

Sermon Theme: Quiet! Be Still!

Sermon Reading: Mark 4:35-41

How many of these do you know? Arachnophobia, Ophidiophobia, Acrophobia, Trypanophobia, Mysophobia? Arachnophobia is fear of spiders; ophidiophobia is fear of snakes; Acrophobia is fear of heights; Trypanophobia is fear of injections; Mysophobia is fear of germs and dirt. To have a phobia is more than just being afraid of something; *it's a persistent fear of an object that is excessive and unreasonable that causes some level of impairment.* The thing with fears is that they can be very subjective. One person might see someone's fear as ridiculous and can't believe that someone would be afraid of it. But the person who has that fear, it's a whole different story. They might seem to become paralyzed at the thought of it or they become visibly agitated, have a feeling of shivers that goes up and down the spine thinking about that thing they fear.

What are you afraid of? I'm not necessarily asking if you have any phobias, but what is it that brings you unease? What is something you refuse to do because you have a fear of it? What thoughts give you the shivers? This feeling of fear might stem from a thought that it might harm you—physically, mentally, emotionally. The fear might come from the thought of a possibility of what could, maybe, might happen. It might come from wondering the unknown—what is going to happen?

Jesus had spent the entire day preaching and teaching. The crowds had been so large that he had went into a boat, sat down, and from the boat in the water taught the people who were along the shore. As evening came Jesus tells his disciples, "Let's go to the other side of the sea." So, exhausted as Jesus is, they take Jesus along into the boat and start heading across the water. And Jesus takes a nap. He goes into the stern of the boat, finds something to make himself a pillow, gets comfortable, closes his eyes, and falls asleep. Shows how much Jesus is like us. After a long day of hard work, you need to wind down, and sometimes while winding down, those eyelids close.

While Jesus is peacefully sleeping away, a furious storm comes up. Because of the geographical layout of the Sea of Galilee and how it is located below sea level, it regularly produces these "funnel effects" with the wind and storms that will come up seemingly from nowhere. For Jesus' disciples who were fishermen they would have been used to this and would have known what they needed to do. They were experienced in such situations. But, this storm is different. The winds are roaring. The waves are growing and breaking over the sides of the boat so that it was nearly swamped. This boat is a toy being tossed around by the raging elements. It must have been terribly frightening because these professional boatmen decide there is

nowhere else to turn to except their teacher, a carpenter by trade. Waking him up they cry out, “Teacher, don’t you care that we are going to die!?!”

If you’ve been in a boat on the water when a storm comes up, you know how frightening that can be. But even if you haven’t, you know what it’s like to be afraid. There are so many different fears that can come into our lives. Maybe you fear for the family and their well-being. You fear for your children when they are sick or not doing well. You fear for those who may not be able to take care of themselves as well as they once could. You might fear for the church and what the future holds. There’s the fear of what’s going to happen if the offering numbers don’t start improving or the attendance doesn’t get better. There might be the fear of what’s going to happen to the school. You might fear about your personal well-being. You might fear how you are going to pay the bills, make ends meet. You might fear what’s going to happen with your relationships because you or someone else did something or didn’t do something and now you don’t know how it’s all going to turn out. You might fear how you are going to handle your own struggles and difficulties when life doesn’t go as planned. You might fear that someone else is going to find out about the sin you struggle with or sins you’ve committed. We could go on and on and on.

We like to say, “I’m not afraid or have fear of those things, I’m just concerned.” Which makes sense; we want to be mindful, show that we care, and give that support. But like that storm that popped up from seemingly nowhere, it’s all too easy and quick that the concern turns into worry and then into fear. And when we start to be afraid and filled with fear, we start to focus on all those fears with the many possibilities and what could happen, and that’s all we see. Then the devil comes and starts asking that question, “Does God really care about you? Don’t you think there’s a chance that bad thing you don’t want to happen will happen to you?” And the terrible thing is that the devil is whispering what we already are struggling with and it can happen where we hear and listen to nothing else. And the more that we listen to him and to the doubts in our minds, the more we focus on the fears and the unknown, the more it feels like everything is piling on top of us and it can feel like you are drowning and suffocating under the weight of it all. Then we cry out in despair, “Why me? Don’t you care?”

When the disciples wake up Jesus and cry out in despair, Jesus listens. He gets up, rebukes the wind and says to the waves: “Quiet! Be still!” Next time it’s a windy day, go outside and try this and see how well it works. But when Jesus scolds the wind like a parent scolding a naughty, misbehaving child and when he speaks, it listens. The wind dies down and it is completely calm. The way it is written gives the picture that this was instantaneous with not a ripple on the water to be seen.

Then comes the stinging question, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” Jesus turns from rebuking the winds and waves to rebuking, scolding his disciples, why? Didn’t they do what they were supposed to do by going to Jesus? What Jesus is speaking to is their weak faith, a lack of trust in the divine power of Christ, God’s plan, and Jesus’ willingness to help.

“Do you still have no faith?” Jesus asks you as you face the many fears and things in this world that threaten you. Do you still have no faith after all the blessings that he has shown and showered on you? How often do we know where to turn, but wait until the last minute after all other possibilities have been exhausted? How often even when we turn to Jesus for help there’s still the question in our heart and minds of whether or not it actually will. How many times do we say I know God’s promises and that he cares for me, and still I cry out in despair as if he has abandoned me? How similar we are to those disciples and we listen to the lie of the devil and wonder, “Does God really mean that? Does God actually care?” Instead of surrendering to God’s Will, plan, and power we all too often surrender to the fears, doubt, and devil.

Jesus said to the wind and waves, “Be still.” God speaks to us through the writer of Psalm 46, “Be still, and know that I am God.” When the winds die down and the sea becomes completely calm the disciples are terrified and ask each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” It’s not like they all of sudden forgot who Jesus was. But even after they had seen him do a number of miracles, after they had heard his preaching and teaching, this is something all-together different. There are many things that can be fixed in this world, but you can’t fix the weather. One might wish it would change, one might pray for more rain, one might ask that it stops to rain. But no ordinary human being has any control over it. But Jesus does—he has the power to control the seemingly uncontrollable.

Who is this? He’s a man who needed a nap because he was exhausted from a hard day’s work. He’s a man whose sweat would be like drops of blood at the thought of his suffering and death. He’s a man who like us lived in a world filled with fearful things. He felt the temptation to doubt and not trust.

Who is this? He’s also a man who perfectly trusted his Father to protect him in his mighty arms as he slept through a terrible storm. He’s a man who prayed, “Your will be done,” conforming his will to his Father’s when facing that suffering and death. He’s a man whose Father would forsake him completely, enduring hell itself on that cross as a direct punishment for claiming all sins including your sin of doubt to be his own. He’s the same man who would entrust his spirit into his

Father's hand when he died knowing and trusting that in three days he would rise again to live and rule eternally.

Who is this? He is your Savior Jesus who has control over the wind and the waves; true Man and true God. He is Jesus who has conquered your greatest threats and enemies of the devil, sin, and death and gives you the victory through faith. He is Jesus who wants you to see what he has done, his control of the winds and the waves, and believe that when he says all your sins are forgiven, they are. When he says you have a home with him in heaven, you do. When he says he is watching over all things for you and working them for your eternal good, he is.

So, do not fear though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging (Psalm 46:2,3). The Lord Almighty is with us. Faith is more than just having a knowledge of Jesus or believing that he is real. Faith holds onto and grasps God's promise, it trusts that it is true. Faith is the chain that connects us to the solid anchor of Jesus that although the storms of life swirl around us, Jesus remains constant and sure. Faith must have its trials. It will be tested. As long as life is well and there are no storms, it is easy to forget, to believe, and to grow sure in ourselves and our capabilities and not trust in God. But when the storms inevitably will come, when those fears threaten to drown you, God calls out with his promises spoken in his Word to remind you and reassure you. Jesus reaches out to you inviting you to receive his body and blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins and strengthening of your faith. He comes to you to give you that peace of mind and heart that surpasses all understanding and reason. Jesus tells your soul to calm down and be at rest; he has it under control. He tells those lies of the devil and those doubting thoughts to be silent. Jesus says, "Quiet! Be Still!" Know that he is God. Amen.