

*“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
(Galatians 1:3 | ESV)*

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It's just us here, isn't it? We can speak frankly – right?

Because – I'm sorry, but this sermon will make us discover some embarrassing things. So please: Don't tell anyone, okay?

I.

The whole story begins strangely enough. We experienced Bible readers may no longer even notice it. Because we are so familiar with the stories.

But have you noticed where Jesus is going? To the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. And this is not where the pious people live, not those who pray and go to church. This is where the Gentiles live. Those who do business – even without the slightest respect for others. Those who are not interested in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. People with whom pious Jews have nothing in common with – and Jesus certainly has been a pious one!

So, this is “interesting” enough. But it gets even better – or worse. Depending on your point of view. Jesus decides to sail across to the other side – but, please, didn't he pay attention to the weather? After all, he is the Son of God. Didn't he know what was coming? And if he, as a carpenter, didn't pay attention to the wind and weather, then at least his disciples, as experienced fishermen, should have. Didn't anyone check their weather app?

II.

So now events take their course. The storm is gathering. The waves crash into the boat. Water runs into the ship. – And Jesus sleeps.

Here, too, there can be found at least two rather unfavorable aspects. The first: the disciples are afraid.

Now you might say: So, what's so strange, so special about that? It's perfectly normal to be afraid when a ship is about to sink.

Yes, you might say that. But a man in a country on the Mediterranean is not afraid. Period. And certainly not when such an event occurs on a comparatively small body of water like the Sea of Galilee. Get a grip on yourselves! Aren't you real men?

You can't imagine what would happen if the people in the pubs nearby heard about it. They would not be able to stop laughing! “Such losers!”

But the next aspect is no less irritating. Jesus is asleep. God is asleep? Imagine you get into a conversation with your neighbor and he talks with you about all the suffering that is going on in the world: War, hunger, terror, unforgiveness, strife and hatred in society and in families. And he would ask you: Where is God? Why is this happening?

You would never seriously think of answering: He is probably asleep. And if you did, your counterpart would probably turn away at once. Are we supposed to believe in such a God? Yes, it is written here: He was asleep. – But don't worry – we'll come back to this later.

III.

And finally, there is the way the disciples wake Jesus up. "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

Quite bold and rude. This is only the second time that the Gospel of Mark reports what the disciples say to Jesus. The first time is a more technical announcement - and already with a somewhat reproachful undertone: "Everyone is looking for you." (Mark 1:37) And now the second time the disciples speak up. And in a tone that makes you wonder: "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

It is not surprising that Matthew and Luke present the disciples' words in a somewhat friendlier way in their gospels. Sorry, you can't talk to the Lord Jesus like that! No way!

As you can see, this story contains many reasons not to tell it to others. We meet people who behave in an embarrassing way. And then there is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose behavior also remains mysterious. At least for now. So: Don't tell anyone!

IV.

On the other hand:

What if the Bible only spoke of heroes of faith? If the people who traveled with Christ had never doubted, had never been afraid, had never lost their temper? Wouldn't we then have the impression that we were excluded, that we didn't belong? After all, we do have doubts and fears – and we do lose our temper now and then, don't we?

It's not good that it is like that. And it is a sign that the world is broken by the power of sin and that we ourselves are also sinners. But it is good that Jesus Christ walks with such people, does not push them away, but is patient with them and continues to walk with them.

And how would it be if we would only read in the Bible that people with Christ never have a bad time? What if we were told that all the dangers and problems in their lives vanish into thin air as soon as they say a prayer?

Wouldn't we immediately question ourselves? What are we doing wrong? Are we Christians at all? Shouldn't we believe more strongly, be better Christians?

It is therefore very helpful to realize that people who believe in Jesus Christ are not led around problems and dangers and difficulties but go right through them – with him. Even when we have the impression that he is asleep and possibly not in control

of the situation. I tell you: He is – definitely. As the psalmist says: “Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.” (Psalm 121:4 | ESV).

V.

But what can we learn from the Gospel for our lives? How can we live as Christians - especially when we are in deep trouble and don't know what to do next?

In any case, tell the Lord. And don't think too long about whether the words will fit. Do as the disciples did. They wake Jesus up with rude words. And actually, he doesn't criticize them for their words – but only for not trusting him. So: pray, talk to God, don't hide your feelings. He will help you. He will not let you down. Even if it is sometimes the case that his help and presence is hidden under the impression of the opposite, as Luther once said.

But you are God's children. You are members of the body of Christ. And the members of the body of Christ cannot be separated from Christ himself. We are one.

VI.

And it is worth staying in touch with this Jesus. Because he is not just anyone.

This miracle of stilling the storm already seems spectacular to us. And when a storm is approaching again and we look anxiously at the trees in our garden, we would sometimes also be grateful if Jesus came by to calm the storm.

But that is only the surface of what is told here. In those days, wind and water were not just seen as natural phenomena that I can potentially even predict with knowledge of weather science. Rather, in times when many people could not even swim, water and wind were seen as demonic forces.

And so, it is no coincidence that Jesus uses the same words to calm the storm that he used a few chapters earlier when healing a man with an unclean spirit: “Be silent, and come out of him!” (Mark 1:25 | ESV).

VII.

This makes it clear: the Gospel does not tell us about some miracle man who is performing his tricks here.

Instead, we are introduced to the Lord of the world, before whom everything must fall to its knees. Wind and water, which have made people afraid back then, everything demonic, all the powers that threaten our lives and make it difficult for us to live together, sin, death and the devil. Nothing, absolutely nothing has any more power when Jesus Christ comes on the scene.

And so, this story is already a little Easter story. Just as Jesus rested in the tomb, he also rests here in the boat. But not to sleep instead of helping us, but to achieve the most complete victory we could ever imagine. We will live. Now – yes, now here in this world, which already offers so many beautiful things. But even more so and in wonderful splendor in eternity.

VIII.

When I started the sermon, I said: Please don't tell anyone. And yes, at first glance, the gospel offers some things that seem quite embarrassing.

And in fact, according to the accounts in the Gospel of Mark, even Jesus himself repeatedly instructed people not to tell others about the miracles he performed. However, with little success: “Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.” (Mark 7:36 | ESV).

Perhaps it will end up being the same with this sermon. I started and told you not to tell anyone. But I can already see it. That’s not how it works with us Christians. As Peter and John once said: “We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:20 | ESV).

And you know what – it’s okay, even very much okay. Go and tell others about the God who loves all people, who has power over everything that frightens us, who has saved us and with whom we have become one through baptism. This is a wonderful message that the world needs – especially in times like ours.

Amen.

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“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4,7 | ESV)