

Pentecost 3B

June 21, 2009

Hymns: 417 - 433 - 741 - 503

MARK 4:35-41

(page 1558, **slide 1** during reading of key verse)

JESUS CALMS THE STORMS OF (family) LIFE

***He Calms The Storms Within Us.**

***He Motivates Us To Avoid Storms With Others.**

Dear Children of our Heavenly Father, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, Welcome on this Father's Day, 2009! As someone has said, "Father's Day is like Mother's Day, except the gift is cheaper." And that might be true in some incidents. But there are fine Dads in our congregation, and we want to honor them. After all, it's not easy being a Dad.

It's not easy being a Dad, but never before has it been more important that we have good Dads. These are stressful times—What an important time to have Christian parenting! Not every biological father is a good Dad. And today there are stepdads who are facing the challenge of being a Dad to children who may or may not be ready to accept them. There are also grandfathers who are filling the role of surrogate Dads. Sadly, new to the American scene is the prospect of instead of having a mom and a dad, adopted children can have two dads or two moms. This is a new world, particularly with regard to the family. Today we sincerely salute all those men who are conscientiously seeking to provide a wholesome Christian environment to young people, in whatever role they may be, just as we saluted Christian women on Mother's Day.

Our Gospel lesson today concerns that time when Christ stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee. You know the story from Mark's Gospel. Jesus and His disciples are crossing the sea when a furious squall comes up. The waves are breaking over the boat. It's nearly swamped. While this is going on, Jesus is in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The frightened disciples wake Him and say, "Teacher, don't You care if we drown?" (**slide 2**) What happens next is one of the most dramatic scenes in Scripture. Jesus gets up, rebukes the wind and says to the waves, "**Quiet! Be still!**" Suddenly the wind dies down and it is completely calm. Jesus then turns to His disciples and asks, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

Then Mark says something really interesting. He says, "***They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!'***" The disciples seem more frightened by the fact that Jesus could still the storm than they were of the storm itself! And they should be frightened. Jesus was no ordinary man. Only the power of God can still an angry storm, and Jesus had done just that.

Christ is still in the business of stilling storms. We need to understand that. Sometimes those storms are in our individual hearts. Sometimes those storms are in our families. Sometimes the storms are in society. But Christ is still in the business of stilling storms. (**slide 3**) **Wherever there are people there are storms.** You would agree with that, wouldn't you? Wherever there are people there are storms. These storms may be personal storms, storms raging in our individual hearts and minds. Or they may be storms in our social relationships. Either way, they can bring peril.

There was a fascinating but somewhat cruel study done in Russia sometime back. (**slide 4**) Scientists subjected a group of chimpanzees to an assortment of experiences that made them violently and helplessly jealous. For example, they would take a chimpanzee who had been living happily with his family and suddenly rip him from his family to an adjoining cage from which he could see and hear his family but could not reach them. In full view another chimpanzee was given his place. Screaming with rage, he could only watch as his fury mounted. Within three months he was dead of severe hardening of the arteries and of high blood pressure. He was killed by his jealousy and rage.

(**slide 5**) A storm within one's own soul can have tragic circumstances. Jealousy, anger, bitterness, guilt. The list of storms that can rock our individual souls is lengthy indeed. We need a Savior when such storms rage

within. But there are other storms, storms that may rock our relationships. Those storms may be in our marriages or between us and our children or in our workplace or our community or in the world as a whole.

(slide 6) In the nineteenth century, philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer compared the human race to porcupines huddled together on a bitter cold winter night. The colder the world gets outside, the more we families huddle together; but the closer we get to one another, the more we hurt one another with our sharp quills. As a general rule, porcupines have two methods for handling relationships: withdrawal and attack. They either head for a tree or stick out their quills. They are generally solitary animals. Wolves run in packs; sheep huddle in flocks; we speak of herds of elephants and gaggles of geese and even a murder of crows. But there is no special name for a group of porcupines. They travel alone.

People can be like porcupines, can't they? How often, even in the closest of relationships, we can hurt one another. Is this not why families hurt so much!? Even worse, toxic feelings have a way of intensifying if not dealt with at the earliest possible moment. It is not enough to ride out these storms. Someone needs to calm the storm. That someone, of course, is Christ. But how? How does Christ calm these storms?

(slide 7) First of all, Christ calms the storm within us. We will not do well in dealing with stormy relationships if we cannot conquer the storms in our own hearts and souls. One reason we have conflict with others is that we have conflict within ourselves. We are often part of the problem rather than part of the solution. We strike back when we should keep quiet. We disparage when it's time to encourage. We sulk when we should be reaching out. We have to calm the storm within us before we can have satisfactory relationships with others.

(slide 8) Baseball superstar Mickey Mantle was interviewed shortly before his death. He had been a hero on the ball field, but not such a superstar outside baseball. After his playing days ended, he checked into the Betty Ford Clinic to deal with the consequences of a lifetime of alcohol abuse. Part of his struggle involved the loss of his son, Billy, who had died of a heart attack while suffering from Hodgkin's disease, a genetic disease which had killed Mantle's father and grandfather at an early age. In the interview, Mickey Mantle said, "One of the things I learned at the Betty Ford Clinic was why I was depressed. I wasn't a good father. I always felt like I wasn't there for my kids like my father had been for me."

Sometimes we have to conquer our own personal demons before we can reach out to others. Christ calms the storm first by calming us. Father (mother, son, daughter, husband, wife) are you eaten by jealousy, anger, bitterness or guilt? Father's Days, Mother's Days stir mixed feelings within us. Whatever generation, we could have done better! We rightly blame ourselves for damage done to relationships and lives close to ourselves. We have all been porcupines – withdrawing when we should have been in there pitching, contributing, encouraging. What we have often contributed has been caustic –belittling and demeaning - hurting feelings and damaging personalities. To what degree are guilt and shame weighing in this Father's Day?

(slide 9) Jesus comes to you with His Word, "Peace! Be still!" Who is this, Whom even the wind and waves obey?! He is your Savior from sin. Jesus stood in your place and took the wrath of His Father and yours. He was forsaken by the Father into the throes of hell, which He endured for you! Now He speaks to your heart: ***Peace! Be still! It is finished! Your sins are paid for and behind you. They are as good as buried in the depths of the sea. They are as far removed from you as the East is from the West! Enjoy Father's Day! Live every day to My glory.***

And this brings us to the second way He calms the waters of our lives – **(slide 10) He calms the storms – and helps us avoid storms! - by the motivation to imitate His way of dealing with people.** Jesus was a real "Gentle Man," wasn't He? Remember how He dealt with people? Gentleness, kindness, forgiveness. **(slide 11)** His driving the money changers and marketers out of the temple was so striking because of the way it was so out of character for Him. Could we be more like Him?--even as we firmly maintain a manly image or parental control as a father or mother? Children – can you be your own person and still work with your parents, giving them the respect the God-man Jesus showed Joseph and Mary? It's tough. We can accomplish

this enormous task only one way--by walking as closely to Him as we can.

(slide 12) Sometime back the BBC produced a television series called “Walking with Dinosaurs.” It seems that dinosaurs had a good trick to improve their own safety. They would always walk in single file, each one following in the footsteps of the one before. That way, any other creature that came across their trail would be unable to tell whether there were only one or two of these huge creatures up ahead, or a large herd.

We read in *I Peter 2*: *“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.’ When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats” (21-23).* That’s quite an example! **(slide 13)** Follow Christ’s example! Walk as closely with Him as possible. Allow Him to speak to your heart day by day in His Word. Strive to walk in His steps! We need more than His words, His example. We need His Spirit to come into us, making us new people. Christ can calm storms--storms within our own hearts, storms in our homes, storms within our community and out there in the world. This is so important.

(slide 14) It’s said that surgeons invited to dinner parties are often asked to carve the meat--or worse yet, to watch the host carve while commenting on the surgeon’s occupation. At one party, one surgeon was watching the carving while his host kept up a running commentary: “How am I doing, doc? How do you like my technique? I’d make a pretty good surgeon, don’t you think?” When the host finished and the slices of meat lay neatly on the serving platter, the surgeon spoke up, “Anybody can take them apart, Harry. Now let’s see you put them back together.”

What’s true of meat is also true of relationships. It is much easier to carve them apart than it is to put them back together again. Christ can heal a severed relationship, but it is better if things do not get that far in the first place. **(slide 15)** We need to have Christ calm the storms in our individual lives before they destroy us. We need Him to calm the storms in our families and other precious relationships before such relationships are permanently damaged. If there is a storm going on in your life, won’t you give it to Christ today? Amen.

The peace God which passes all human understanding, shall keep the hearts of minds of you and those around you through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. **(end slide 15)**