

Mark 4:35-41: Why Are Ye Afraid?

By Rick Brand

Of all the stories in the New Testament, perhaps this story is most symbolic of the Christian church. Throughout the history of Christianity, disciples have read this story and seen in it their own situations.

For you see, we are now the disciples in the boat. This very day you sit in what is called the nave of the church, and nave is the Latin word for ship. The Christian community has always used as the symbol of its life the ship on storm-tossed waves with the cross on top of the ship. You are now in the boat with Jesus Christ, and the storms are raging outside.

There is no need to prove that the storms are raging! You know what the storms are around you. You know what the storms in your own life are. We are in the boat with Christ, and the storms rage and they are frightening.

In the scripture story, Jesus disciples are doing what Jesus instructed them to do. They have Jesus with them on the boat and yet the storm comes up. This story has always been important to the Christian faith because it is evidence that having Jesus with us in the boat is never a guarantee that there

will not be storms in our lives. And even though Jesus is with us, many of us, like the disciples, lose hold of our faith.

“Don’t you care if we perish?” the disciples ask Jesus. They were not concerned about whether or not Jesus the Messiah and the mission of the Messiah might perish. In their fear they expected Jesus to care about them and to save them from danger.

Likewise, when we become afraid of the storms around us the temptation is to believe that God does not care what happens to us. With the fear there returns that old expectation that God’s obligation is to protect us. Walter Bruggemann suggests that one of the marks of atheism is when we return to that “insistence on self-definition. . . . for it is based on the surmise and fear that there is no one but us. And only our voice can prevent the terror of cosmic silence.” Don’t you care if we perish?

Jesus spoke the words, “Peace! Be still!” The words had an effect on both the disciples and the storm. The words of Jesus are directed to all the different forms of evil, mistrust, and fear that are working in the world. Jesus actions to speak to the

winds and the sea (those hostile storms outside) exerted control over the disciples fear and mistrust.

Jesus demonstrates the power to protect and care for his church and his disciples. There are no storms that by the hope of Jesus Christ his people cannot endure. Jesus does care and is able to keep his people from sinking and falling into the full power and control of hopelessness and despair.

Let us pray...

Keeper of our lives,

you know the hardness and gentleness of human hearts.

You call your people to faithful living.

Through the storms of life

that bring suffering and fear, joy and laughter,

teach us to turn to you for all we need,

so that we may come to know your presence

even in the midst of the trials that surround us. Amen.