

The Rev. Dr. Leanna K. Fuller, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Scripture

Mark 4:35-41

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." ³⁶ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. ³⁷ A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹ And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Devotional

As Christians, we affirm that we can learn about the nature of God by looking at the life and ministry of Jesus. In today's reading, Jesus' words and actions make powerful claims about who God is. First, we learn that while the waves swamped the boat, Jesus slept. The disciples think this means that Jesus doesn't care about them. Instead, Jesus shows us that God brings peace and rest even in the midst of the world's chaos. Our God is a firm foundation; God is our refuge and strength (Ps. 46).

Then, when Jesus perceives his disciples' distress, he commands the wind and the waves, "Peace! Be still!" From this we learn that our God brings comfort; when we cry out to God, God will be present with us. Yet our God is also a God of challenge, as we see from Jesus' response after the storm has calmed: "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" While God comforts us, God does not wish us to remain mired in despair. Instead, God calls us forth from our anxiety and fear, inviting us to trust God completely, no matter what storms may rage around us.

Prayer

Gracious God, in this season of Lent, help us to learn to listen for your voice in the midst of the storm. Even when it seems to us that you are sleeping, or that you are indifferent to our plight, remind us that you are always near, ready to calm the chaos that swirls around and within us. Most of all, give us the strength and courage to respond when we hear you calling us beyond our fears to follow wherever you may lead. Amen.