

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Lord arose from His sleep, and rebuked the winds and the waves, and there was a great calm. In this truth, in this recounting by St. Matthew of this factual occurrence, we learn much about the Christ, God the Son. First, in the boat, the Lord was asleep. God never sleeps, for God never grows tired. But God the Son took on human flesh. He was made Man. He was conceived of the Virgin Mary, and the Eternal God was born in time.

As a Man, he hungered. He thirsted. He wept. He bled. He tired. And He slept. God Himself experienced the same things you experience. So the Apostle writes to the Hebrews "...we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." God is not a God far-away. He took on Flesh, entered the fray, and endured the things that you endure.

And still, woken from sleep, He command the wind and the waves. He spoke and it was. He who hung the sun and moon and stars stood in that boat, and the creation had to obey Him. God the Son speaking through Solomon revealed His role in the creation, standing alongside God the Father: "When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside Him as a Master Craftsman."

And so St. John can write of the Word of God "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." He has the power to command wind and wave. So faithful Job could write of God the Son "He alone spreads out the heavens, And treads on the waves of the sea."

St. Matthew records that the Lord got into the boat, and His disciples followed Him. That's what disciples do – they follow their Teacher. And in this case, they would receive a lesson on trust. God indeed tempts no one. But God tests. He uses the tribulations of life to increase your faith and to make your faith strong, as you see time and time again that in love He delivers you.

In the darkest hour, God keeps His promises. All the trials of your life, and the many times that God protects you, work together to prepare you for the darkest hour, the hour of death, that you may see through death to God's ultimate protection: the eternal life that He has won for you.

The disciples followed the Lord into the boat. Everything seemed to be going well. Suddenly, a great storm appeared, and in moments the disciples thought they were going to die. Life is like that. The unexpected comes upon you. In their fear, they even thought that since the Lord was sleeping, He must be unaware of the storm. Tribulation brought doubt. Surrounded by turbulence and darkness, afraid, helpless, they prayed to the Lord in the boat "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"

Perhaps you have known how they felt. Perhaps you too have been afraid, surrounded by turbulence and seeming darkness. Perhaps tribulation has come upon you suddenly, and you, like the disciples in that trembling boat, have doubted. Perhaps physical affliction or illness, the loss of a job, the death of a loved one, tension and strife with family or friends, shame over your

sins, or just a vague sense of impending doom have overcome you. Perhaps you too, helpless, even doubting, have cried out “Lord, save me! I am perishing!”

The Lord heard the prayer of His disciples. He was, of course, well aware of the storm. But more than being aware, He was in control. The omnipotent Lord of heaven and earth stood in that boat. He commanded His creation to submit, and it had no choice.

The voice that once said “Let there be...” and there was, now commands the wind He created and the waters He placed. He stood up, rebuked the wind and the sea, and out of turbulence and turmoil, the Lord commanded calm. He protected His disciples from harm and death. He saved them. And the same Lord saves you.

What men fear most, what His disciples feared most, death, the Lord Himself willingly suffered. As if helpless, He endured the turbulence of scorn and ridicule. He submitted Himself to the buffeting of fist and scourge. Great darkness surrounded Him, but no one rose to protect Him. He drowned in death, dying a worse death than His disciples feared in that boat. He died the death of the cross.

In that precious, holy death is great calm for you, dear Christian. For there He died your death. There He protected you from sin, death and the devil. There He endured the tempest of the rejection of men and the forsaking of the Father. There He gave you the sign of Jonah, as He plummeted to the deepest depths of death. And just as on that boat He awoke, so too from the tomb. He defeated what you have feared most. He defeated death. He lives. He lives and reigns for eternity, Lord of heaven and earth, the sign of Jonah fulfilled.

Drowning in sin, the tempests of the fallen world buffeting you back and forth, in faith you cry “Lord, help me, I am perishing!” and He delivers you. He does so in the calm waters of the Font, where His death and resurrection are made yours. There in that life-giving sea He brings you forgiveness and everlasting life. There, it is not a strong wind, but the very Spirit of the Living God that blows over you and into you. He brings you God’s peace and strength.

So do not be afraid, dear Christian. Your sins are forgiven. And the same Lord that died and rose for you has power over the storms of your life. He is not asleep, He knows what you endure. And He is with you. He hears your prayers. He brings you to safety in the unsinkable Boat, the Ark, the Holy Church. Here, in this Nave, He protects you from the tempests and storms of the world. Here He shelters you and keeps you from harm. Here He gives you heaven, making you the heirs of His New Testament.

The wind and sea obey Him still. But more, for you this day, bread and wine obey Him, as His Word is spoken and He places His Body and Blood with created elements. He bids you eat and drink. Receiving Christ, you receive the great calm that comes by the forgiveness of your sins, and the strengthening of your faith.

And by that faith, you are not afraid. Come darkness, wind and wave in this fallen world you trust in Christ. The disciples asked: “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, your Savior, your Redeemer, your Lord.

St. Matthew 8:23-27  
The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, 2017 A.✠ D.

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