

Calm to the waves, calm to the wind, Jesus whispers, "Peace! Be still!"  
Balm to our hearts, fears at an end, in stillness hear his voice.

What storms have you weathered this week? What boisterous waves or fearful breakers or tempestuous seas have you survived to get here this evening? When have you cried out: "Jesus, save me from this wild ocean, from the wind and the waves that threaten to engulf and destroy me?"

In today's gospel reading, we hear that Jesus' disciples cried out to him in the midst of a turbulent, tempestuous, and threatening storm on the Sea of Galilee. Seasoned fishers, they respected the power of the wind and the waves. To put it simply, they were afraid—and rightly so. "There was a great storm of wind," Mark tells us. The disciples knew they were in danger on that lake.

The Sea of Galilee doesn't look like a dangerous lake at first glance. From the center of it you can see the shore all around its 33-mile circumference, and at times it is so calm that you can see clear down to the bottom as well. But it isn't always calm. Listen to my friend Mary, who traveled there with her husband Brian.

We were in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. Brian read the story about the storm in Mark 4, and I laughed out loud. "How could the disciples have been afraid of perishing on such a small, quiet lake?" I asked him. Within minutes, another boat pulled up alongside ours to ask for help, and a man climbed on board. He told me that he had been fishing on the calm lake earlier that morning when a storm suddenly blew up and overturned his boat. "Please," he pleaded. "Would you help me look for my brother? He's missing."

Mary's story concludes, "Our search was unsuccessful." Like the man who climbed into Mary and Brian's boat, the disciples knew what they had to fear that day on the boat in the Sea of Galilee. They knew the power of the turbulent, tempestuous, threatening storm, and they were afraid, afraid for their very lives. "Teacher," they cried out, "Do you not care that we are perishing?"

You and I, too, encounter such storms in our lives, moments when we are in danger, moments when we are afraid. Our life-storms take many shapes, but they are nonetheless threatening. Certainly we fear windstorms and hurricanes and tornados and floods because they put us in physical danger. But no one can deny that we are also in danger from other storms of body and soul—turbulent, tempestuous, threatening storms. These storms of body and soul also buffet us on boisterous waves. They are no less dangerous than windstorms, and we do well to fear them—to have a reasonable awe of their power to destroy us.

You may be the only one who knows what storms are raging about you right now. Failing a test, not knowing how you will pay next month's rent, living with pain or illness or addiction or depression, living with someone who abuses you, worrying about a wayward child, navigating a rocky relationship with a spouse, a sibling, a neighbor. These storms may threaten your peace of mind; they may threaten

your faith; they may even threaten your very life. You, too, may feel like calling out to Jesus: “Don’t you care that I am perishing?” And perhaps you can hear him saying, saying, “Peace! Be Still!”

Calm to the waves, calm to the wind, Jesus whispers, “Peace! Be still!”  
Balm to our hearts, fears at an end, in stillness hear his voice.

Jesus hears your cries, dear friends. He hears them just as he heard the cries of his own disciples. When the disciples woke Jesus up, he immediately rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Jesus heard the cries of his disciples and answered their pleas. Just as he heard their cries, he hears your cries, too. Even when they seem to go unheeded. Indeed, it may seem that your storms continue to rage unabated, that Jesus never wakes up in your boat, that he ignores your cries, that he doesn’t care that you are perishing.

When you cry to Jesus, “Save me, Lord, I am perishing; I don’t have money to pay the gas bill,” he may not send you a winning lottery ticket. When you cry, “Save me Lord, I am perishing; I am addicted to tobacco,” he may not magically take away your desire to smoke. When you cry, “Save me, Lord, I am perishing; my husband left me, and I can’t live as a single parent,” he may not send you a mail-order spouse.

But he might send you a song—or a word in your morning devotions--or a friend who can listen to you--or a whole community to surround you when you are in trouble. Jesus hears your cries today, dear friends, just as he heard the cries of his disciples in the boat long ago. Although he may not calm your storms in the way you wish he would, or as dramatically as he did for the disciples, he does hear you. It’s not so likely that Jesus will bring your wayward son home tomorrow or take away your best friend’s cancer or make a deposit into your checking account to cover your mortgage payment or give you your job back. Sometimes, instead of calming your storms, Jesus calms you. Sitting in your boat, he brings you calm in the midst of your storms, no matter how turbulent, no matter how tempestuous, no matter how threatening. Whenever a storm comes, listen, for Jesus says to you, as he said to the disciples: “Peace! Be still!”

Calm to the waves, calm to the wind, Jesus whispers, “Peace! Be still!”  
Balm to our hearts, fears at an end, in stillness hear his voice.

AMEN