

Grace and peace are yours from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Old Testament reading records the miracle God performs through His prophet Elisha in feeding the multitude of people with loaves of barley. A very similar miracle is recorded in the Gospel of Mark with many of the people (who participated in the miracle), believing that another great prophet (like Elisha) has come. At the end of the day, the disciples get in their boat and begin to make way for the other side of the lake.

Now the Lake in the gospel text has a few different names; Lake of Gennesaret, Lake Tiberias, and most commonly, the Sea of Galilee. This body of water is a freshwater lake that is approximately; 33 miles in circumference, 13 miles long, and 8 miles wide with an average depth of 84 feet and a maximum depth of 141 feet. Why the geography lesson on the lake; to reveal this is NOT a small body of water and also indicating it is not possible to see the other side of the lake at its widest point when standing on the shore.

After Jesus and the disciples feed the multitude of people, Jesus goes ahead to escape the crowds, while the disciples get in the boat and leave without Jesus. After rowing about 3-4 miles.... approximately to the center of this body of water, a strong wind arises and the waters become violent and rough. In the midst of this fear, the disciples see Jesus out ON the water walking towards them...and their fear is complete.

Now; listen carefully to the words of the gospel, because what happens next is a miracle that may just go unnoticed. After Jesus tells the disciples to not be afraid, Jesus does not calm the storm. Instead, when the disciples help to take Jesus into the boat; the boat immediately reaches land and they are at their destination.

The miracle of the boat reaching the shore is not recorded in Matthew and Mark's Gospel; instead, those accounts reveal Jesus calming the storm. In John's gospel the storm continues to rage and Jesus brings the disciples safely to the shore.

Clearly, these are not the same event being recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark because there, Jesus begins in the boat with the disciples. However, in John's Gospel, Jesus is separated from the disciples because the crowd wanted more than the miracle; they wanted to make Jesus their king. The disciples go ahead without Jesus and meet Him in the center of the sea in the midst of a storm. (*Not long after Jesus calmed the storm.*)

My friends, there are no coincidences in Holy Scripture; there are also no mistakes. The truth as recorded in the gospel texts reveal that Jesus calmed one storm and allowed the other to continue. The truth as recorded in the gospel text also reveals that Jesus remained with His precious disciples throughout both events; times of trial and tribulation. Jesus remains until we are brought safely to the shore; safely home.

During our time at Vacation Bible School this week, the adults took a deeper look at the miracles that Jesus performed; their meaning, their purpose, and their reasons. Miracles came in two forms; miracles that healed and miracles that controlled nature; both of which revealed the divine nature of Jesus to humankind...so that we might believe.

Miracles, like parables, are also a means by which we grow in our faith and learn to trust in our God whose love is beyond our comprehension. The miracle of the storms the disciples encounter and the gospel writers record are among the most meaningful, relevant, and hopeful passages for our lives today because so many of us seems to be sailing and struggling against the wind.

You see, our journey can appear to be a storm of sorts from the beginning of life to the very end. Sure, there are times of peace and calm along the way but the storms are necessary elements that strengthen and guide us in our faith to a place of trust and reliance upon our Lord.

We reach a point in our faith where we weather the storms with less impact and less repair in order to help others with the storms in their life. When we cry out to God in the midst of our storms, God hears our prayer (every time) and acts in our best interest. There are times when God will calm the storm and there are times when God allows the storm to rage. In either case, God remains among us to protect, defend, and securely guide and carry us along the way.

My dear friends in Christ, God has been our guide and stay in life since time began and will remain with us long after time has ended. The relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ is as eternal as God Himself because God invested His very Word in our future. Storm will come and go for only a short while longer until the tempest is forever silenced. When the storms subside and the Son comes again to reign in peace forever, then our salvation-won will be the reality of everlasting life among all God's children.

Until the day of peace is announced and the final trumpet is sounded, we will continue to sail into the wind, find ourselves blown about, and washed-up upon new and different shores; but never in vain and certainly not alone. God is faithful and remains among us, guiding, steering, caring, and above all, loving us in the most complete and compassionate expression possible.

When we weather the storms with this understanding, we sail confidently into a life of service to God knowing that we are provided for and sustained in all things; regardless of the climate. Each new storm allows us to grow in grace and faith to where we become the miracles in the lives of others through Jesus Christ.

My friends, we are all Children of one God and heavenly Father; and together we are the Body of Christ. Today, we are the miracle the world is looking for, waiting for, and watching for in the storms that rage around the planet. You see, the great and mighty church of God is still sailing on the rough seas, but Her Lord is in sight and the shore is not far away. As we travel forward together we hold the hands and heart of those whose faith is still in its infancy to ensure all are kept safe, protected, and calm.

This is the miracle my friends; an act of love and compassion that continues from the time of our existence, to the time of Christ, and throughout eternity. And through this miracle, comes the peace that passes all understanding to keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.