

Title: “In the Boat”

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Mark 4:35-41, 2 Cor. 6:1-2

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Service Readings: Job 38:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41

Through faith we believe in Jesus as our rescuer; not just for the troubles of this life but for the eternal one to come.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

A rookie firefighter responded to a house fire on Toledo’s east side. She managed the nozzle and her partner handled the hose a few steps behind. He realized he had forgotten his facepiece and so, unbeknownst to her, turned back to retrieve it. As she entered the dining room the floor began to sag and then fail and she quickly slid into the crawl space of the house. As she fell, the dining table flipped over and landed on top of her. Her first instinct was to activate her distress signal.

This morning we read of another harrowing experience. Mark records that the disciples,

“leaving the crowd, took [Jesus] with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”

Two events. Thousands of years apart. But intertwined within are two parallels and a contrast that are valuable to unpacking this morning. The first to consider is the training that was received. This firefighter, before even stepping foot in the burning house, had been subject to years of education and practice. And through it she learned what she would be up against, and she learned how she would respond when coming face to face with these threats. Her instructors prepared her for the day when she would face real flames with real consequences. Nothing was left to chance, because her very life, and the lives of those who depended on her, mattered.

In a similar way the disciples received their own training. Before being sent out into the world, their teacher poured into them knowledge and even sent them out into the world to practice. They learned what they were up against and learned how to respond when they would be let out into the world after his ascension. Now for them, the fire was not contained to a single house but to all of creation and Jesus left nothing to chance because their eternal lives, and the lives of all who would go after them, depended on this training.

The second parallel to consider is that in both events, they knew that the challenge they faced was much bigger than them and that they would need assistance. Because of her training, she formed within herself an instinct that would recognize imminent danger and know when to call out for help. Her mind needed no time to recall this training; in that moment she immediately knew she needed saving and immediately knew how to call out for it. She activated her distress signal and anticipated her rescue.

For the disciples, *several* of these men had been fishermen and *all* of these men knew that Jesus hadn't. Several of these men had been in terrible storms before, and yet they did not rely on those skills alone to save them. You see, because of the training from Jesus, these disciples *also* formed within them an instinct to react to danger. And just like the firefighter, it was to look outward for rescue. And so they woke up Jesus. *He* was their distress signal. And *he* would also be their rescue.

Preparation and instinctive response. These are two of the parallels between the accounts. But faith? Faith is where they diverge. For you see, when this rookie firefighter called out for help, she did so with the confidence that she would be heard, *and* that she would be rescued. She had faith: faith in her training, faith in her instinct, and faith in her human savior. I'm sure that as she waited, she still fought the fires, and she still knew that she would not come out unscathed, but she also knew that she would not be there alone – her savior was on his way. And she was rescued. Her legs suffering second degree burns, but alive and saved.

But the disciples? It seems they weren't so confident. Faced with potential death, they seemed to know *who* to call, but didn't believe he would have the power to actually rescue them. "Do you not care that we are perishing," they ask? And even *after* he calms the storm, they still question their savior. "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Where was their faith? Jesus even asks them this. "Have you still no faith," he inquires?

This seems like the proper time to remove the disciples from the boat and to place ourselves into it, instead. How similar to them are we? We too have been trained, educated, poured into by pastors and parents and teachers. And I would go so far as to suggest that in the storms of our own lives we too instinctively call out to Jesus for help. But how often do we believe we'll find that he is with us, but also asleep? How strong, then, is our faith?

These disciples *lived* with Jesus. They talked to him, ate with him, traveled with him. And yet, in the midst of their own storm, they laid bare the weakness of their faith. How? How could they be so weak? Because unlike the firefighter, their faith *can't* come from within themselves. Their faith, yes, even their faith, must be *delivered* to them! It comes, not from knowledge, not from instinct, not even from skill. It comes *from* the Holy Spirit. And it comes *through* the power of God's Word. It is *through* his word that they, *and* we, receive the faith which allows us to believe in Jesus as our rescuer. And it is through this faith that we can understand the knowledge that we have been given. And it is through this faith that the instinct to reach out to Jesus in times of trouble can be formed. At that time, the disciples had weak faith. They knew enough to call out to him, but were not sure he could save them.

We are in the boat right now. Each one of us. Maybe you find yourself in the middle of a storm. Or maybe all is calm but you see one approaching. Or, maybe you are in a period of sunshine and calm. It doesn't matter the weather, your actions should remain unchanged. And what are those actions? What is it that we should do, regardless of where we find ourselves?

First, know that our learning is never complete. God continues to pour into us his knowledge through engagement with his word. We must never stop pursuing to learn more about him. He is a personal God, one who *wants* us to know him better – not because it contributes to him anything,

but because it contributes to us everything. He wants to show us how much he loves us and we find it when we become more knowledgeable about him.

And as we continue to understand him, the Holy Spirit continues to fortify our faith, strengthen it, and instill in us the recognition that we cannot get through life alone, and to give us the instinct to call out to him, not just for petitions but for praise.

And finally, the outcome of our preparations and instincts, the fruits of the Spirit, include the confidence to know that in the worst storms Jesus *is* with us and he *is awake* and has the power to help us. But even more than that, the spirit works in us the faith to believe that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the major storm, the one that eternally matters, has already been calmed. Our salvation has been secured. And though it may look turbulent now, the daily challenges that we face are just ripples left over from that storm that Jesus faced for us. And though we may continue to experience these small waves as we sit in this boat of life, we can confidently and patiently wait for the day when our heavenly lake will be as calm as glass.

Until that day, continue to prepare, continue to call out, and continue to live in confidence that your life is now, and always has been, in the hands of the only one who has already kept you safe.

Please pray with me.

Lord, you once offered this promise to Isaiah:

“In a favorable time I listened to you,
and in a day of salvation I have helped you.”

We believe as Paul does, that “now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” We ask that you continue your work in us so that we can stand confidently and weather any storm in life because we know that you have already called out “Peace! Be Still!” to the eternal one.

Amen.