

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – June 20, 2021

“Peace! Be still!” (Mark 4:39)

The 4th chapter of Mark begins with Jesus preaching a string of parables. We read of the sower crazily scattering seed with some landing on rocky soil, lit lamps hiding under baskets, sowers not knowing how the harvest grows, and a mustard seed growing wildly out of control.

After all this preaching, teaching, and explaining, Jesus became tired and wanted some alone time. He takes a boat trip with his disciples to “the other side.” During the journey, exhausted Jesus falls asleep on a cushion in the stern of the boat. A great wind comes up, tossing the occupants about and causing them to be afraid. Waves were breaking over and spilling into the little boat threatening to sink it. All the while, Jesus is asleep, seemingly unaware of the dire situation.

And that’s when the trouble begins. We hear the cry of the disciples: “Don’t you care that we are drowning?” The disciples’ cry is more honest than even they know. They are human beings and are perishing. Maybe not in this storm, but perhaps in another. Jesus awakens and rebukes the wind and the sea. It’s worth noting that Jesus doesn’t criticize or rebuke the disciples because of their fear. Jesus quiets the wind and waves with a two-fold command: “Peace! Be still!” Simply by speaking, Jesus produces a “great calm.”

All is well once again, that is, except for one more thing that is required. Jesus teaches them by asking a two-fold question, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” Jesus is explaining, “Open your eyes! The world is under the power of the coming kingdom of God.”

Once again, Jesus is teaching in parables. But this parable isn’t a sermon, it’s a storm. The disciples ask themselves, “Who then is this?” With “great fear” they wonder about that question. It’s easy to understand why they are afraid in the storm, but why are they afraid when Jesus teaches them? Do they fear because they’ve just witnessed Jesus perform another miracle? Are they afraid because they realize that it’s a risky thing to go sailing with Jesus? “Even the wind and the sea obey him” is an amazing thing to say about Jesus. We were warned at the opening statement. Jesus is more than just a person, a teacher, a preacher; he is none other than the Son of God.

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