

## “QUIET! BE STILL!”

Mark 4:35-41 | Fifth Sunday after Pentecost | June 21/24, 2018

*He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.*

### **Juva, Jesu!**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I like storms. Always have. Just the other day George and I were talking about the front porch of our parsonage in Columbus. It was a large covered porch. We all used to enjoy sitting out there listening to the patter of the rain and the roll of the thunder.

A number of years ago we were visiting a friend in Pueblo, Colorado, an area with a desert-southwest-type climate. I remember vividly sitting on my friend’s patio one evening and watching a thunderstorm slowly move over the mountains and across the wide expanse of the desert. The dark purple clouds flickering with bright lightening at twilight were truly a beautiful sight.

Not all storms are as pleasant, of course. They can cause great damage and even loss of life. Each one is a reminder of how small we are and how little we control. In addition, not all storms are the weather kind. The storms of trial and trouble that we face in this broken world can be even more terrifying.

How comforting it is to know that Jesus is master of both! How reassuring to know that he uses both for our good! This morning we listen as Jesus, Lord and Savior of all, masters the storms. “QUIET!

BE STILL!” On Lake Galilee he stilled a storm with a word. In each of our lives he stills the storms with his Word.

### **I. He stilled a storm with a word**

Jesus had had a busy day – when didn’t he? It was a day filled with preaching, teaching and healing. At the end of it he was wiped out. So he ordered his disciples to row to the other side of the lake and then promptly fell asleep in the back of the boat. (By the way, quick side note: Jesus is true man. He got tired and hungry and thirsty just like we do. This was no act. Our Substitute really took on our human flesh.)

The crossing didn’t go so well. The Sea of Galilee is notorious for quick and violent storms. The lake is 700 feet below sea level. Mt. Hermon at 9,200 feet above sea level is just 30 miles to the Northeast. When cool air from Hermon collides with the warm, humid air hovering over Galilee dangerous storms are often the result.

Such was this case this night. The storm was so violent that Jesus’ disciples, some of them experienced fishermen, were terrified. When they woke him, fear and frustration poured from their mouths: **“Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”** Now they didn’t wake him up because they needed to more hands to bail. They

had seen what he could do. They knew he could help. But they seem hurt they Jesus hasn't already taken action. Their conclusion. The Lord doesn't love us! They couldn't have been more wrong

They were right about one thing – Jesus could help. And he did. **He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.** The English is a little too soft here. The Greek is much stronger. What Jesus said to the storm is more like, “Hey! Knock it off! Put a sock in it!” The storm had no choice but to obey the Lord and Creator of all. The wind stopped blowing. The waves stopped crashing. The lake became smooth as glass.

Time for another side note: Jesus is true God. His power over the storm proves it. Of course, these two side notes – Jesus is man, Jesus is God – are not really side notes at all. They are at the heart and core of our faith. They answer the question posed by terrified disciples: **“Who is this?”** The answer takes away the terror. Jesus is the long-awaited Savior. He is the promised Messiah. He is the God-man come down to save the world.

Why God and man? His humanity enabled him to live under the law as our Substitute and to suffer and die in our place. His divinity empowered him to keep the law perfectly and gave infinite value to his sacrifice on the cross. His death paid for the sins of the world! Which means his death paid for your sin, and mine too.

This account clearly shows that Jesus is

the God-man, the exact Savior that we need. And that for our comfort! But there is much more to learn from what happened on the lake that night. A sleeping Savior got up and stilled the storm with a word. That same Savior stills all the storms in our lives with his Word.

## II. He stills our storms with his Word

Jesus had had a hard day. The disciples were having an even harder night. As the storm grew so did their fear. They weren't thinking straight. They spoke words of accusation: **“Teacher, don't you care if we drown?”** He rebuked the storm and then he rebuked the disciples: **“Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”**

Again, the Greek here is stronger than the English. Jesus essentially called them cowards. Fear gripped their hearts. Their faith left a lot to be desired.

So is Jesus saying here that the disciples had no saving faith? Is he implying that they didn't trust in him as the promised Messiah and Savior of the world? No. They still believed in him as their Savior. Where their faith struggled was in applying the specific promises he had given them. Their faith had amnesia. They forgot the promises that he gave them.

For example, Jesus had promised them that they would carry out a mission in his name. **“Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people”** (Mark 1:17). That promise alone should have convinced them that they weren't going to occupy watery graves that evening. They still had a job to do. But they weren't convinced. At that moment, the waves

breaking over the side of the boat were speaking more loudly than the promises of their Savior and Lord.

How like those disciples we are! Just like them we let circumstances drown out our Savior's voice in this Word. Too often we take his lack of immediate action as sleepy indifference. Like the disciples our eyes are often so focused on our problems that we forget about our Savior's power and promises. And our hearts impatiently cry out, "Lord, don't you care?" Thank God he is not so impatient with us!

Let's think about this for a moment. If the Creator of the world can still a storm with a few words, do you think he can help you and with the storms we face in our lives? Of course he can. The psalmist wrote: **I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth** (Psalm 121:1-2). The one who called the heavens and the earth into existence by his almighty Word, also has all power to help us in every time of need.

There is, of course, no shortage of storms in our lives. Health problems: from the common cold to chronic pain to the big C (cancer). Relationship problems: broken marriages, failed friendships, challenging children, difficult coworkers. Psychological problems: anxiety, panic attacks, depression, dementia. Financial problems: crushing debt, the loss of a job, a mailbox full of bills. Spiritual problems: doubt, a pet sin that you just can't seem to shake, relentless guilt. The storms of life in this

broken world pound on us relentlessly. How do we avoid sinking to the depths? How is our faith to survive?

Jesus once told a story that helps answer those questions. It's about a house in a storm: **"Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."**<sup>25</sup> **The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."**

We need a solid foundation. We need a rock to cling to in the storm. And we have one. The Word of our God. The rock-solid promises of our Savior.

We don't have time to review all the promises our Savior-God has made to us in his Word. But let's hit some of the highlights:

- **"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you"** (Matthew 7:7). Sometimes it may seem like the Lord is sleeping. He's not. He's wide awake and he promises to hear and answer when we call to him.
- **"Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"** (Matthew 28:20). It's always good to have a companion – someone to listen when you're confused, to hold your hand when you're hurting, to embrace you in times of grief. Jesus is that companion. He will never leave us or forsake us. He is with us

always.

- Paul wrote: **I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord** (Romans 8:38-39). No matter how difficult things get, no matter how much pain or sorrow enter our lives, God won't let anything cut us off from his love for us in Christ.
- In that same chapter of Romans, we hear these words: **We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose** (8:28). God never promises that the storms won't come, nor does he promise to take away all the pain they may cause. But he does promise to use every storm of life for our eternal good.

Let's remember something about our God and his Word. **God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?** (Numbers 23:19). God is not in the habit of telling fibs. It is against his very nature to do so. God keeps every promise he has ever made.

So when the storms of life hit – and they will – flee to his Word, cling to his

promises, rejoice in and rely on his grace and mercy. Find calm in the Word of Christ.

A little while ago we sang these familiar words: **“Be still, and know that I am God”** (Psalm 46:10). The God who stilled the storm speaks to our troubled hearts and says, **“Quiet! Be still!”** His promises have power. His Word brings calm as nothing else can. Amen.

**S.D.G.**