

FAITH THAT CALMS THE STORM - Luke 8: 22-25  
JAZZ VESPERS + June 8, 2008  
Calvary Lutheran Church, West Chester, PA + Roy Almquist

**Our Gospel lesson for this evening describes the human situation in a dramatic fashion.** We live our lives .. we try to be good, decent people .. we avoid temptations and perhaps we can say that, for the most part, we walk with the Lord.

**But then something happens .. suddenly, terribly, unexpectedly.** As the Bible says, *In the midst of life we are in death.* Death can take many forms .. the loss of a loved one, the loss of innocence, the loss of our dream. We discover that there is no abiding place for us .. there is no plastic shield that can guard us from danger and, what is worse, there is nothing that can protect the ones we love.

Every night the evening news reminds us of how quickly a storm can come: a child is abducted, a teenage boy is killed for the crime of being in the wrong place at the wrong time ... tornados, automobile accidents, the loss of a job, and the end of precious relationship. **How quickly the storm can come!**

That is why we are **fearful of change.** We tend to experience change as disruption or danger because we do not control it. *Transition* is not a warm happy word for most people. We know what we have .. we are not sure about what is coming. We enjoy *There'll Be Some Changes Made* when it is an *instrumental prelude* at a Jazz Vespers, but we are not so excited when those words are a description events in our lives.

This congregation is living through a time of change. A lot of the former things have passed away. The future is uncertain. We know the Lord is bringing about something new for Calvary, but forgive us if the net result is a sense of anxiety and doubt.

In our lesson from Luke's Gospel we see Jesus and his disciples use a boat to avoid the crowds on shore. On the surface this was a good idea because this got them quickly away from the hordes of people, but suddenly the disciples find themselves not at the mercy of a swirling multitude but instead in the midst of a terrible storm. Convinced they were about to perish they woke Jesus up and pleaded with him to do something. **And he did ..** he stilled the storm and removed the danger.

In Mark's version of this story we are told, almost as an aside, that .. **other boats were with him**. In some ways that is a *throw-away line* – Luke does not include the verse. But I consider it important. That simple line reminds us that, even though our attention is drawn to the **flagship** where Jesus and the disciples are sailing, **other people were in danger that afternoon**.

I think it is important to note that **the people in those other little boats were also saved**. **They became the beneficiaries of the faith and power that resided in that central boat**. When the winds quieted, they quieted for everyone. When the disciples were removed from danger, the other ships were removed from danger. Those little boats made it to the other side because of **someone else's faith .. someone else's saving action**.

**I think this story tells us something extremely important: *Our faith in God can ultimately benefit many.***

- Thomas Edison believed and now we illuminate our rooms with the flip of a switch;
- Wilbur and Orville Wright believed and now we fly all over the world without a second thought

Now there is a down-side to this "other boats" idea. *How can we begin to measure how many are trying to live off the faith of their mother or father?* A lot of people believe the Church is a good thing for children .. they want it to be there when they need it, but they don't feel a personal need for a relationship with Jesus Christ or a sense of connection with a Christian congregation.

That is a source of sadness for me because I believe that participation in Christian community can be an incredible source of strength and stability for us as we navigated the risky rapids of life and stare down the changes that frighten us. Being connected with Jesus Christ through participation in a community of faith can give us that **still point** and that sense of **abiding hope** that can strengthen us in the worst of times and give us purpose during the best of times.

In one of the great hymns of the faith we are reminded that ...

*Jesus calls us, o'er the tumult of our life's wild restless sea,  
Day by day his clear voice sounding, saying, **Christian, follow me!***

Let us live into that truth. Let us follow Jesus with all of our strength and determination. And let us cling to the one who stills the storms and has come that we might have life in abundance. Amen.