**Mark 6:45-56 (ESV)**

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. **46** And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. **47** And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. **48** And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, **49** but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, **50** for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” **51** And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, **52** for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. **53**  When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. **54** And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him **55** and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. **56** And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

**“Weathering The Storm”**

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come Jesus Christ Our Lord, Amen (Revelation 1:4). During the early times of the Old Testament, God used His creation to bring judgment upon a sinful world. The devastation by water let nothing remain as it was and changed everything that would be. Noah and his sons were still more than helpless after walking off the ark. One-drop of rain would have surely invoked fear at all levels. God alone had to speak a promising Word to save them. He even used the terrorizing water as the agent that would produce His sign set in a rainbow. Greater than this promise in creation is what has come to us now at the time of the New Testament.

God became man in Jesus Christ. The creator has joined Himself to creation. This was not for a time, but for all eternity as a promise given to humanity. St. Mark today records a strange event taking place in-between two glorious events. Last week on the one side of the lake, there was the miracle where Jesus fed the 5,000. This week on the other side of the lake, we have Jesus healing as many people as touched Him. Here are the two greatest things for life food and health. Yet, what sticks out like a sore thumb is the episode out on that water. It has nothing to do with food or health, not even a rainbow, but the promise to believe God has become man. Jesus sends us into storms to turn hard hearts to trust in Him for salvation.

The disciples already had a long day. Helping to feed so many people must have been a strenuous task. Jesus knew they were hard workers, so He sent them across the Sea of Galilee. The distances would be about eight miles or four times as wide as Silver Lake. None complained about it and plenty had experience out on the water. However, what was at first a boat ride turned into a struggle of madness. Who could have planned for this bad weather? God did. Jesus sent them into this dire situation. He would let their paddling prove nothing as the wind robbed them of whatever strengthen they had left. St. Mark describes, “And Jesus saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them.” God knew their sorry state of affairs. Jesus was with them, but He was not going to help, at least not until the powers of the Law emptied their life.

God still cares for the world with food and healing. Those baptized into Christ have a promise that surpasses these blessings. It means Jesus has and will put us into difficult and impossible situations. He does this for our good, though we will far from believe it to be good. God allows the Law to have its way with us and drain our works. If this does not happen, we end up justifying ourselves and hoping in what we can do no different from an unbelieving world. Our Lutheran Fathers state, “As long as a man’s mind is at rest and he does not feel God’s wrath or judgment, he can imagine that he wants to love God and that he wants to do good for God’s sake” (Tappert 108:9). Like the disciples, God makes us row against the Law. Farmers have felt this in the fields and others with personal health, managing finances, and some with matters many miss. The reaction is to just row harder or faster, it might even be with love for the Lord. Yet, works never truly rescue us from our sorry state of affairs.

Jesus left His disciples out in the water only for so long. He did not abandon them as if He enjoyed watching their struggle. Instead, at the right time, which was about 3-6am in the morning, He came. When dawn was emerging, Jesus walked out to them on water as if it were like land. Their works worn down by the wind put them into a position to see Jesus in His glory as God. They found no comfort for their pain of rowing turned into complete fear. This was the same fear that Moses had hiding his face from God. Yet, the face of Jesus held the promise that God became man. They received not only His Word of “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” This “it is I” is Jesus claiming Himself to be God, the great “I am.” Let alone they received a second miracle when the creator of the world stepped into the boat and calmed the storm. His presence was their protection just as His Word gave faith for all to believe in Him.

Events can change when we least expect it. God moves from Law to Gospel to lift up the broken and battered lives of His baptized. Far greater than a storm, we know Jesus went the way of the cross. Love for sinners allowed Him to walk where no one else could because no one else is God. He suffered the storm of judgment by the Law against our whole sinful life. Jesus brings forgiveness to our worn out lives of works. There is no need to hide out of fear from what we see. His Word still brings absolution by the called ministers that He sends to the Church. His Word claims the baptized to “Take heart,” for the cheerful hope is Jesus works to save no matter how dark the situation. Likewise, “do not be afraid” invites the baptized to pray always in His Name knowing He hears us. More than His Word, we receive a double miracle of Jesus present for us at the Lord’s Supper. If this does not calm the storms of sin and death, nothing will, God is holding out His life for you. Jesus’ promise is not a rainbow made by water, but His body given as the sacrifice. The watery Word of baptism has risen up to bind us into God’s death and life.

When the disciples got to the other side, they had a different view of Jesus. It tells us the people “immediately recognized him” and they sought Him wherever He went. Yet, whether it was with the food on the one side or healing on the other, God was offering far more than something for this life. Works were to give way to faith and courage that the One whom the disciples knew was God able to save from all sin, death, and the Devil. As St. Paul later writes, “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” Greater than the promise Noah had from God after the flood, there is finally an enteral promise set in Christ that has risen up to the highest gates of heaven.

Rather than the winds of the Law blowing against works, the Spirit given by the Gospel forgives, leads, and saves in ways far beyond what men can imagine or achieve. By the resurrection of Jesus, we can admit food and health are nice, even rain too, but they cannot compare to the miracle of the cross. Those wounds of Christ won the battle and they go before us all the days of our life, even to death so we need not doubt Him. Jesus did send out His disciples one last time not to cross a lake, but into the depths of a sinful world. Yet, what was the promise for the church that went out baptizing and teaching? Just this promise that has not lost its power for God said, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20). Jesus sends us into storms to turn hard-hearts to trust in His saving love. Amen. Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding be with your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.