

*35On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "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?"*

Remember a time when you were afraid.

A thunderstorm. An earthquake. A flood. A hurricane. A blizzard. A sandstorm.

Did you stand at the edge of a precipice? Were smoke and flames gathering in intensity? Was a sea of faces watching you as your mind went blank? Were you home alone in the dark of night when there was a sound? Were you sinking beneath the water thrashing for some air? Had the ice given way to thrust you into the numbing cold?

Maybe your moment of fear came with the look on the doctor's face before he told you the news - or waiting for the surgeon when the surgery should have been done hours ago - or in the days before you get the results of the test that may show that your child will not live as a normal child lives.

Was it the night your teenager was out way past his curfew? Your toddler wandered off in a busy mall? Your mom was an hour late in picking you up?

For the twelve disciples their moment of fearing a great fear happened on a boat. You heard the story a moment ago: Jesus had been teaching the crowd in parables, when it was evening he told the disciples: Let us go over to the other side. So Jesus and his disciples crossed the sea of Galilee in a boat.

While they were out on the water, a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat so that the boat was already being swamped. But Jesus was asleep on the cushion.

I can just see it – the disciples battling to keep the boat from going under by bailing out the water with all their strength and Jesus, asleep.

It is no wonder that they woke him and accused him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”

It kind of reminds me of another scene: We read that Jesus was distressed and agitated. And he said to his disciples: “I am deeply grieved, even to death, remain here and keep awake.” And while Jesus prayed that the hour of his death might be avoided, the disciples slept.

That night on the sea, with the wind and the waves threatening to drown them all Jesus woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” Then the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But do you know what? We still have not gotten to the point in the story that Mark tells us that the disciples feared a great fear - the wind and the waves and not a word about their fear. But when it was all over this is what Jesus said: “Why are you afraid?” (and the word in the Greek there might best be translated cowardly) Why are you cowardly? Do you still not have any faith?

And then Mark tells us: And they feared a great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” Not the storm but the realization of who Jesus might be filled them with fear. For only God can command the wind and the sea and they obey.

You and I have a choice: we can either fear God or we can fear everything else. We can either know that if we are right with God everything else will take care of itself or we can not be right with God and no matter how anything else turns out we are still lost. When Jesus was deeply troubled and grieved in the garden of Gethsemane that night he prayed, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” Jesus did not want to go to the cross – he feared it – but he feared God more. God’s will came before all else.

How many hours I can spend worrying about those things that someday may threaten me and miss the very things God wants. The disciples ended up sleeping when the real time of danger was close.

I think of our life together in the church. What is the real threat to us? Is the greatest threat to our life together to have financial problems? I know those are the storms that get my greatest attention. But I think that

Jesus might just be sleeping through those storms. The storms that get his attention are when we lose faith – lose courage to share God’s love with the outsider. That is where the disciples and Jesus were going that day – across the sea to where the Gentiles lived – the people who did not believe in the God of Israel. On the far shore Jesus and the disciples would encounter a man possessed by demons who could not even be chained but who lived in a graveyard among the tombs, howling and bruising himself with stones. For this wreck of a human being Jesus and the disciples endured a stormy sea. And what might you endure to make a difference in a human life?

You young people who are traveling to New York may face some challenges this week. You will trust that God will provide what you need to help those who need your help.

And those of us who stay behind? There will be lives for us to touch if we remember that each one we encounter is loved by God.

Maybe you noticed that I haven’t told you the storms will go away – nor have I suggested the fears will either. But I hope for you and me that we will know that the one who drank that cup of suffering to the very bottom will not fail to give us what we need every step along the way. Fearing and trusting and loving him above all else, you will be all right. No matter what, you will be all right.