

Sermon for: Trinity, Manilla and Zion, Manning

Fifth Week after Pentecost; June 22-23 2024

Sermon Text: Mark 4:35-42 (Gospel reading: Jesus Stilling the Storm)

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

The students in the classroom leave for another day and the teacher sighs, “quiet time.”

Having tended to the demands of the toddler, the parents puts the child down for a nap: “quiet time.” The grandparents have entertained the children for a day (or days), and the children are picked up by parents and drive away: “quiet time.” The family makes the annual journey to their favorite lake cabin, away from the daily demands of jobs: “quiet time.” Our schedules, life stage, personality, and other factors influence the “how” and “when” of “quiet time.”

Physically, emotionally, and spiritually we all need quiet time. As true man, Jesus also needed quiet time. The incident in today’s reading from the Gospel of Mark is also reported in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Matthew adds that Jesus and the disciples got in the boat to get some relief from the crowds that followed them everywhere. The previous chapters of Mark’s Gospel tell about the active first months of Jesus’ ministry. Right after Jesus’ baptism, He is continually tempted by the devil for 40 days in the wilderness. The diseased, paralyzed, and demon possessed all come to Jesus for healing and relief. In His hometown of Capernaum, we are told that the crowds were so large and demanding that he find time and a place to eat. In addition, Jesus constantly faces the criticism and the challenges of the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus needed quiet time.

The need for quiet time was a constant in Jesus' earthly ministry. Throughout Jesus' ministry, we are told that He often withdrew to quiet places to pray. Even on the night of His betrayal Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray hoping for a final quiet time of prayer.

Jesus' quiet time in the boat was interrupted by a storm. The text states, "A great windstorm arose and the waves were breaking into the boat." The panic of the disciples adds to the drama, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

Only Mark's Gospel shares Jesus' verbal response, "Peace! Be Still." We then read nature's response to Jesus' command, "The wind ceased, and there was a great calm." It was quiet! Jesus, True Man sleeping in the boat, was also True God who had created the sea, the wind, And the waves. The stormy sea and all creation are obedient to His words. Jesus' ultimate mission was to calm greater storms than those of nature. Satan would come to create turmoil on the sea of life. Frightened sinners in the storms of life would call, "Lord, we're perishing." The storm of Jesus' passion intensified on Good Friday. There was an earthquake, darkness, and the ripping of the temple curtain. The One who had calmed the storms and healed the sick seemed Himself helpless hanging on the cross. Jesus speaks in the chaos of the cross, "It is finished!" There were no more words and no breath from Jesus. There was quiet. It would be quiet for three days as Jesus experienced the sleep of death in the tomb. But again. Jesus would have the a word to calm the storms of death and the grave. The risen Jesus would appear to frightened disciples hiding in Jerusalem and greet them, "Peace be with you." There was quiet! The One who had spoken, "Peace! Be still," to panicked disciples in a boat would speak His peace to disciples who were again anxious and panicked because they didn't know if the rumors of Jesus' resurrection were true. Jesus comes to calm their fears.

The resurrected Lord who had quieted the stormy sea would, would by His death and resurrection quiet the guilty consciences of sinners. When we are burdened with sins of the past and present, the words of Jesus become ours, "Peace, be still" because the blessings of the death and resurrection of Jesus are ours through baptism and His forgiveness is sure. Jesus' words quiet our guilt and assure us of His forgiveness.

When Satan's temptations come storming into our lives or when he tempts us to doubt as to whether God's promises are true for us or whether our faith is strong enough, Jesus' words become ours, "Peace, be still," for Satan has been drowned in our baptism. God's Word quiets Satan.

When the reality and even fear of death and the grave come to us, the words of Jesus become ours, "Peace, be still." King David reflects on and rejoices in God's quiet presence and comfort, "He leads me beside the still waters," (Psalm 23:2).

When conversations get stormy, jealousies rage, or injustices come to mind in our relationships, our relationship with Jesus quiets the conversations. The quiet we have in Jesus is lived and shared in His name in the home and other contexts.

When we are in the sea of uncertainty with family or friends who are experiencing the storms of physical or mental health concerns; when the waves come crashing into our world, the presence of Jesus brings quiet to our fears.

Jesus who questioned the disciples also addresses us, "Where is your faith?" The question brings us to a confession that we have often tried to calm our storms, looked to our own resources, and to the solutions of the world, rather than looking to Jesus. Too many times we

have not given attention to the necessity of nurturing our faith. We are blessed to gather again to hear Jesus' powerful Word and come again to the Lord's Table to receive His body and blood so that our faith is strengthened.

Jesus' question also brings us to the assurance that through the Spirit we have received the gift of faith. Perhaps at times it is a mustard seed faith, but it is a faith that Jesus is our Rescuer from sin, death, and the devil. He is the rescuer who brings calm to our life. Faith in Jesus quiets storms!

When it rained for 40 days and 40 nights, Noah and his family floated safely in the ark. For more than a year, the ark was their safe place. With all the animals it probably wasn't quiet, but it was secure. When the storm raged on the sea, the disciples were safe because Jesus was with them in the boat. We are safely in the boat of the church. Our Lutheran Service Book includes this petition in the introduction to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism: "We pray that this child be kept safe and secure in the holy ark of the Christian Church." This is our 'sanctuary,' this is our "boat" where Jesus speaks to us in the means of grace. This is where the storms of the week are again quieted as forgiveness of sins is announced in the words of absolution and at the Lord's Table.

Several years ago, Diane and I were blessed to be part of a fall foliage cruise up the St. Lawrence Seaway. From Montreal, Canada we went northeast around and through the Atlantic Provinces and down the coast of Maine, Massachusetts and other coastline states. Our itinerary was altered when a "nor'easter" began moving up the coast. A "nor'easter" can bring strong winds and high waves along the coastal areas. It can be extremely dangerous. The ship



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captain's response was to put the ship into a protective bay along the coast, where the ship rocked for a few days but we were safe. Although I would have preferred to have Jesus on the boat to calm the sea and allow us to make the planned historic and scenic stops, it was important to have a quiet and safe place.

When unexpected "storms" come in our community, our family, or our church, it's important to have a quiet place to which we can retreat. It is important to have a Lord and Savior in our presence who speaks "Peace, be still."

Edward Hopper, pastor of the Church of Sea and Land, in New York city, in the 1880's directed his seafaring worshippers to the Lord of the sea and land. Hopper penned the hymn, "As a mother stills her child, Thou canst hush the ocean wild; boisterous waves obey Thy will, when thou say'st to them, 'Be still.' Wondrous Sov'reign of the sea, Jesus Savior, pilot me." (LSB #715, vs. 2)

I especially appreciate Hopper's word picture, "As a mother stills her child . . ." Perhaps you've been the parent, grandparent, or other care-giver holding and rocking the fearful, crying child saying, "Shh . . . it's going to be okay." Jesus holds us and calmly assures us, "Be quiet. It's going to be okay," in Jesus name. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds quieted in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.