

"Come"

Mark 4: 35-41

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Church of Reconciliation

One of my very first experiences with water that I can remember was when I was around 6. My family and I were having a picnic with our extended family at a lake. Although not completely afraid of water, I was not a strong swimmer, and already at the tender age of 6, had figured out my boundaries and my limits: if the water is not over my head, all should be right with the world! My dad decided that my day would just not be complete without going down this playground looking water slide, that would quickly shoot me off and into the lake. All of my cousins had been on it all day long, and I guess he figured that I needed to have a turn too. Despite my begging and pleading for this event NOT TO HAPPEN, he insisted that I would be just fine, because he was going to go down with me, and keep me (and my head) above the water. At 6 years old, I had no reason not to trust him, so I cautiously and carefully climbed the steps of the ladder to the slide. Now, as I look back on this, I realize that I had to walk into the water, to get to the steps of the ladder, and the water was not above my head, in order to do that. So common sense should have told me, that the water at the ladder must have been a similar depth to the water at the bottom of the slide. In the event of emergency, all I needed to do was stand up. That thought NEVER occurred to me! SO, none-the-less I was petrified, as I fearfully climbed the steps with my dad, who as promised was right behind me. With every step, I trusted that my dad was going to keep me safe. As I got to the top of the slide, I had to sit down first, so that my dad could then sit down, and wrap his legs around me. From this point on, the details get a little fuzzy, but my best guess is that there was not enough room on the top platform to make this all happen the way it was planned! He was almost seated in place, and the next thing I know, I am going down this crazy slide ALL BY MYSELF! I vividly remember being scared to death and hearing my father's voice

screaming my name. Needless to say, I sank like a rock and I was completely under the water. Instantly, I felt this mighty and powerful hand grabbing me up and out of the water...rescuing me from this most frightening situation....and comforting me and loving me in the midst of my fear and my tears. He reminded me that even though "our plan" did not work out like he had hoped, that I could still trust him, and that he would always do everything in His power to rescue me, always!

I trusted that promise from my earthly Father and as we listened to the Gospel Reading from Mark 4:35-41, I had to wonder as the disciples climbed in the boat, if they trusted Jesus that night too? I also wondered about the experiences that the disciples had had with water? We know that several of them were fisherman and I am going to assume that like me at 6 years old, they too weren't afraid of the water per say, but they knew their limits. I wonder if they had a false sense of security because they were in a boat? Had they experienced "storms" in the past and lived to tell about it? With Jesus and a boat, what could possibly go wrong?!? Right!

So let's assume that that evening when Jesus says to them in verse 35 "Let us go across to the other side" that the disciples have no reason to fear per say. Prior to this moment, it appears to have been a pretty long day of "teaching" beside the sea. These verses don't tell us what was on the other side of the water, but I wonder if the disciples may have been thinking...some quiet time might be nice, some rest from teaching and ministering to the people would be welcome...I'm not sure. Maybe Jesus had a whole other plan that they were not privy to? Maybe on the other side of the water was a whole other group of people for Jesus and the disciples to minister to. It just doesn't say....

But we know from verse 36 that they leave the crowd behind (although it also says that other boats go with them, so not really sure that they leave the ENTIRE crowd behind) and the disciples take Jesus with them

in the boat, "just as He was." Have you ever stopped to consider that phrase... "just as He was?" I hadn't? At our staff meeting, we chatted about that seemingly unnoticeable phrase that most of us have always skimmed right by when reading. Was Jesus exhausted, hungry, discouraged? Maybe He was filled with excitement, maybe encouraged by the day's events when they took him on the boat? Was He already asleep when they took Him on the boat? Was He in need of some quiet time and prayer with God? Again...not sure....All we know is that the disciples brought Jesus onto the boat that night "just as He was." I believe that this is exactly what Jesus is asking from us...what He modeled for us. Come to Him "just as you are." He even reminds us of that in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

In verse 37, we see that any hopes for some "rest," for the disciples at least, is squashed, because a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped...taking in a lot of water. These furious storms...this storm.... was sudden and violent and were common on this lake because of the fact that it was surrounded by high hills and narrow valleys that functioned as wind tunnels. My hunch is that it must have been pretty intense to frighten these seasoned fishermen (who again knew their limits.)

So, as they are panicking, we learn in verse 38 that Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. Asleep in the midst of a storm...seemingly indifferent/unfazed by the situation. If I was in the boat that night, I wonder if I would have been more frustrated with Jesus or more amazed by Him? Frustrated that I am getting NO help from Jesus during this storm OR amazed by the fact that He could be sleeping during this violent storm. My guess is that the disciples are feeling frustrated because they wake Jesus up and say to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" Translate to modern language...."Uh Hello

Jesus, a little help here might be nice!! But you have to wonder what they really thought Jesus would do to "fix this problem?" What was the plan here, because it didn't seem to be going right? Was He supposed to help them control the boat? Maybe bail out some water? Maybe carry them all out of the boat and walk on the water to the safety of the shore? Maybe pray them through the storm. My guess is they were not completely confident that Jesus COULD rescue them, but if they were going down, Jesus was at least going to be awake to notice!! In my heart, I'd like to think/hope that the disciples were already practicing a little bit of what they had been taught, even if it was unknowingly, when they woke up Jesus. My hope is that if Jesus had been teaching them about God, and His relationship with God, and modeling to them that He had the power/ability to intercede on their behalf with God, that maybe in the midst of the chaos of the storm, the disciples remember that there are these other boats following them that don't have Jesus on board. Maybe the disciples were interceding on behalf of these other folks, waking Jesus up in the hopes that they could help these other followers, just like Jesus had called them to do. Is it possible that their motives for waking Jesus were not completely out of fear and frustration, but out of love and compassion and concern for the others? What is your storm? Do you feel like Jesus is sleeping in the midst of it? Will you cry out to Him? Are we asleep in the midst of a storm? Maybe our storm or someone else's? How is God calling you to cry out and intercede for those who can't?

So regardless of the disciples motives of waking their Teacher, we see in verse 39 that Jesus wakes up and rebukes the wind, and says to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. I know scripture says that Jesus rebuked the wind and sea, but I can't help but wonder, if He should have been talking to the disciples... Peace! Be Still! I have the power to handle this storm. I may not handle it the way that you want or in the time that you want, but I've got it. Crazy random thought here, but maybe the whole point of Jesus

sleeping, was He was giving the disciples some time to try and figure out "the plan"...what they were going to do...try and handle it their way...or cry out to Jesus for help! I'm not sure, but we read that as sudden as the storm began is how suddenly the storm stopped! Coincidence...maybe? The power and authority of the voice of God? Either way, we know the result is dead calm. For me, I will choose to believe that the power of His voice calmed that storm. The physical storm and the storm that was raging inside the minds and hearts of the disciples. Where do I need peace and to be still, so that I can see and hear the power and the authority of the voice of God calm the storm? How do I underestimate Jesus' power?

Jesus rebukes the wind and the waves and now in verse 40 He rebukes the disciples, saying to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" Despite all that they had witnessed Jesus do, the disciples were still fearful, full of worry, doubting Jesus, lacking faith. But let's be honest...Isn't that what we do in the middle of the storms of life? The disciples were the picture of humanity in this moment. In this week's Forward Day by Day, it talked about "the disciples being an ideal small group but let's face it, they were also deeply flawed....naysayers, fickle-minded, easily distracted, anxious contemptuous and deceitful. To put it simply, they were human: the good, the bad and the ugly." And although we read no answer to the questions from Jesus to the disciples, it may or may not be safe to say that the disciples would have said, "because we are human...and because faith in the midst of a storm is sometimes really hard?" In a different reading from Forward Day by Day the writer talks about the phrase "Just Have Faith". I enjoyed how timely that phrase was and was comforted by reading that "faith is more than a belief or a desire. Rather faith is about turning away from the idols and trappings of the world and opening our hearts to the living God. The more we turn toward God, the more we open ourselves to God's impossible impossibilities. It is with this kind of faith

that mountains are moved, new dimensions are made known, (I will insert storms are calmed) and we are transformed."

And this transformation is what we get a glimpse of from the disciples in verse 41 where they are filled with great awe of the one who calms the sea. Am I, are you, in awe of the One who calms the sea?

As followers of Christ, what could this story mean for us today?

In my opinion, I think it would be very easy to focus our attention on the fear, the worry, the doubt, the lack of faith (and I have done my fair share of talking about that this morning!) We could easily focus our thoughts and mind on Jesus calming the storms in our lives. Gosh our week long VBS theme this summer is Shipwrecked: Jesus Rescues! And honestly, I think that no one could fault us for that application today.

But I wonder what would happen if we walked away today focusing our attention on something else....the water...the beautiful, refreshing, life giving, life sustaining water. Yes our verses today pointed us to the challenges water can bring, but what about ALL the miracles of water that we read about in God's Word. We find the miracles of water in creation and the miraculous appearance and allowance of water in the desert. In Exodus the parting of the waters of the Red Sea saved the Israelites. Water was used for purifying...making things clean...removing the dirt and restoring the beauty. Our very own Jesus was baptized with water, walked on water and changed water to wine. And today, as we prepare to baptize Miss Violet with water, we are blessed to be able to walk alongside her and her family and to be reminded of the new life in Christ that this water will bring. To renew our own baptismal covenants. To welcome Violet into this family of believers and to intercede for her and for her family (like the disciples interceded for the boats that were alongside theirs...like Jesus intercedes for us) and to remind them of this water that washes over us today and every day. The water that purifies us and makes us new in

the beauty and the wonder and the mystery and even sometimes the challenges of this life.

The Book of Common Prayer has a prayer for the Thanksgiving over Water for Baptism: "We thank you Almighty God for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us through his death and resurrection from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.....We thank you God for the water of Baptism.....Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit."

In Revelation 22:17 we are given an invitation: "the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty "Come." Let anyone who wishes, take the water of life as a gift." We are honored and privileged to walk alongside Violet as she takes this water of life as a gift! My prayer for us all today is that we will reach out and take hold of this life-giving, life sustaining water that Christ has offered to each and every one of us. The water that offers us a new life in Christ. All you have to do is "Come."

Amen