



Free Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
in South Africa

Sermon- 10th Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 12B)

Jesus, the I AM,

means to pass by His disciples!



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach

• **The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mark 6, 45-56:**

• ^{ESV} 45 Immediately He (Jesus) made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He dismissed the crowd.

• 46 And after He had taken leave of them, He went up on the mountain to pray.

• 47 And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and He was alone on the land.

• 48 And He saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them,

• 49 but when they saw Him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out,

• 50 for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

• 51 And He got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded,

• 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

• 53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore.

• 54 And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized Him

• 55 and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard He was.

• 56 And wherever He came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored Him that they might touch even the fringe of His garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

• **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our eyes and our hearts so that we will realise who Jesus is and what He did for us and what He does with us, and so drive out the fear in us for people, for nature, for the winds of the times, and for the future! Amen.*

• **Dear beloved of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!**

• We continue on our journey with our Lord Jesus and His disciples. Last Sunday we saw that as Jesus wanted to grant His disciples some leave, the crowd found them and Jesus taught and fed more than five-thousand people through His disciples, acting out the new Exodus of Israel in the wilderness. Today we hear how Jesus cautiously dismissed the crowd and sent His disciples off on the boat to Bethsaida.

- After Jesus had dismissed His disciples, He went into the mountain to pray, just like Moses and Elijah went up the mountain. Then follows His Epiphany on the Sea of Galilee which only the disciples witnessed. Now this is the second time we hear about the disciples sailing or rowing on the sea. In the first story Jesus was asleep on board whilst a storm came up and the boat with the disciples got in danger of being swallowed by the waves. That is when Jesus commanded the storm to calm down.
- This time around it was not actually the wind which caused the disciples to be terrified. The shock for them came as they did not recognize Jesus “meaning to pass by them”, as it says!
- So, why would Jesus do such a strange thing, which terrified His disciples? He said to them, ‘Take courage, it is I (I AM), stop being afraid!’ The disciples were totally astounded and amazed which Jesus by the way, judged as hardness of heart. What was He teaching them, what is He teaching us by telling us this story?
- One thing we know, from previous passages in the Gospel of Mark, that the mysteriousness of Jesus is something Mark likes to point out and highlight. Here we have a particularly mysterious passage. Why would Jesus mean to pass by His disciples, after seeing that they battled against the wind?
- One thing we can rule out in the beginning: Its got nothing to do with mythology. Jesus was no ghost. The disciples initially thought so, but that was exactly NOT the case. It was Jesus in His human body walking on the sea! That is what was so astonishing!
- Now, there are several passages of the OT which may come to mind. One passage in particular is Job 9,4-11: *“... how can a man be in the right before God? If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times. He is wise in heart and mighty in strength- who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?- he who removes mountains, and they know it not, when he overturns them in his anger, who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble; who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars; who alone stretched out the heavens **and trampled the waves of the sea**; who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the chambers of the south; who does great things beyond searching out, and marvelous things beyond number.*”

Behold, he passes by me, and I see him not; he moves on, but I do not perceive him.

- Job is speaking of God here, of Yahweh, of I AM who I AM. Those things which Job says about God, which could be misunderstood as being mythology or figures of speech only, ***Jesus fulfills literally!! He does it in His body!*** There you see I AM trampling the waves under Him. He passed by them and they perceived Him not. They didn't recognise HIM!
- Put in another way: *“Our Lord Jesus brings to literal expression the depiction of the all-powerful God who is master of His own creation.”*
- Lets give some more examples: In the OT Yahweh says that He will shepherd His sheep, and so Jesus literally does this. Yahweh says that He Himself will lead His blind people on the way to Jerusalem and so literally Jesus does. Yahweh is described as walking on the sea and passing by unrecognised and so Jesus literally does!! Jesus fully fulfills the OT *story*, the history and hope. Not only the Law and promises of God, but also the story!
- But, there is more: Whilst God passed by Job, Jesus did not pass by His disciples! They cried out and He came to them into the boat! And immediately the wind died down. In other words, the disciples saw Yahweh and when they were frightened by not recognising Him, they cried out. He heard them and came to them.
- So, Jesus does the new thing that the OT prophet like Isaiah predicted. Jesus' disciples experienced God in a physical way, unlike any OT experiences. Yahweh does not elude them. He visits them in a full physical and spiritual way!
- But, now, although they saw God with their own eyes, they could not believe what they saw! This brings us to the other main theme in the Gospel. They were so amazed, even frightened, when they saw Yahweh, yet they didn't believe what they saw, which proves that seeing never is believing when it comes to faith in God. Jesus calls that hardening of the heart. Faith needs to be given first, by God, otherwise we cannot see!
- Yet, faith has been given to us! We can believe because it was given to us through the Spirit that was given to us when we were baptised into Christ's death using the Word of the Cross. So, what does this story speak to us? Furthermore,

we have to ask, what does this story *do* with us?

- As we hear this story unfold in our midst, gathered as Body of Christ, after Jesus' death and resurrection, something truly astonishing actually happens: We physically hear His Word and we believe and see more than the disciples saw that day! This is only possible because God is really with us in His boat. Yahweh visits us as we hear the story of Jesus.

- In other words, the Word of Jesus draws us into a new space and lets us experience God in a new way which is fuller than what the disciples actually experienced, because their hearts were still hardened. We can understand more than they did, although they had physically seen it!!

- And so we realise today, that the Bible, God's Word the story of God with His people is about God's story with us, with me personally, in a very deep, real and profound way. Do you see, we experience real wind against us, spiritual wind against us. So, now we know, God sees this. If we call for help, in Jesus' Name, He hears us and will not pass by us! As we invoke His name, invocation at the beginning of the service, He Himself comes aboard and the winds of the times must obey Him! We call on Him and He comes to us in the boat.

- This is not figuratively speaking, this is not depicting God, this is not a myth, it really happens. Do you see, those disciples, that's you and me, that's us, not only us, its present tense reality for Christians who hear this Word! So, as we experience the Word of God in human language, in a physical way, the lights of our spirit are switched on and we see the truth of it all for our life now. So, the Word of God creates a new space and time for us. Here we are gathered thus in a space where the Word of God unites foreshadow with fulfilment, where Jesus reigns who is Himself the place where God and the new Adam are united in fullness.

- And all those of you, who have been united with Christ, you participate in this new fullness. God is with us in the boat! Therefore, stop being afraid!

- Glory be to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

- *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. [MKJ 2 Cor3:14.]*