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Rev. Kellie Wilson

The Gospel Mark 4:35-41

When evening had come, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Questions:

- Where were they and what was on the other side?
- Did this happen to all the boats that were with him or only the boat Jesus himself was in?
- What do we know about Jesus so far?
 - He can subdue the forces of the world
- What comes before?
 - The parables of seeds – good soil, mustard seed, sower who plants and ignores field
- What comes after?
 - Jesus subdues the Gerasene with the Legion of unclean spirits.

Notes:

- Its evening - its dark. What is around you is unseen and unknown. A bit (or a lot) of fear. Your senses are heightened. Your reactions more extreme. You're on alert and more aware and more sensitive.
 - The disciples have to cross over the chaos (water) in the dark to get to a new place.
 - Jesus sleeps in peace through the traveling at night in the chaos.
 - Of course the very word which creates would be able to tell that which he created to stop.

Sermon Points:

- My understanding of Jesus/God is not big enough.
- How do I know?
 - College story – always thought Jesus was distant even though people told me otherwise until Jesus showed up through my Dad. I understood Jesus was close at hand and loved me.
 - When I almost died. I never understood why I was here or the meaning of life. Until God broke in and gave me a purpose and called me to share that purpose with others
 - Just two examples, I know God will keep breaking in and teaching me more and more about God.
 - Today's gospel is one of those God box breaking stories.
- This is about Jesus' agency. It is designed to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?"
 - Answers
 - This section is the beginning of a section of Mark, which covers from Mark 4:35 – Mark 8:21. In this section, we two different stories of sea crossings. We get two

different feeding stories. Then, in between all these stories or exorcisms and healings. Why this pattern?

- It tells us Jesus is functioning like a new Moses in some ways. Jesus frees us from what oppresses us and binds us. The sea crossings should bring us back to the Israelites following God and Moses through the red sea to the Wilderness and then later following God and Joshua from the wilderness through the waters into the land of Canaan, the promised land.
 - It tells us Jesus is strong enough to bind up evil and the forces that bind us.
 - It tells us Jesus has control over the creative forces of this world. As the wind swept over the waters in Genesis 1, the wind sweeps over the Sea of Galilee, and as the Word speaks, the wind, water and whatever else brings forth creation and submits to that Word. (in Genesis, it was “Let there be...” Here it is “Peace! Be Still!”)
 - It tells us Jesus is present in the darkest and scariest of times – as they step out into the night (then unknown, the fear) to journey.
 - All of this speaks to Jesus as the one who brings renewal to Israel as prophesied by the prophets.
- The question for us is do we believe that God has given Jesus authority and ability to be stronger than any other forces. So often, I think people think its Jesus vs Satan. And that is not the case. Jesus is way more powerful than evil. Its our lack of faith which prevents us from seeing how much more powerful Jesus is, and living in faith of that power. To be at peace that God through Jesus is in control.
 - The answer to that question determines if you remain like the disciples and act out of fear and questions on the other side or if you can act from a place of centeredness, faith and trust, knowing Jesus is God’s agent and still has control.
- When we are going through tough times or change, we can be full of fear like the disciples in the reading. We can focus on what feels like chaos, and the long way we have to go to get solid ground again. Today’s story reminds us not to let the fear and chaos reign, but rather to focus on the one who is more powerful than it all – to focus on Jesus and Jesus’ promises. To know Jesus will bring renewal, new life and has power above it all. Your boat will not be swamped. It will make it to the other side. However, like the disciples, the reality is that we don’t always get it. Therefore, we should also allow ourselves and each other some grace, knowing not even those closest to Jesus were able to always get it and like them we still have a lot of learning to do and still continue to ask “Who is Jesus?”