

Eastern Mission

Apostolic Lutheran Church of America

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“And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. 36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. 37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? 39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Mark 4:35-41

A little over a week ago, our local area experienced one of the most devastating storms in its history. Overnight, we received over six inches of rain causing flash flooding, severely damaging many roads and homes. The storm caused upwards of \$50 million damage to our roads, homes and property. In addition to those losses, was the life of a twelve year-old boy, who died not long after the basement of his home collapsed upon him.

Perhaps our first instinct in these situations is to ponder why God allows them to happen. Does God really care? A week after the storm, the appointed Gospel reading from Mark chapter 4 poses that very question. When the great storm arose, the waves were so great that the ship was filling up with water. The fearful disciples looked to Jesus for help, and found Him asleep. “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” It is significant to note that Jesus’ presence in the ship did not keep the storm from coming. The presence of the storm does not signify the absence of God. The same is true for us, when we face the storms of this earthly life. Just because we are God’s children does not mean that we will never face troubles in this world. Peace is not the absence of conflict, it is the presence of God. The disciples did the right thing when the storm arose. They looked for Jesus. And they found Him in their ship.

Does God care? He certainly does. God cares so much about the storm of sin that He sent Jesus to die in our place “And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” I John 2:2 God cares so much about the storm of death that He has destroyed its power through the death and Resurrection of Jesus. God cares so much about the storm of suffering that sent His Son to suffer along with us, in order that He might finally put an end to all suffering. “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 We need not look far for God in the midst of our trials. He is in our “ship.”

In the aftermath of the storm, we see signs of God’s presence all around us. Neighbors helping neighbors. Churches and relief agencies opening their buildings to provide supplies for the needy. Volunteers from near and far helping victims clean up and repair their homes. God’s children from all over the country and abroad upholding us in prayer. God is present. God is present in the Body of His Son. And, He is present in the continued proclamation of the glorious Gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ. May God grant us all strength as we journey through the storms of life, resting in His gracious and unfailing promises.

“...Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. 2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. 3 For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour...”
Isaiah 43:1-3

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Chuck Bylkas