B, Pentecost 10

Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Brookings, SD

Rev. Matthew Wurm

July 29, 2018

Sermon Text: Mark 6:45

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The sermon text for this morning is Mark 6:45, *“Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.”*

Jesus had just enabled to the disciples to give the crowds something to eat by multiplying the five loaves and two fish in order to feed 5,000 men, not including the women and children. After the finished collecting twelve baskets of leftovers, Jesus makes them get into the boat and go before him to the other side of the lake, to Bethsaida, a more gentile region. While He goes upon on the mountainside to pray, the disciples make headway painfully throughout the night, for the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night, sometime between 3am and 6am, Jesus came to them, walking on the sea and He meant to pass them by.

They think He is a ghost and, in the Gospel of Matthew, here is where Peter gets out of the boat and walks on the water toward Jesus until he becomes afraid of the wind and the waves and begins to sink. Jesus saves him and calms the storm. In both the gospels of Matthew and Mark the disciples think Jesus is a ghost and to their fear Jesus replies, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” But this is not the only time the disciples think Jesus is a ghost. In the gospel of Luke, as the disciples who were on the road to Emmaus were recounting their conversation with Jesus to the rest of the disciples behind locked doors, Jesus appears to them and they think He is a ghost. To their fear and confusion Jesus says, *“Peace to you! ... Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”* (Lk. 24:36-39) And then He ate with them.

In each instance, the disciples are filled with fear because they think Jesus is a ghost. Both times Jesus does something miraculous; He walks on water and stills the storm and appears behind locked doors and eats. The laws of nature instruct one that this should not be, but it is. And if it is so, and Jesus is not just a ghost, a *phantasma,* then it means that this Jesus is Lord of all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.

The Father has spoken and declared that this Jesus to be His beloved Son. (Mt. 3:17) This Jesus feeds thousands, heals all manners of diseases, even raises the dead, and drives out demons on a regular basis. This Jesus is Lord of all things and He holds all power heaven, on earth, and under the earth. This Jesus declares that He is the “I AM,” Yahweh, the God of their fathers, in fact the only One True God in His response to the disciples fears each time. But shouldn’t they have understood that already?

Many of you here were raised as Christians from birth, baptized into Jesus’ Name shortly thereafter. You should know who Jesus is and what He does. And you do. You confess who He is and what He does all the time, especially when you say the creed. But nonetheless you doubt and disbelieve who He is for you, in your times of weakness and confusion. If you run up against a teaching of Jesus in the Scriptures that you don’t want to hear because Jesus speaks against greed, but you like your greed, then you close your ears to His word for you. If you hear Jesus tell you to love your enemies and do good to those who hate you but you, forgiving them, but you would rather nurse your grudge until death because it satisfies your self-justification and makes you feel right, then maybe you don’t fully know who Jesus is for you. Now sins and doubts about the entirety of who Jesus is and what Him being fully God and fully man means for your daily life doesn’t mean that you aren’t a follower of Jesus. St. Peter doubted Jesus when he was walking on the water. On the Mount of Transfiguration, he was confused as to who Jesus was, and when Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, they all thought He was ghost and not the Lord Christ. All the while they were sinners who sought to put their trust, their faith in Him. And so are you.

You are a disciple of Jesus Christ. You follow Him and you seek to learn from Him. You hear His words, and even though your flesh might not want to hear all of what He says, especially the leaving your lives of sin part, you still seek to listen and follow His bidding. But sometimes it gets hard, painfully hard.

Jesus Christ is Lord of both heaven and earth. You know and confess that He reigns in mercy over all things yet He has set you to get into the boat and make headway painfully, for the wind is against you. This is what I mean; like the disciples in our text today, you follow and serve Jesus but Jesus seems to give you no rest. Not only is life at His side, feeding the 5,000 with Him right there to provide, help, and encourage exhausting, but life going out and doing what He says. It is painfully difficult to make headway for the wind, a force which He has control over is against you.

Maybe God has set you in a relationship, say a marriage that you know He has said He would bless and you know He has control over, but so many things about it are painfully difficult and you think you can’t make it in your any longer. You want the struggle to stop. You want out. Maybe you are married and you desire to have a child or just to be married and you know that your God who is in control of all things has, thus far, not chosen to give you that which you desire. Your emotions are pained throughout the night with the failure to conceive or find a suitable spouse as you struggle to make any headway because the wind is against you.

You know Jesus has called you by name and made you His just as He did for His closest disciples. You know that He brought many to faith and healed all manners of diseases but your child has left the faith and you are dying of disease. You know Jesus has the power to turn things around for you in the boat of your life that He has made you get into and set sail, but nonetheless, you struggle mightily, not to make any headway, but just hold course against the wind and not sink.

The lesson is this; Yes, Jesus is Lord. He is the “I AM.” He is Yahweh most high but He does not leave to struggle in your pains and trials alone. He comes to you. He comes to you in a closer way than He came to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob. He comes near to you in a closer way than He came to Moses, who spoke with God and saw His Glory. He comes to nearer to you in your struggles, suffering, and pain than He came to the disciples on lake that frightful night. He comes to you in His flesh and blood and gives Himself unto you and into you.

He speaks to you and His Holy Spirit opens your hears to hear and believe His words to you, *“Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”* Like unto the weary and frightened disciples in the upper room He says, “Peace to you! … *Touch me and see.”* (Lk. 24:36, 39)

Storms upon the Sea of Galilee certainly returned. Struggles in the lives of Jesus’ disciples certainly didn’t go away for good, nor did they receive much earthly reprieve from painful struggles throughout their lives. They were all, with the exception of the Apostle John, martyred for the confession of Jesus’ Name. Your life might not look all that much like the life of a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee or like that of an Apostle, but there is one thing you certainly share in common – Jesus.

He comes to you and speaks peace to you just the same. The painful struggles of your life may not be stilled, as was the storm, but you have the Lord of heaven and earth even more near to you than He was to Moses. He means not just to pass you by. You can touch Him and see. You can hear Him speak. He says, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” I have forgiven you all your sins and covered over all your failings. You are not alone. I have engraved you in the wounded palms of my hands. You are mine. Peace, be still.

In Jesus Name. Amen.