

The Fourth Sunday after the Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord
St. Matthew 8:23-27
January 30th, 2022
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Lord, Save Us!

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, Who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are worth nothing, send Thy Holy Spirit, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and all virtues, without which, whosoever liveth, is counted dead before Thee. Grant this for Thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The holy Scriptures are full of historical events where the Triune Lord God blesses His people, they rejoice at first, and then fall into a pattern of forgetfulness, turning away from the Lord, and after they endure oppression on account of their sinfulness, they cry out to the Lord God for help. He then rescues them and restores them by defeating the cause of their oppression and affliction. This pattern is seen in the Book of the Judges, in the Books of Samuel, the Books of the Kings, and in the Chronicles. It is seen in the history books which give us an account of the events that led to the eventual exile of both kingdoms of Israel and Judah—the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. This pattern is also shown and confessed in the songbook of the Israelites—and the Church—the Book of the Psalms. In the historical psalms we see this pattern confessed by the psalmist to show that the Israelites were constantly forgetting the good things that the Lord God had done for them.

They would constantly forget that the Lord God had chosen them as His people. He had led them out of Egypt, given them His Law, and led them in the wilderness for forty years (which they dwelt in because they had forgotten the things He did in the land of Egypt—the land of the descendants of Ham—only a few months prior to that). He led them through the wilderness for forty years, and brought them into the promised land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. They would continuously forget the good things that the Lord God had done for them, that rescued them from their enemies and oppressors. This pattern carried over into the time of the Judges, when on account of their forgetfulness and sin, they were led into oppression and affliction by the nations around them which they did not completely drive out. These nations became a thorn in their flesh and caused them to sin. However, whenever they remembered the Lord God and His mercy and compassion, they would cry out to Him, and He would remember His mercy, and deliver them from the enemies who would oppress them.

This is also shown in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. The Apostles had followed the Lord + Jesus into the boat to cross over the sea of Galilee to the other side. It was a common occurrence that storms would pop up on this sea, for the sea of Galilee is about 700 feet below sea level, and the surrounding land in high hills and mountains, so when the cold air and the warm air of these two levels would meet, they would cause storms. The Apostle and Evangelist tells us

that there arose a “great storm.” This was not just some wind and rain. The Greek word that is used to describe this storm is the word from which we get our English word “seismic.” The word used to describe the violence of earthquakes. Earthquakes happen to land, but this word seismic is describing the water. The waves were covering the boat and coming into the boat. It was rocking the boat to and fro.

At least four of the Apostles were accustomed to being in boats and on the sea, for Sts. Peter, James, John and Andrew were all fishermen. They were in business together with Zebedee the father of St. James and John. They would have even been familiar with this particular body of water, for they were from Bethsaida, a coastal town on the northeast banks of the Sea of Galilee. They would have fished this sea on a regular basis, so they were used to this sea’s intricacies. That these Apostles who were well-accustomed to the sea and boats were found to be out of their depths—out of their skill set—is a testimony to how harsh this storm was. It was seismic. It was a “great” storm; a mega storm.

Through it all our Lord + Jesus was asleep in the bow on a cushion. It had been a long day, and it was now night. Like all humans, He grew tired and slept. A testimony that the Lord + Jesus was fully a man. That is what we are taught during this season of Epiphany—what is revealed to us—that this man + Jesus from Nazareth was fully human. But we also learn in the Epiphany season that this man + Jesus is also the Lord God. The Lord + Jesus was a man, who was tired, and fell asleep—soundly asleep. In this He exhibits what faith is. He has no worries for He is under the care and guidance of His Father in Heaven. He being perfect and without sin never forgets this.

The Apostles being sinful men, and being like their ancestors, forget about the Lord + Jesus—about the Lord God—and His mercy and compassion for His people. Instead of immediately turning to the Lord + Jesus when the storm arises, they try to fix the problem themselves. After all, some of these men are familiar with the sea, and have dealt with these situations before. They trusted in their own abilities to rescue themselves first. Only after seeing how violent the storm and waves were, do they come to the Lord + Jesus to wake Him and say, “Lord, save us!”

How often is this the case with us? How often is this the case with all sinful human beings? We believe that we can rescue ourselves with our own working and striving. We can get ourselves out of this mess, if we just try hard enough. We may be able to solve some of life’s problems on our own, but we cannot solve the problem of our sinfulness. We cannot rescue ourselves from our sin. We cannot rescue ourselves from sin in this world, and the consequences it brings into our lives. We, like the Apostles and the people of Israel, forget about how much our Lord desires to show us mercy and compassion. We forget how often He has rescued His people from oppression, affliction, and danger. There are countless examples from the holy Scriptures, as I pointed out just a few minutes ago. The Lord God is always willing to deliver those who cry out to Him.

However, we often forget about this, just like the people of Israel in the Old Testament; just like the Apostles in the Gospel reading today. It is not that we do not possess faith. We, like the Apostles, eventually call upon the Lord God when the afflictions of this life get to be too great for us to handle. We cry with them, “Lord, save us!” That we cry to the Lord shows faith, but like the Apostles this also shows the smallness, the littleness, of our faith. It is on account of our sinfulness that we often forget the mercies of our Lord. We forget that if we have the Lord + Jesus—if He is for us to preserve us, and defend us, and forgive us—then we never have need to fear or worry. If we have the Christ, we have all we need. For in Him is life and salvation. In Him is forgiveness of all our sins. From Him we receive mercy and compassion for all of our woes.

For our Lord + Jesus is not just a man; He is not just a person sleeping in the bow of the ship on a cushion. He is the Lord and Creator of all things. He is the One Who can speak to the sea—rebuke the sea—and it becomes calm. With His Word He shows us that He is indeed the Lord and Creator of all creation. Just as He shows His Apostles. For witnessing the Lord + Jesus, this man asleep in the

bow of the ship, calm the storm with just His Word, they call to mind the words of the psalmist in Psalm 107, "Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters, they see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep. For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. Then they are glad because they are quiet; So He guides them to their desired haven." (vs. 23-30). Only the Lord God could calm the storm and bring them to their desired haven.

This man + Jesus was the Lord God, Creator of all things in Heaven and Earth. They were in the presence of the Lord God in the flesh. "Who can this be, that even the winds and sea obey Him?" The question of the Apostles is left unanswered by the Evangelist. This is because the answer to the question is obvious. This man + Jesus is the Lord God. He is the Son of God Who has come down from Heaven to take upon Himself our flesh so that He might rescue us and save us. In our distresses we are prone to forgetting that, just like the people of Israel were; just like the Apostles in the Gospel today.

Therefore, my dear friends, let when we forget that our Lord is merciful and compassionate, and desires to hear the voice of our complaint always, let us turn to Him and cry to Him, for He will hear our cries, and remember His mercies, and will rescue us and guide us safely to our desired haven, the haven of Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

O God, Who hast founded the earth upon the seas, and established it upon the floods, and Whose Word is forever settled in Heaven, grant unto us grace, we beseech Thee, to look beyond the things which are seen and temporal to the things which are not seen and eternal that, walking by faith more than by sight, we may not be unduly moved by any occasions in this world, but be able to endure unto the end in the way of life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who is the same yesterday and today and forever, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!