

**June 21, 2009**

**Mark 4:35-41**

## **Still In One Peace**

**Jesus does not promise to calm every storm in your life.**

**Jesus does promise to calm you in every storm of life.**

**So on this Father's Day we pause to especially thank those men who have chartered our course and have weathered the storms of life.**

**We live in the Great Lake State. Michigan is surrounded by the world's greatest supply of fresh water. The Great Lakes have also produced some legendary sailors and boaters.**

**From sailors in the Port Huron to Mackinaw and the Mackinaw to Chicago races. From Gar Wood and the founding of Chris Craft in Marine City, to the mighty freighters from all ports of the world.**

I admire sailors and boaters who calmly face fierce storms; bad weather; pitching and tossing waters.

While land lubbers cling to sides and hang their heads over the rails, seaman can remain in an almost worshipful calm.

Watching these mariners, so apparently unperturbed by the howling winds and crashing waves, makes me realized we too can also have a truly waterproof faith.

God can give us the ability to likewise ride out life's storms with as much confidence.

What makes mariners so peaceful in the face of a tempest?

It is the same trait that the disciples so woefully lacked in today's gospel text: an unquenchable trust in Christ.

After stretching out his arms and stilling the storm, Jesus turned to his companions and chastised them.

By crying out to Jesus in fear, they had revealed the shallowness of their faith. Although they had been specially chosen as Jesus' fellow travelers on this journey, they missed the boat.

What could have been more of a thrill than witnessing this miracle of Jesus' calming the storm?

The miracle Jesus wanted to show them was not the miracle of calming the storm but the miracle of calming them in the storm.

This is the faith the faith of a true mariner -- the faith that knows with Jesus that there is no storm too fierce, no opponent too great, and no crisis too complete.

The disciples lost out on their chance to experience the jubilation, the sheer exhilaration that could have been theirs had they had the courage to ride the waves of that storm with Jesus.

Instead, their timidity forced him to shut the ride down and sail them into port.

How many of us have voluntarily dry-docked our faith?  
How many of us keep land-locked for safety's sake?

If a few of us do venture out on the water, it is usually only to paddle about in the shallows -- afraid to sail too far away from land, where the current might grab us and take us off in unknown directions.

What are we afraid of? While the disciples did have the advantage of witnessing firsthand the power of Jesus to heal, they did not yet have the experience of witnessing Christ's death and resurrection to buoy up their courage.

The resurrection teaches us we need no longer fear anything, not even death itself. So what keeps us still spiritually anchored in safe, snug harbors?

Are we, perhaps, more afraid of becoming failures than of becoming fatalities? Are we more afraid of living than we are afraid of dying?

Jesus doesn't want us to keep only to the narrow paths of life, the "tried and true." Jesus kept moving throughout his ministry, always pushing the disciples along to the next community or grabbing a boat to journey to a new shore.

Jesus doesn't call us to just live within our limits. Jesus calls us to live into our limits

That is the continuing call of the church -- to go everywhere, be everywhere, to hit the road and sail the seven seas. How else can the church fulfill the directive Jesus gave it to go "... to the ends of the earth?"

The miracle story of Jesus' calming the storm at sea testifies to two truths.

First, as a child of God, there is nothing Christ cannot do to keep us from ultimate harm.

Second, as Jesus' disciples living in an imperfect world, we are in for some rough times.

This gospel story confirms that the boat in which Jesus and his disciples found themselves went through a real storm, a real threat.

The storm doesn't blow around their boat just because Jesus is on board. It hits them full force.

Nowhere does Jesus promise his followers anything different. A peaceful voyage is not the ticket Christians travel on.

But a peace-filled journey, with Christ always present, is. Christ's promise is not to sail us around every storm but is to bring us through all storms -- still in one peace.

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Look around you. Many people are in the midst of storms right now. Home fore closures, unemployment, illness and death. Fifteen million Americans attend half-a-million support groups weekly.

How should we at Franklin Church best respond? Our church is not meant for hiding out but for striding forth. Jesus reminded his followers: "Peace! Be Still." Once the storm is over Jesus sends the disciples out again.

The Rev. Dr. William Barclay (1907-1978) was one of Scotland's greatest scholar theologians, a pastor and statesman.

He held degrees from Glasgow University, Marburg University and Edinburgh University. The hundreds of books he wrote were written to be easily understood.

By the end of his life Barclay was probably the most widely read Christian author of his day. He also had a weekly radio show on the BBC. Queen Elizabeth made him a Commander of the British Empire.

William and Barbara Barclay had three children.

On August 11, 1956 their daughter Barbara Mary, tragically drowned at Sea. Shortly after the death of the Barclay's beloved daughter, William Barclay told the BBC:

"Whether Jesus was able to calm a storm on the Sea of Galilee around 30 A.D. is not very important. The fact that Jesus today still calms the storms in the hearts of people is what is really important."

For me Christ's resurrection message was: "Go tell them I am risen and meet me on the road ... Behold, I go before you and led you into new truth and new opportunities."

Amen.

## **Prayer**

Almighty God, Lord of the storm and of the calm, the vexed sea and the quiet haven, of day and of night, of life and of death, grant unto us so to have our hearts stayed upon your faithfulness, and love, that, whatsoever happens to us, however black the cloud or dark the night, with quiet faith trusting in you, we may look upon you with untroubled eye, and walking in lowliness towards you and in lovingness towards another, abide all storms and troubles of this mortal life, begging you that they may turn to the soul's true good. We ask it for your mercy's sake, shown in Jesus Christ our Lord.