

Jesu Juva

“Our Always Saviour”

Text: Mark 6:45-56 (Genesis 9:8-17; Ephesians 3:14-21)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

It had been a perfect day. Jesus had just fed over 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. And before that, He had taught - with those words that had authority; those words no one else ever spoke; strong, powerful words. They were different. He was different. And then the twelve baskets full of leftovers when there wasn't even one basket full of food to begin with. They were in Jesus' wheelhouse that day. It was great.

And then the day is over and Jesus sends them away. He doesn't come with them, as they undoubtedly wanted. He sends them off in a boat while He goes off to pray. And their time on the water was exactly the opposite of how the day went. It was hard. Adversity. The wind was not at their back. When it was, they could practically fly across the Sea of Galilee. That night it was against them, so it was hard work. Every boat length of progress exhausting. . . . And Jesus is off praying. Where is He when you need Him? Like a couple weeks ago, when He was with the disciples in the boat on the Sea when a storm came up. He helped them then; where is He for them now?

You know how it is. You've been there. You've had a good day, maybe a good week, like our youth at Higher Things this week. They went with suitcases filled with clothes and came back with them filled with teaching, memories, and the awe of 1,000 people packed into that chapel, every seat filled, singing vigorously and loudly and with an organ that filled the room and then some. *Jesus* was feeding and teaching them.

And then it was time to come back home. All the cool pastors replaced with ordinary parents. From the awesome chapel to Mt. Kilimanjaro!* New friends gone and old brothers and sisters back. Instead of going to sectionals, doing chores. Jesus was there for them then; where is He for them now?

But you too. All of you, have been there. Good days, good weeks that end far too soon, and then back to the grind, back to adversity, with the wind in your face, not at your back. Challenges, struggles, trials that keep coming and seem never to end. Times when it seems like Jesus isn't there for you when you need Him.

Oh, but He was there. When He was praying, He saw them. He saw them struggling. He saw the adversity. For the Good Shepherd never stops watching over His sheep. He never lets them get too far away. And then He comes to them. He doesn't just zap Himself onto

the boat - that's not Jesus' way. But He does walk on the water, because that's where the disciples were. He comes to them where they are.

Mark tells us, though, that He intended to pass them by. For they weren't in danger, you see, like when they were caught in the storm. This time it was tough, but they were making progress, though slowly, yes; difficult, yes. So Jesus was just going to let them see Him; a glimpse, that they know He is with them; they are not alone. He is going ahead of them, to prepare for them. That should have boosted the disciples a bit.

But it doesn't. Instead, they think they are seeing a ghost! They wanted Jesus with them, *but not like that!* They immediately think the worst, and cry out. Scared. Harassed and helpless, like sheep *without* a shepherd.

Maybe us too. Jesus *is* there with us when we need Him. He promised. But maybe, like the disciples, it's just not in the way we want Him to be. He still doesn't zap Himself into our lives or into the midst of our problems. He *is* with us, though, through the people He uses to care for us. Parents, spouses, friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, pastors, and more. These people the masks of God, through whom God has mercy on us, helps us, gives to us, and provides for us, through them.

Disappointed? Have in mind something else? Want Jesus, *but not like that?* Don't be. Repent and give thanks to God for these gifts He has given you. And don't think He cannot do great things through such simple people, through such simple means. Look at Noah. Through an ordinary old man and his big old boat, God saved alive all the species of animals in His creation, along with the man and his family.

And through that man and from that man would come this too: **our Saviour**. God didn't zap Himself into our world and troubles then either, when our Saviour came - He was walking then, too. He came through a virgin, was born in a manger, grew up in the town of Nazareth (which everyone knows nothing good comes from). Then He traveled about with a rag tag group of twelve guys who weren't the brightest bulbs in the box, and then eventually was condemned and crucified. And the disciples were scared then too. Denying, running away, and hiding behind locked doors. Like sheep without a shepherd.

But the third day after all that, Jesus spoke just about the same words to those frightened disciples behind locked doors that He spoke to those same frightened disciples in the boat who thought they were seeing a ghost: ***Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.*** And His Word does what it says. The Shepherd is with His sheep and they have peace.

And that is the way of peace for you as well: the Word of God. The Word of God that teaches us that no matter how bad things seem, they are never out of our Father's control. The Word of God that speaks peace to us in the forgiveness of our sins. The Word of God joined to ordinary water that does a most amazing thing: it washes us clean on the *inside*,

unites us to Jesus, makes us sons of God in Him, and gives the Holy Spirit. For Jesus is here with us in the boat of the church. And His Word and Spirit are too, to give us peace in the midst of the winds of adversity in our unpredictable and sin-filled world.

Disappointed? That all we've got is the Word spoken by a man as sinful as you and not something more spectacular than that? Want Jesus, *but not like that*? Don't be. For as St. Paul said, through this Word, *Thy Strong Word* (LSB #578), Jesus ***is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to his power at work within us***. And as Paul says elsewhere, Jesus doesn't choose or use the powerful and spectacular things of this world to give His gifts. He uses the weak and lowly and despised things of the world to do the greatest work (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). Like the cross. To do His work. And He always has more for us.

So with Jesus in the boat the winds die down and they are able to make it to the other side. And when they get there, Jesus picks up right where He left off: healing, driving out demons, teaching, caring, shepherding. The people come and He turns none away.

For us too. After our perfect days and weeks, we get back and Jesus picks up right where He left off. It may *seem* as if Jesus isn't with us or is passing us by, but it is not so. His promise to Noah is still His promise to you: that ***the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh***. Because the Father did this instead: He offered up His Son. He offered up the flesh and blood of His Son for your sin, for my sin, for the sin of the world. And so the water the Father now sends is not a destroying water, but *a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit* (Small Catechism, Baptism: *How can Baptism do such great things?*). And that Body and Blood of His Son, *given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins* (Small Catechism, The Sacrament of the Altar), now given to you here, swallows up your sin and death and gives you peace and life. Here Jesus says to you: ***Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.***

And the sign of this covenant isn't the bow in the clouds, but the cross placed upon your forehead and upon your heart when you were drowned and raised in that baptismal flood. The sign that tells you: I will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5), because my Son took that for you, there, for your sin, in your place. Now I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:20). I am your Good Shepherd (John 10:11). I know you, and you know me.

Disappointed? Never. For you have a Saviour who is with you in the really good days and weeks and in the really bad days and weeks. In adversity and in times of ease. In the spectacular and the ordinary. In plenty and in want. In sorrow and in joy. In life and in death. A Saviour who is here with you, so that you be with Him, in Paradise, forever.

So with such a Saviour,

*Entrust your days and burdens To God's most loving hand;
He cares for you while ruling the sky, the sea, the land.
For He who guides the tempests Along their thunderous ways
Will find for you a pathway And guide you all your days (LSB #754 v. 1).*

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

* The Adventists from whom we rent space for church are having their Vacation Bible School this week and have decked out the church to look like Mt. Kilimanjaro. It's something we have to endure every year.