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**July 18, 2021**  
**in the Season after Pentecost**

**Christians Strive for Confidence in Jesus**

Where do we Christians place our confidence? Certainly not in the weather, especially these days. Savings seem secure until recessions arrive. Health is good until it's not. The Lord Jesus invites us to put our confidence in him in good times and in bad. He is always in control—even the wind and the waves obey him!

**First Reading**

**Exodus 14:21-31**

*The Lord controls the waters of the sea to save his people.*

**Second Reading**

**Philippians 4:4-9**

*We live with confidence in the peace of God.*

**Gospel**

**Mark 4:35-41**

*Jesus calms the fears of his disciples with his power over the waters.*

**Sermon**

**Mark 4:35-41**

Introduction: "You don't care about me!" A daughter yells as she slams her bedroom door. Her father's heart is hurt, but he knows he's doing what's best for her. He loves her dearly. Yet, he knows the big party after Prom isn't a safe place for his young daughter to be. Yet, it doesn't make her words any less piercing, "You don't care about me!" "This will ruin my friendships," she fears. "People will think I'm so lame." She doesn't see the care of her father. For now, she sees only hardship and someone holding her back.

It's easy, isn't it, to jump to the conclusion, "You don't care!" We do it often! With our parents, our friends, our spouse, our colleagues. We do it with our God. It's easy. It's tempting. Everything seems to be going wrong. You or a loved one's health isn't getting any better. Depression and anxiety are again pressing down on you. It's easy, isn't it? To lie down on your bed at night and think, "Why God? Why? Don't you care about me?" What tunnel vision, what a clouded outlook! To assume God doesn't have a plan, to suggest he doesn't care, just because of the current situation he's allowed. In today's Gospel, the disciples asked that same question. "Teacher, don't you care?" What a question to ask the Savior of the world! Yet, Jesus graciously answered, and he did so powerfully. He immediately took away what they feared and showed them they can trust in his power. He uses it for them, for their good!

**The Powerful Savior Does Care!**

He graciously calms fear.

He proves that you can trust his power.

It was supposed to be a routine trip across the Sea of Galilee. Many of the disciples were fishers of the lake, after all. This was a trip they sailed plenty of times before. But suddenly, it was not so routine—fierce gusts of wind, raging waves, a rocking boat. We're told the waves were hitting against the boat, water pouring over the sides, rushing in. The disciples were no doubt frantically throwing water from the boat, rowing with all their energy against the mighty wind's blast. This was no ordinary storm. In fact, Mark tells us it was a GREAT one. One that shook these disciples to their core.

140 feet of deep, raging sea threatened beneath them. A watery death by drowning was daunting. Their might and energy were failing. They had nothing more that they could give, and they were deathly afraid.

How quickly this storm clouded their memory of the day they had just shared with Jesus. Jesus spent the day teaching not only the crowds but also personally teaching his disciples. He took time to explain his many parables to the disciples. The parable he just taught them? The parable of a mustard seed. A tiny seed that grows up into a grand tree with big branches. So too, their faith was to affect every aspect of their lives. Now their branches of faith seem broken, splintered by their fear of this storm. Now fear dominated their minds. Jesus had told them, explicitly, "Do not worry." Jesus had told them of his plan for them, how he would send them out "to fish for people." How could they worry that God would allow their lives to end like this? How could they fear when they had Jesus as their personal teacher? They even had him right there, in the very same boat.

But where is Jesus? He's there, but fast asleep. As the waters rush in and the wind howls, our Savior snoozed. He had no fear, just perfect trust in his Father. He knew his plan for them was not to die here on this boat. He, in perfect trust, is sound asleep in such a whirlwind of activity. Our perfect substitute, for all the times we too fear like these disciples, forgetting God is with us! We often go to him only after we've reached the brink, the breaking point. When we've concluded there's nothing more we can do. The disciples were right to go to Jesus. He was indeed the one who could calm their fear. But why did they wait so long? Jesus told them to ask, and it would be given, to seek and find, to knock and the door would be opened. How in their distress, in their fear, could they not go running instantly to their helper, their teacher, the very one who said, "Do not worry," except only after they concluded they were perishing?

God tells you, too, "do not worry." Philippians 4 tells us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Pray persistently! Go to him! Bring your wearied and burdened self and lay your fears at his feet. God implores you, "Call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you!" How we love to handle our fears alone. We forget to ask our Savior to calm them, to deliver us. Instead, we wait until we cannot alone bear them any longer. Then, when we finally do go to the Lord, what do we say, "Don't you care, Lord? We are perishing!" I am drowning in fear. Where have you been?

Yet Jesus, despite the disciples' same, pointed question, graciously and quickly dispelled their fear. Even though they waited until their final moment of helplessness, he gets up. Even with their doubt of his care, he promptly shows them he does care. Jesus immediately calms their fear. He had just been awakened, and no doubt just been screamed at, "Teacher, don't you care?" He gets up and rebukes... not his questioners, but the wind and waves, "Quiet! Be still!" He speaks silence right into the storm. He could have just made it happen. We've seen him do other miracles without even a word. Yet, by speaking, he makes it crystal clear why they don't need to fear. Their teacher, who had already taught them that he cares about them, now shows them he also has power and authority, even over the weather. He was the same God who by his Word brought the world into existence, and now proves it to them as he halts a storm in its tracks with his Word.

Now they knew, without a doubt, they can trust Jesus. Jesus showed them exactly why. You see, Jesus used this storm to teach his disciples a valuable lesson. Jesus has almighty power, and he uses it for their good. So, "trust in me," Jesus says. "Why are you so afraid? Where is your faith?" The disciples thought they were truly perishing. They did everything they could to weather the storm, but all their efforts were for naught. They had nowhere else to turn. And by sleeping, the disciples have to explicitly go and wake Jesus. This incredible storm made them see Jesus as their ultimate, their only hope, and what a powerful one they find their hope in.

What about you? Has God ever used a seemingly hopeless situation, days brimming with fear, to lead you again to come to him? So, you do. You come to him because you have no other option. He is the Savior, after all. He has unlimited power that silences wind and stills seas. Of course, he can take away your fears too. How many times could Jesus also say to us, "Why are you so afraid? Where is your faith?" Where is that faith like a mustard tree, whose branches extend into every aspect of life, even trusting God in trials? Why do we so often let fear win the day? Why do we so often forget we have the all-powerful Savior on our side? Again and again, God teaches us to trust him, as he allows a storm and lets

it pour for a while, then lets the sun shine once again. He reminds us that we should have trusted him all along. He cares.

The disciples may have forgotten for a time. They may have tried to do it all themselves. They let their fears control them. But now, see how their Savior changed their outlook of fear entirely into one of awe and a newfound trust in their almighty Savior. They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" Jesus had replaced their fear with fear of a different sort. One which suddenly recognizes who stands before them. He is the almighty, powerful God who just worked powerfully on their behalf.

The almighty, powerful God is with you too. When you fear, he says to you, "Trust me! I have everything under control. I control all things!" And as Paul tells us in Romans, this all-powerful God with complete control? He works for the good of those who love him. And we know full well he does. We know full well he cares. Just as Jesus spoke, "Quiet!" And quite literally, "Be muzzled!" to the wind and waves, so Jesus also cried out, not from a boat sinking into the sea, overflowing with water, but from a cross, weighed down by our sin, overflowing with our guilt, "It is Finished!" and it was. He silenced the devil. He muzzled the sinful flesh. And in 3 short days, God's almighty power was shown again, as Jesus rose, defeating death too. Be assured, Christ cares for you. He gave his very life for you. Do you now think he'll just leave you? Let you keep sinking under your guilt? "It is finished!" He's already demolished your guilt, defeated your worst fear, eternal suffering. He wouldn't do that and then just leave you to wallow in doubt and despair. Instead, he reminds you by his Word, in your worst fears, that he cares for you. And that he has almighty power. And when he, again and again, sustains you through fear, may you be ever more encouraged to trust him.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1

Does the powerful Savior care for you? Thanks be to God that Jesus makes the answer clear. It was answered on the cross. It was answered again and again when he knew exactly what reminders, what situations were needed to crush your fear and bring out your trust in him again. But whenever those situations come, those hardships arise. When fear grips you, listen to what God tells you through the apostle Peter, "Cast all anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7) Jesus does care for you. Go to him. Run to your caretaker. Pray without hindrance. Bring your anxieties, your stress, your fear. Lay them at his feet! Always remember that he cares. Trust that he, the one with unimaginable power that speaks silence to wind and wave, has abundant ability to help you, abundant power that he uses for your good, for your faith. The powerful Savior does care for you. He calms fear. He says to you, "Trust in me!" Amen.

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