

3rd Sunday after Pentecost
Text: Mark 4:35-41
Preacher: The Rev. R. Bruce Todd

St. Peter's - Lafayette Hill, PA.
June 21, 2009
Father's Day

“Weathering the Storm”

A mother was out walking with her 4 year old daughter. The child picked up something off the ground and started to put it into her mouth. The mother took it away and said “Don’t do that!” “Why not?” asked the child. “Because it’s on the ground,” said her mother. “You don’t know where it’s been. It’s dirty, and it’s probably loaded with germs that could make you sick.” The child looked at her mother with total admiration and said, “Mommy, how do you know all this stuff? You’re so smart.” The mother said, “All Moms know this stuff. It’s on the Mom’s Test. You have to know it or they don’t let you be a Mom.” There was silence for a minute or so as the child thought this through. “Oh, I get it,” she said at last. “And if you don’t pass the test you have to be the Daddy?”

Happy Father’s Day! As someone has said, “Father’s Day is like Mother’s Day, except the gift is cheaper.” That may be true. But there are some fine Dads in our congregation, and we want to honor them. After all, it’s not easy being a Dad.

A woman wrote to a magazine to tell about an event that had occurred in her family when she was about eighteen months old. Her mother was out and her dad was in charge of her and her brother who was four years older. She says that she had just recovered from an accident in which she had received some injuries. Someone had given her a little ‘tea set’ as a get-well gift and it was one of her favorite toys.

Her Dad was in the living room one evening engrossed in the evening news and her brother was playing nearby in the living room when the little girl brought her Dad a little cup of make-believe ‘tea,’ which was just plain water. After several cups of this tea and lots of praise from Dad for making such a yummy concoction, the little girl’s Mom came home. Her Dad made Mom wait in the living room to watch this eighteen-month-old bring him a cup of tea, because it was “just the cutest thing!” Her Mom waited, and sure enough, the little girl came down the hall with a cup of tea for her Daddy. Mom watched Dad drink this special tea, then asked, “Did it ever occur to you that the only place that baby can reach to get water is the toilet?” “Yuck!” It’s not easy being a Dad.

Dad’s have to weather many storms - it’s just part of being a Dad. Our scripture lesson today is about that time when Christ stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee. After a long exhausting day Jesus and the disciples get in a boat and start across the Sea of Galilee, heading out into open water. Jesus conked out, contentedly curled up on a cushion in the wind-sheltered stern of the boat. But a storm kicks

up, and pretty soon the storm is kicking the boat all over the place. But Jesus sleeps on.

Terrified, drenched, despairing, the disciples pounce on Jesus and wake him up, screaming, "Don't you care that we are drowning!" Shouted out of his sleep, Jesus might have keel-hauled his crew of comrades. But he doesn't. There is no rebuke to the disciples for waking him up. There is only a rebuke to the sea for disturbing the peace. Jesus walks to the side of the boat and calmly, confidently says, "Peace, be still" and calms the storm. WOW.

Imagine that you are one of the disciples. We have just witnessed one of the greatest miracles of Jesus' ministry, the first time he demonstrated his mastery over nature. Jesus had healed people before this, but there were lots of faith healers in Jesus' day. Here was a healer who could command the wind and the waves to obey him. If you or I are one of the disciples, I know what we're doing after that miracle: high fiving one another for the wisdom of our choice. Did we pick the right guy to follow, or what? You know so-and-so could never have done what Jesus just did? Are we good or what? Can you believe that we were the first to be there when Jesus did the impossible? Can you believe what we just saw? Are we blessed or what? What a privilege! What a blessing! We may just have witnessed the greatest miracle in all of recorded history?

And that's exactly what Jesus turns around and says to us, Right? Congratulations, disciples, you've just seen some of my best work? Wrong. What Jesus actually says is more like - "You Fail!" In a paraphrase, Jesus says "O you of little faith": "Disciples, you failed the test. That's not the real thrill I had in mind for you. You could have ridden history's greatest roller coaster ride. With me in the boat, and with the Holy Spirit billowing the sails, what do you have to fear? What harm can come to you?"

The disciples settle for the lull of their lives rather than the ride of their lives. The church loves to focus on Jesus' first rebuke to the storm, and forgets Jesus' second rebuke to the lack-of-faith of the disciples. Jesus was more concerned with what was threatening the disciples from within - instead of the danger from the storm on the outside.

Victor Hugo, who is famous for his novel the Hunchback of Notre Dame, also wrote a story called "Ninety-Three." It tells of a ship caught in a dangerous storm on the high seas. At the height of the storm, the frightened sailors heard a terrible crashing noise below the deck. They knew at once that this new noise came from a cannon, part of the ship's cargo, that had broken loose. It was moving back and forth with the rocking of the ship, crashing into the side of the ship with terrible impact. Knowing that it could cause the ship to sink if it broke through the side, two brave sailors volunteered to make the dangerous attempt to retie the loose

cannon. They knew the danger of a shipwreck from the cannon was greater than the fury of the storm.

That is like human life. Storms of life may blow around us, but it is not these exterior storms that pose the gravest danger. It is the corruption that can exist within us which is what can overwhelm us. The furious storm outside may be overwhelming but what is going on inside of us can pose the greater threat to our lives. Greed, Jealousy, Anger, Envy, Mistrust, Guilt - all of these emotions cause internal storms. Unfortunately storms that rage within us cannot always be cured by ourselves. It takes the power of God's love, as revealed in Jesus Christ. That's what the disciples learned this day on the Sea of Galilee. They thought the danger was outside the boat. They would soon learn the real danger lie within the boat, within their own hearts. They lacked faith. And without faith - their lives were at risk to the storms which would inevitably come. Sometimes those storms are in our individual hearts. Sometimes those storms are in our families. Sometimes the storms are in society. But Christ is still in the business of stilling storms. Wherever there are people there are storms. These storms may be personal storms, storms raging in our individual hearts and minds. Or they may be storms in our social relationships. Either way, they can be tumultuous. A storm within one's soul can have tragic circumstances.

The list of storms that can rock our souls is lengthy. We need a Savior when such storms rage within. Jesus is with us, so we can relax and don't have to worry about storms. Storms will come up. One always comes up. But what is our fear? We can talk to God through our stormy situations. We can ride the waves with peace and joy.

Today is Father's Day. Think about your Father. As adults we realize they weren't the perfect person we might have thought they were when we were a child. Unfortunately, some realized as a kid that their father wasn't perfect. But Dad's wrestle with storms. My father had economic storms and health storms. They were times when he didn't make the right decisions. But looking back, I realize that he did the best he could. That's what Dad's need to realize. They don't have to be perfect they just have to do the best they can.

That's all our Heavenly Father asks of us. And as with the disciples, when we find ourselves in the midst of a storm, call on your Savior for help. After all, that's what Saviors do!

Learn from the actions of the disciples. With Jesus in our boat and the Holy Spirit in our Sails and God as our Heavenly Father, it may not always be smooth sailing But we WILL be able to weather the Storm. Amen