

St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church + Modesto, California  
**The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**July 13, 2003**

Sermon by Pastor Jonathan Micheel

**Mark 4:35-41**

<sup>35</sup> *That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." <sup>36</sup> Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. <sup>37</sup> A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. <sup>38</sup> Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"*

<sup>39</sup> *He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. <sup>40</sup> He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" <sup>41</sup> They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (NIV)*

## **Who Is This Jesus?**

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Our Lord,

Mark is the one where nobody "gets it". The Holy Spirit caused four accounts of Jesus' ministry to be written. We know these four accounts as the Four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each account of our Lord's work is distinct in the way it's written and in what kinds of things are emphasized. In Matthew, for instance, we see Jesus patiently teaching his disciples, and along the way proving that he was the one whom the prophets had predicted would come into the world. Luke's Gospel is thorough, since Luke carefully investigated what had happened during the ministry of Jesus, after which the Holy Spirit inspired him to write down the facts he had discovered. John's Gospel is simple, yet profound. He shows us that Jesus is the light and life of the world. And Mark's Gospel, the one we're looking at most during this year—Mark is the one in which nobody "gets it". Mark gives us short, action-packed episodes from the life of Jesus: Jesus forgives a man, Jesus heals a man, Jesus preaches, Jesus drives a demon out of somebody. Then Mark shows us Jesus' disciples. When Jesus does something or says something, their typical reaction is, "Um, what just happened?" Mark is the one where nobody "gets it".

Do you remember the sermon from two weeks ago? (Uh-oh. Nobody warned you there would be a quiz!) Jesus' mother and brothers tracked him down. Do you remember why? They thought he was out of his mind! They didn't understand who he was. Likewise with the teachers of the law. They thought Jesus had some pact with Satan. As you read Mark's Gospel, you see that often. People—even the ones closest to Jesus—don't get it. They don't understand who Jesus is.

Do we? Do we understand who Jesus is?

Jesus wants us to know who he is. And not just because he wants certain bits of knowledge to be in our brains. No, Jesus wants us to know who he is because he's the one in whom we trust. And by bringing us to know him better, Jesus will strengthen our trust in him. And that strengthening will result in countless blessings for us.

So let's ask the question that Jesus' bewildered disciples asked one night on the Sea of Galilee: Who Is This? Jesus will tell us.

### **One who saves you**

Jesus had been teaching all day by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, that large lake in the northern part of Israel. That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." So, his disciples got their boat ready and got their Master into the boat without any further preparation.

Some time after getting underway, Jesus did something. It's not something that is, in and of itself, unusual, but it may be something we don't normally think of Jesus doing. He fell asleep. When we think of Jesus, we often think of the things he did—healing the paralyzed, giving sight to the blind, making

the sick miraculously well. Or we envision him teaching, bringing God's truth to life with vivid parables. But here we find Jesus sleeping. He's tired. He sleeps.

This partly answers our question, "Who is this Jesus?" Answer: he's a man, a human being. Like you, like me. He eats, he works, he gets tired, he sleeps.

And there's more. As Jesus slept, A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The storms on the Sea of Galilee were notoriously fierce (I understand that they still are). The lake is hundreds of feet below sea level, but high mountains surround it. Cold air coming down from the mountains, hot, moist air rising off the lake—that's a recipe for violent weather. That's the kind of squall that whipped up, a squall so vicious that seasoned fishermen (that's what some of the disciples were) feared for their lives. Then something happened. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. Even more quickly than the storm had appeared, it disappeared. Jesus spoke, and it was gone.

Who can do that? Who can, by speaking two words, make a ferocious storm disappear? Only God can. Recall what he said to Job: Who shut up the sea behind doors...when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt'? (Job 38:8,11)

Who is this Jesus? He is really a human being, and at the same time he is really God.

Huh? We cannot understand that. We cannot comprehend how the infinite and eternal Son of God could become a human being with real human flesh and blood. The disciples couldn't understand it either. And it bothered them. When they saw Jesus sleeping during the storm, they didn't say, "Oh, that's comforting; Jesus is true man." Instead they shouted, Teacher, don't you care if we drown? And after Jesus stopped the storm, the disciples were more bewildered than anything. Who is this? they asked. Even the wind and the waves obey him!

God is not trying to confuse us, however, by showing us that Jesus is both God and man. No, he wants to comfort us. By showing us that Jesus is a real human being, God assures us that he is involved in this world, that his only Son knows what it is to be human as we are. By showing us that Jesus is truly his Son, God assures us that he is powerful enough to help us.

Nowhere is this more critical to know than when we consider our eternal future. God says that for us to live eternally, we have to, as human beings, do everything right in his sight—everything. That means we can have no sin, no failures on our record. How, then, will we ever live eternally and not die eternally? We have sinned and not lived the spotless life God has demanded. The answer lies in Jesus, true man and true God. Jesus, a real human being, lived a perfect life. This perfect life he gives to us as a gift; he lets us consider his spotless life to be our own. Jesus, a real human being, suffered all the punishment for all people's sins when he died on the cross. He took your place and mine. And since he is true God, his death counted as a big enough payment to pay for all of our sins completely. Jesus, by being a real human being and at the same time really God, did exactly what we needed. He saved us from the firestorm of all our sins, from death and from all the power of the devil. We heard a beautiful summary of it a few minutes ago in the Second Lesson: God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Who is this Jesus? He is true God and true man. This truth is more than a theological curiosity. It is our salvation from all evil. Jesus Christ is the one who saves.

### **One who speaks to you**

The disciples of Jesus in the boat were missing out on the comfort they could have had. Now, we can be sympathetic toward them. Their lives were in danger—so they thought. We can even sympathize with their veiled accusation against Jesus, "Don't you care if we drown?" Many of us here have probably asked Jesus something similar at some crisis point in our lives.

But Jesus pulls no punches: He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Why was he so harsh with them?

It was because they had forgotten what Jesus had told them. Jesus had made these men his followers. He had told them that they were going to one day go out and be fishers of men. Jesus designated these men apostles—ones who would be sent out on an official mission. Do you see? Jesus wasn't going to let them drown; he had told them already that he had work for them to do. For

that matter, Jesus had work yet to do, too (suffering, dying and rising); he wasn't going to become fish food at the bottom of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had made promises. He had spoken to his disciples. They were so afraid because they were forgetting what Jesus had told them.

Jesus didn't rebuke his disciples just for being afraid of the storm. No, he got after them for forgetting specific promises he had made to them. He had been revealing to them who he was and why he was there and who they were and why they were there. But they either forgot or mistrusted those words.

How much of our fear comes from forgetting what God has promised us? "God can't relate to my problems. He's way up there and I'm stuck down here. I might as well not even ask for his help." We think that even as we ignore what God has told us. His Son Jesus became a human being. That means God is involved in our world. Jesus lived a real, hard human life. He is involved in his world. He can relate to our problems. He has promised us that he cares. Or this: "I don't think even God is able to help me." We think that even as we ignore what God has promised us. He is able to do even more than we ask or imagine according to his power. Jesus is truly God. He is able to help, and he has promised that he will.

Jesus' words for his disciples are for us, too. "Why are you so afraid? Why are you living so cowardly? Don't you know who I am? Don't you know what I have promised you?"

Jesus speaks to us. He speaks to us because he loves us. And when Jesus speaks, things happen. He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. See how powerful his words are? The promises he has made to you are just as strong.

- When he says that you are reconciled to God, that God thinks of you as completely holy, that all your sins are forgiven—that promise is true. Heaven is your eternal home, not hell. Jesus says so.
- When you come here afraid in your heart, not really sure who you are or why you are here, God speaks to you with word and water. He says, "You are mine. Your purpose is to be loved and to love."
- When you come here afraid, thinking that you've done something so bad that God will surely hold it against you forever, God speaks to you: I forgive you all your sins. And his word is as powerful as the one that calmed the storm.
- When you come here afraid because you're trying to do better in your life but you keep failing and falling, Jesus speaks to you. He says, "Look at what I have done for you. Take, eat, this is my body, given for you..."
- When you come here, beat up by disaster that has touched your life (for God has not promised us that our lives will be free from tragedy), Jesus speaks to you. "I know what it is to be human, to be broken, to weep. I love you. I am powerful, and I will help you. Be still, and know that I am God."

When your ship is beaten and battered by waves, listen for the voice of the God-man. He will speak through his word and through his special sacraments. What will he say? "I love you. I care about you. Know who I am, and don't be afraid."

Do you "get it"? Do you see who this Jesus is? He is the God-man, the one who sleeps, then wakes to command the storm. He is the one who makes promises to you and me, and then he keeps them. He is Jesus. He is our Savior. Amen.