

**Mark 4:35-41 + Have No Fear! Jesus Is Here! + Cross of Christ Ev. Lutheran Church – Liverpool, NY  
5th Sunday after Pentecost + 24 June 2018**

We love to watch them on the big screen saving the day and rescuing the helpless. We love to watch superheroes in action. Many of the biggest Hollywood blockbusters are superhero movies. Just in the last couple years, audiences have packed theaters for movies featuring Spider-Man, Thor, Justice League, Wonder Woman, Black Panther, the Avengers, and The Incredibles, just to name a few! Now why are they so popular? People enjoy amazing special effects, snarky humor, Easter eggs, and plot twists. Yet perhaps all this love for superhero movies speaks to something more, something deeper—a yearning in human hearts for someone who can save the day in this dark and uncertain world.

Wouldn't it be nice if superheroes were real? Every time you get into trouble, a superhero swoops in and saves the day. An asteroid threatens the earth, and a superhero deflects it back into space. A violent villain threatens a city, and a superhero defeats him. A loved one is trapped inside a burning building. A superhero puts out the fire and rescues them without a scratch.

Now wouldn't it be great if those same superheroes could do more than just save the planet? Wouldn't it be nice if a superhero could swoop in and fix your leaky finances or reverse your loved one's terminal diagnosis or replace your fear and uncertainty with hope and confidence? Wouldn't it be nice if a superhero could take the giant boulder of guilt or grief or heartache or hurt threatening to crush your heart and heave it far off into space?

Wouldn't it be nice if superheroes were real? Of course! But even if they were, could Superman or Ironman or Wonder Woman or the Incredible Hulk really help you when you're afraid or uncertain or fearful? Could they help you when you face those times when your will or your ability or any capacity you have to save yourself fails? After all, even the greatest superheroes have their flaws, and they can't save everyone. So our world remains dark and uncertain...that is, until Jesus quietly steps into our story.

Jesus was tired. He had been preaching and teaching, traveling and healing for days. Small groups of disciples had exploded into huge crowds lining the edge of the Sea of Galilee just to hear him teach. He taught the people with parables, parables about faith that persists and never lets go of the gospel. He taught about the power of the gospel to bring life to the dead and the ways that that gospel grows beyond human comprehension and expectation. He taught how the Christian life is a life of faith in him and his Word—and his disciples listened closely to what he had to say.

...But Jesus was tired after a long day of teaching out in the sun on the lake. So he asked his disciples to take him across the lake away from the crowds so he could rest. Most of those disciples were experienced fishermen, men who had grown up on those very waters of the Sea of Galilee, men who knew how quickly and violently storms can roll down from the heights and hills surrounding the lake. The disciples had listened to what Jesus had to say about faith, so they simply obeyed him. They got into the boat where Jesus had been sitting, and just as he was, they began the slow journey across the Sea of Galilee. No questions asked.

Faith seems easy when the seas are calm and the sun is shining. Yet what happens when the seas get rough and a great, big, violent storm comes rolling in and throws everything into chaos? Mark tells us, ***“A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.”*** Furious, ferocious winds blew down from the heights above, swirling around the lake basin. Waves grabbed hold of the boat and pounded away at it, crashing and raging over it again and again. The disciples pulled at the oars with all their might trying to fight the storm.

...And what was Jesus doing? Where was he amid all this chaos? He was fast asleep on a cushion in the back of the boat. He was exhausted and didn't want to be woken up as the chaos of the great storm raged around them.

Now the disciples had listened to Jesus' teaching about faith, about trusting him and his Word even when times are tough. So what did they do? They woke him up. They went to Jesus for help and woke him up, but it wasn't a gentle wake-up. No, it was a blaring alarm as the wind howled. ***“Teacher, don't you care if we drown?”*** “Don't you care if we're destroyed and end up at the bottom of this stormy sea?” “Get up! Help us! Save us!”

Their natural reaction to danger was worry, fear, uncertainty. If Jesus wasn't going to do something about the storm, at least he could help them row! They wanted him to save them. If he was going to save them, they obviously had to wake him up, right? Well...

You see, the disciples had listened to Jesus' teaching about faith and trusting in him even when times are tough, but they had forgotten something that Jesus had taught them earlier. When they needed him, they went looking for a superhero to swoop in and save the day for them, but they had forgotten that God was sleeping in their boat. The exhausted Jesus sleeping in the back of the boat seemed so human, so run-of-the-mill, so ordinary, so full of humanity that they forgot about his divinity. Yes, that Jesus would die one day, but he wasn't going to die at the bottom of the Sea of Galilee. He was going to die on a cross at his appointed time. Jesus' very presence in that boat guaranteed that they would make it through the storm.

A fellow pastor described Jesus this way, ***“He who sleeps is He who reigns from all eternity. He who takes his pillow and rests in the stern is He who sees all, knows all, possesses all power, and uses all power to save...He is weak to take our place. He is strong to save...Whether he slept or strained at the oar, He was the One through whom the seas were made and by whom the ocean's boundaries were set.”***<sup>1</sup>

So Jesus got up and rubbed the sleep from his weary eyes as the storm raged around them—and what did he do? Did Jesus react with fear or worry or panic? No, fear, worry, and panic come naturally to sinful human hearts, but Jesus is sinless. He got up and faced the storm. Did Jesus rebuke the weak faith of his disciples? If they would've just trusted him and his Word, they would've let him sleep and weathered the storm, but no, Jesus didn't rebuke his disciples. Instead, he heard their prayer and saved them. Jesus muzzled the wind and rebuked the sea with two words, ***“Quiet! Silence!”***

At that very moment, the wind stopped and the seas calmed. The great storm became a great calm immediately. Only then did Jesus turn to his disciples, ***“Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”*** The sudden realization of who had been sleeping in their boat filled them with terror. No man, no teacher, no hero they knew had such power that ***“even the wind and the waves obey him!”*** Yet that Jesus was in the boat with them.

Faith seems easy when the seas are calm and the sun is shining. Now faith is faith, but the strength of our trust can vary. Some days you feel like you could get out of the boat and walk on water, but then there are days when you think you'll drown even inside the boat. You know what I'm talking about—days when the seas get rough and the winds roar ferociously and a great, big, violent storm comes rolling in and tears everything out of your control.

At such troubled times in your life, what's your natural response, your gut instinct—fear? worry? uncertainty? maybe even panic? Do you feel like those disciples throwing everything you've got into rowing against that storm or bailing out the water out of your sinking boat? Do you look to Jesus like you're looking for a superhero who can get his strength behind the oars and get you out of trouble? Do you forget who is “sleeping” in your boat? I know I do.

I fail to remember who is in the boat with me. I fail to remember that God, who created the heavens and the earth, the seas and the dry land, is there with me in the boat, even if he's “sleeping.” I fail to trust in the Lord who has rescued me from guilt and death and hell. I fail to trust in the Lord who can do anything, the Lord who is the Lord of the Church, the Lord of life and death, the Lord of heaven and earth who is my Lord and will never leave me.

Martin Luther once said that the Church needs to remember that Christ is in the boat, even if he's sleeping, and that is really all that matters. We don't need a comic book superhero. We need the One who is right here with his Church, with his people, with individual believers like you and me through word and water and meal. We need to remember this: **Have no fear! Jesus is here!**

When you get tired and weary with the troubled seas of this life and you worry about what's to come, have no fear! Jesus is here! When the storms and waves and winds of this life grab hold of you and batter away, have no fear! Jesus is here! When you're afraid or worried or panicked in your unguarded moments, have no fear! Jesus is here! When you don't know what to do, have no fear! Jesus is here! Even when it seems like Jesus is unconscious of what's going on in your life, have no fear! Jesus is still really and truly here!

The Lord who makes the wind and the waves obey is certainly still here for you. That, my friends, is a true superhero—the One who brings peace no matter how violent the storms of this life, the One who remains God no matter how human he seems, the One who removes your fear because he is always here. Dear Friends,

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<sup>1</sup> Wade Johnston. [\*A Path Strewn with Sinners: A Devotional Study of Mark's Gospel and His Race to the Cross\*](#). New Reformation: Irvine, CA, 2017. (Kindle locations 403-410)

when the storms of this life rage around you, look to the God, the Savior, the Hero in your boat. **Have no fear!**  
**Jesus is here!** Amen.