

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
St. Matthew 8:23-27
January 29th, 2017
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Greenville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Why Are You Fearful?

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

The storm rages. Our Lord sleeps. The disciples are afraid for their life. Their peril seems to go unnoticed. Does the Lord not care that they are perishing?

Storms rage in our life as well. We face temptation from sin. The devil, the world, and our flesh assault us from all sides and from within and from without. We face the storms hardship in this life: disease, poverty, and the persecutions of the world and our society against us and the Church and Christianity. We face storms within our own family, as we struggle with our loved ones over various issues of this life and world.

And, in our anxiety we cry out to the Lord. Does He rescue us right away? Sometimes He does. But, there are the times when our cries seem to fall on deaf ears. When will our Lord rescue us from our personal storm? The storm rages, the waves crash against the boat. We are rocked to and fro. We cry out, "Lord, help us!" There appears to be no help coming. Perhaps our Lord is asleep.

"Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" At first this seems like a strange saying. Does not the fact that the disciples ask the Lord for help show that they have faith? Then why the rebuke for their little faith? At least they go to the right source, and do not think that they can solve the problem all on their own—which was impossible for them. At least they are not like so many people—and us too sometimes—who believe that if they work hard enough on the problem it will go away. This is not really the way of faith: that you if you believe hard enough it will happen according to your will. This makes faith your work, and the outcome of faith your work. It really leaves the Lord out of the equation, even though we may even invoke Him. This is faith turned inward toward ourselves, and is dependent upon our believing enough.

But, here in this Gospel we get a lesson on just how faith works. Our Lord shows us what true faith is like. For faith clings to something or someone; trusts in someone or something to grant it comfort and peace in this life. And true faith trusts and clings to the One, True God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for all that we need to support this body and life. A person with a sure and confident faith—a faith that cannot be shaken by the storms of life remains calm and can find peace even when the storms is raging round about him; even when the waves crash against the boat of our life and rock us to and fro, a person with great faith, does not even notice them, because their faith is firmly planted in the One Who can rescue him in His own set time. In this person, there is no fear or worry, no anxiousness or

stress, but only reliance that the Lord God, Who made Heaven and Earth, will not allow him to suffer beyond what he is able to handle. Unfortunately, that person is none of us.

Who is the only One in the text Who exhibits this calm? Our Lord + Jesus. He is the One Who possesses perfect faith—something we will not possess in this life, not until we are united with our Lord God in Heaven. Our Lord reveals to us today just what perfect faith is. It is not that He does not care whether Him and His disciples perish, but it is that our Lord trusts so perfectly in His Father's ability to deliver Him from all trial, persecution and temptation that He is completely content. He trusts so completely in His Heavenly Father, that He falls asleep knowing that He is completely protected and held close by His Heavenly Father.

This is why the Lord calls out His disciples for their little faith. A person with more than a little faith would see the situation and say, "If the Lord sleeps and is content in this storm, then I too should have faith that our Lord will deliver us from this storm." I have to confess that I have not achieved this level of faith, yet. For, I still worry and get stressed out during the storms of life. I still try fruitlessly to fix things that are completely out of my control. I still struggle with trusting our Lord and His will in times of trial and temptation. So, what am I to do? What are you to do, when you experience a similar situation? How does one fix a faith that is little? The Word of God.

It is the Word of God that proclaims to us once again the promises that our Lord and Savior made to us: that He has forgiven us of our sin by His perfect obedience to the Law and will of God; that He has opened for us the gates of Heaven and has prepared a home for us with Him in Heaven for all eternity; and that He has saved us from sin, death and the devil by His sacrifice of Himself on the tree of the holy cross, taking upon Himself our punishment. It is the promises of God, the great works that He has done for us, that creates and strengthens faith in us. The Holy Ghost is working through the Word to open our eyes to see what our Lord has done for us. We need constant reminding of His promises, because our eyes are repeatedly drawn to the storm and waves, and taken off of our Savior and Lord, + Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost, through the means of grace, directs our eyes back to our Lord and Savior; He directs our faith back into the One Who can deliver us from all trials, persecutions and temptations. The Holy Ghost directs our eyes back to our Lord through the preaching of the Word, so that we know longer are looking at the storms and waves, but at our Lord Who made Heaven and Earth.

The disciples also needed to have their eyes redirected. They needed to have their faith pointed at the right source. They needed to stop clinging to their own abilities, and cling to the One Who could rescue them, even if He was sleeping—the Lord of all Heaven and Earth—the Lord + Jesus Christ. And so, the Lord + Jesus does just that. He calms the storm with a word. What is the response, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" This is not a question that seeks an answer. It is a rhetorical question: a question to which the answer is already known. This question confirms the fact that they knew exactly Who the Lord + Jesus was, He was the Lord Who made Heaven and Earth. This man was God—the One, True God. He is the man Who came down from Heaven and was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He is the Lord of all things. He is the One to Whom we should cling to in all times of trial and temptation. He is the only One to Whom our faith should be directed.

In seeing once again the Lord + Jesus doing something only the One True God could do, the disciples are once more strengthened in their faith in Him. The same is true for us. This is why it is so important for us to be here today. So that we can hear the Word of God once again; so that we can hear the promises of our Lord once more that He has won for us forgiveness, life and salvation. For in hearing, we are strengthened in our faith. For in hearing, we see just like the disciples, the great works of God, and can say with them, "Who can this be?" It can be none other than our Lord + Jesus Christ,

the One Who rescues us from the storm and waves of life; Who calms the winds and sea with His Word. When we hear, our eyes of faith are directed away from ourselves, and back to our Lord + Jesus.

When we are troubled with sin; when we are troubled with disease and sickness and infirmity; when we face poverty; when we are persecuted by the world and society; when we have trials within our own families; when your spouse has to live a thousand miles away because her employer has not gotten around to transferring her, it is in these times when we need to hear the promises of God most. We need to hear how our Lord God has taken care of us, and will continue to take care of us. This is why it is good for us to be here and hear His Word, but we must also continue to hear that Word every day of our life, for our struggles in this life are not weekly or monthly, but they are daily—in truth, they are hourly. Therefore, we need to hear God's Word every hour, minute and second of our life, so that we are drawn to Him, and learn to trust in Him. The more we hear our Lord's Word, the more it is to our benefit.

For our Lord promises that in that Word the Holy Ghost will work to create and strengthen your faith, so that you believe that no matter what befalls you in this life, our Lord will rescue and deliver you, and finally when your last hour comes, take you from this vale of tears, to His eternal home in Heaven. Why are fearful? Do not be fearful, the Lord will calm your winds and sea, through His Word preached into your ears that the man + Jesus is the God Who created the heavens and the Earth, and has come down from His throne to win for you forgiveness, life and salvation by His sacrifice on the holy cross. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Announcements of a Spiritual Nature

Prayers

Recitation of the Catechism

The Ten Commandments