

*35On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." 36And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. 37A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38But 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?" 39He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. 40He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" 41And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"*

I always thought today's gospel reading was kind of a no-brainer - anyone could figure this story out. The big storm out on the sea - the disciples all anxious and upset - Jesus sleeping through it all. *They woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" Jesus woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still." Then the wind ceased and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they feared a great fear and said, "Who is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?"*

This is a story about faith and about Jesus power over the wind and the sea. He slept because he was not afraid of the wind nor of the sea. God is in charge here.

We should have faith like Jesus. End of story.

I could sit down now and we could sing the next hymn were it not for a class I attended a few weeks ago. But at that class the teacher said something that has had me wondering ever since.

He compared this story of the storm with the story of the garden of Gethsemane. In both stories there is a threat to safety. In both stories there is sleep. In both stories some very great anxiety.

Remember what happened in Gethsemane? This time it was the disciples sleeping, and Jesus was the one all upset. Distressed and agitated are the words Mark uses to describe him. Three times Jesus had to wake them up. They were just not too worried about all of this, just the way Jesus had been in the boat. In the boat the disciples are falling apart because they are afraid of what will happen. Jesus sleeps. In Gethsemane the roles are reversed. Jesus falls apart, the disciples sleep.

I remember a sermon I preached in seminary once. The text was 1 Corinthians 4:1-6. "It is a very small thing to me that I should be judged by you or by any human court, I do not even judge myself," wrote Paul. I preached that what others think should never matter to us.

I remember the response of my professor. "What you have said is true, Lynn. But no one has the kind of faith you are describing."

"Have you no faith?" Jesus asked the disciples. Later when he was the one upset and agitated, they might well have asked him the same question.

Doing the Father's will was not easy for Jesus. Having faith amidst the storms of life is not easy for those who follow him. Still God calls us to faith.

As I prepared to preach today, I thought of what made the disciples afraid. The weather, storms. And I thought of what made Jesus upset, agitated, facing the battle between good and evil. Knowing and following the Father's will.

What do you think? Do we the followers of Jesus in 1997 spend more time searching the weather channel for storms that may be coming our way or the scriptures for signs of God's will for us?

What do you think? Does your pastor expend more anxiety over how he is dressed to go to a party or whether he is clothed in Christ?

What do you think? Do we have more concern over whether our children will be well-liked successful and popular or whether they will believe and trust in God? Which fills our thoughts in the middle of the night?

The two stories of anxiety and sleep, the boat and the garden of Gethsemane may also be asking us this question – "What is worth worrying about?"

Maybe to be human means that we will have anxiety. Paul speaks of his anxiety over the churches of Christ. Maybe to think that we might escape anxiety that troubled Paul, even troubled Jesus is to forget that we walk by faith and not by sight. The question is not will we be anxious but what will make us anxious?

Will our own personal safety or our family's safety be our highest concern? Or will God's will and God's victory over every enemy matter most of all to us?

I know this: It is easy to squander all my energy on what means little so that there is no time or energy left for what really counts. I can use up all my concern on the outcome of baseball games, and the status of my checkbook, and whether the bugs are attacking things in

my yard or garden and have nothing left for children who need a friend, or sitting with those who are sick or being concerned for education in the local school. The disciples slept through Jesus' hour of trial. They had used up all their anxiety on the storms out on the sea, and worrying who among them would be greatest.

Jesus can calm the storms, and heal diseases, even raise you out of death into life. But what can he do if we have no faith? What can he do if we put everything else before seeking God's will? What can he do? Die for us?