world. It's about what the Holy Spirit revealed:

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (I Pet. 1:8-9)

What happened to those first disciples is what happens to us - repeatedly. The process of keeping us on track while we run the race. All of it to obtain the outcome our faith, the salvation of our souls.

He's in your boat! And mine.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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II. No Matter Who You Are.

III. A Problem. A Resolution.

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