

Gospel: Mark 4:35-41^{viii ix}

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But 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?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

^{viii} **About the Gospel: Mark 4:35-41**

Today's story of the stilling of the storm comes at the end of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom in parables (4:1-34) and serves as a transition as Jesus and the disciples cross the Sea of Galilee to inaugurate the kingdom ministry for the Gentiles with a massive exorcism of a "legion" of demons. In chapters 5-8 they will crisscross the Lake performing similar signs and wonders on both the Jewish and Gentile sides of the Sea.

The storm on the sea not only illustrates the situation of the disciples but also that of Mark's community—tossed about by the chaos around them with Jesus apparently asleep at the steering rudder (v. 38). In their panic, the disciples awaken Jesus, who calms the storm with a word. Then Jesus issues the first of a set of challenges to them (7:18, 8:17, 21, 9:19) to come to faith in the rule of God as shown in him (4:40).

The great storm is a test of what the disciples have learned from Jesus' teaching (4:34). But as always in Mark's gospel, the disciples fail to demonstrate that they have understood. Jesus' demonstration of power over nature is another indication that Jesus' ministry participates in God's power. God alone has power over the seas (Psalm 65:7; Job 12:15), even over the primeval waters of chaos (Isaiah 51:10; Jeremiah 5:22). Jesus "rebuked the wind" (v.

39), the same Greek word used to describe Jesus' power to drive out demons (1:25, 9:25), saying to the sea literally 'be muzzled' (as in 1:25).

^{ix} Reflection and Response

Much as we would like to think otherwise, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." And how much better to fear God who saves than to fear the things that threaten to destroy us!

When the Lord answers Job out of the whirlwind giving an awesome view of creative power and might, Job's heart trembles before the one with whom he had contended so ignorantly and reproachfully. His fear is not only the beginning of wisdom, but also the beginning of real faith, as his ensuing humility leads to confession and acceptance by the Lord. Job makes one of the greatest confessions of faith in the Bible: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God" (Job. 19:25-26).

Job's spiritual experience is repeated by the disciples' experience on the Sea of Galilee. Putting out to sea in the evenings was a grave risk, since the sudden storms that come up on the sea often occur at sundown. In this scene, the disciples were obeying the Lord's command against the odds for security. We tend to think that having Jesus in the boat would have spared them any trouble.

The disciples are not prepared for the action Jesus takes. He stills the storm at sea in an exhibition of God's power and control over creation. His question: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" is meant to convey to the disciples that their security lay in a different realm. When God is in control, no forces of destruction can touch them. Not a bad lesson to learn, even if fear is the teacher.