

5th Sunday after Pentecost
June 23, 2024
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Mark 4:35-41

Dear Friends in Christ,

Parents of newborns often sleep like babies. They get up every hour or two just like their newborn son or daughter. Eventually, parents attempt to teach their children to sleep through the night. But it can be a process. It is much nicer to sleep in dad's arms than in a cold crib. It is much nicer to have mom rock me to sleep than to soothe myself to sleep. So, the child will likely cry when left to sleep on his own. Mom checks on him and feeds him and puts him down again. Five minutes later, more crying. Dad checks on him, changes a diaper and put him down again. Five minutes later, more crying. Mom checks on him and puts the covers back on. Five minutes later, there is more crying. But now, Mom and Dad are convinced that their child is just fine. He's been fed, has a clean diaper, the room is not too hot or cold. The parents know that everything is fine but baby is not convinced. He thinks his parents have abandoned him. He thinks his parents are cruel for letting him be by himself. He is not convinced that sleeping though the night without Mom or Dad is such a great idea. But Dad is snoring away at this point in the next room, just letting his poor child whimper himself to sleep, because Dad knows everything is fine.

We are the babies and Jesus teaches us today to trust that our Triune God has everything under control. It is a lesson that takes a lifetime to learn and will only be complete in eternity. Jesus teaches his disciples to trust him in all things, even when the boat is sinking while Jesus sleeps in the back of the boat.

Mark 4:35-41 (EHV)

³⁵On that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, "Let's go over to the other side." ³⁶After leaving the crowd behind, the disciples took him along in the boat, just as he was. Other small boats also followed him. ³⁷A great windstorm arose, and the waves were splashing into the boat, so that the boat was quickly filling up. ³⁸Jesus himself was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. They woke him and said, "Teacher, don't you care that we are about to drown?"

³⁹Then he got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" The wind stopped, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still lack faith?"

⁴¹They were filled with awe and said to one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

It is not difficult to see ourselves in the boat with Jesus that day. For we have unexpected storms rise up in our lives too. Perhaps it is when the storm sirens blare in our neighborhood, again, and we wonder if God is sleeping on the job, again. It might be when an unexpected diagnosis is given by the doctor, and we wonder why God would allow my loved one to be afflicted in such a terrible way. Maybe it is an unexpected repair to the car, or the house and we ask God if he is paying attention at all. A friend lets us down again. The company is letting people go. The windstorms of life may rise up new every day.

Job thought he could get answers from God about why so much evil had been done to him and his family. The Lord gives him a direct answer in the first lesson from God's Word today. The answer is basically, "Job, you are not God." The answer is to trust the Creator of the universe who set the barriers for the waves of the sea. The Son of God, by whose word, the sea was made and confined to its place, was asleep in the boat with the terrified disciples. God's answer to us when we wonder about his plan and his care for us in the storms of life is the same as that to Job.

Our Father in heaven has his plan and he will accomplish it for our good. Trust God in all things.

But how can we trust him when he is sleeping in the boat? The psalmist tells us that God does not slumber or sleep (Ps 121) but Jesus is sleeping. The disciples accused Jesus, “*don't you care that we are about to drown?*” This is very similar to the Israelites whom God rescued from Egypt complaining that God brought them into the wilderness to kill them. To accuse the God who created us and redeemed us by the blood of Christ of not caring about us is not only foolishness but a terrible sin against the Lord. We need to repent when such sinful thoughts linger in our mind or are spoken by our mouths.

Of course, the Son of God cares for us. Of course, God is not sleeping on the job. But Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man, is sleeping. Jesus sleeping in the stern also gives us comfort when we are in the middle of a storm of life. Jesus got tired and needed to sleep just like you and me.

This demonstrates that Jesus knows what we are going through because he is truly human. He knows what it is like to be exhausted after a long day of work. He knows what it is like to grieve at the grave of a dear friend. He knows what it is like to have a friend turn against you. He knows what it is like to have friends abandon you when you most need them. He knows what it is like to face temptations. He knows what it is like to be human because Christ is human, like us in every way but without sin. When it seems like no one around you truly knows what you are suffering, turn to Christ. He knows you and what you are going through better than anyone.

As true God, Jesus is also the best one to trust to care for you. The disciples had a specific promise from Jesus that he would make them fishers of men. They could not drown in the sea at this time. They still needed to go out and fish for men by spreading the gospel of Christ to the world. We do not have a specific promise that the medical treatment will cure the disease, that we will never be harmed in an accident, that we will never have to suffer due to our faith in Christ or other such things. However, our Lord has promised to be with us always, that all things work for the good of God’s children, that our sins are and will be forgiven, that we will rise in the resurrection, that we will see Christ face to face, that we will be glorified with Jesus in heaven, that we will have no more sorrow or pain or tears, that we will have unending joy, that he is preparing a place for us, that he is interceding for us, that he will never leave us or forsake us, that the church will never perish, and even more.

Chris has not promised to answer our prayers in the way and time we want, but according to God’s will. He has not promised that we will avoid all suffering in this life, but that we will indeed suffer, and he will give us the strength to endure. He has not promised that our loved ones will be safe from every disease, from every accident, and from every evil in this world. Instead, our Father in heaven promises that he will bring all his children out of this world of tribulation to himself in heaven. Trusting in all of God’s promises keeps us calm during the storms of life.

The disciples had saving faith. They trusted that Jesus was the Son of God and the Savior God promised to send into the world. This faith connects us with Christ’s perfect life and innocent death so that our sins are fully forgiven and we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. We are saved through this faith alone.

Jesus said to the disciples, “*Why are you so afraid? Do you still lack faith?*” They trusted Jesus as the Messiah, but they did not trust that Jesus would save them during the storm. They lacked faith in a specific promise of God and were therefore afraid. Just like us! We trust that Jesus is our Savior from sin, death, and the devil. We trust that Jesus has forgiven us and will bring us to heaven one day. But we are not sure if he will take care of us right now. Whatever the situation, do what the disciples did, and turn to Jesus. He will listen. Notice also that the disciples did not give Jesus instructions on how to save them from the storm. They simply brought it to Christ’s attention. They did not tell Jesus to speak to the wind and waves. They never would have thought

of that and were in awe of Christ when he spoke and the wind and waves obeyed. So also, in our prayers, bring your concerns to Christ and trust that he will do what is best for God's children, often in ways we had never considered and may not know until heaven.

So, how do we grow in faith, in trusting all of God's promises? We listen to and learn more and more of God's promises. We hear the true stories of how God has cared for, loved, and rescued his children again and again in the Old and New Testaments. Growing in faith is reading and hearing the Bible more and more.

After a question from a member recently about a good way to learn the Bible, I picked up an interesting book at the Martin Luther College bookstore during convention. It is a condensed Bible called "The Story of God's Love." I quote from the forward, "It is recommended for use by first-time Bible readers who want to get a summary of the Bible before tackling all the details. Long-time Bible readers will appreciate it as a summary of the highlights of the Bible" (The Story of God's Love: A Summary of the Holy Bible, NPH). So, if you've tried to read through the whole Bible and gotten stuck in the genealogies and ceremonial laws in Leviticus and Numbers, maybe this is something to try. You will get 250 true stories that show us how God can be trusted in every promise he makes. The words are directly from the Bible but it just doesn't contain every word that is in the Bible. Of course, if you do use the condensed version, you can always go back and dig into everything our Savior had written down for our good.

Teaching a baby to sleep through the night on his or her own might seem to take forever, but when it finally happens, everyone gets better sleep. Learning to trust every promise of our Savior God in every situation of life is a lifelong goal. As the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to increase our faith, we will be more and more likely to fall asleep on a cushion in the back of the boat during any storm of life for we know that Jesus is with us and our Father in heaven knows that everything will be just fine in the end. Trust him.

Amen.