

MATTHEW 8:23-27 / EXODUS 14:13-22
EVEN THE WINDS AND THE WAVES OBEY HIM!

In the name + of Jesus.

Throughout the Epiphany season, Jesus is revealed as the Messiah, the Savior, and true God. The Father testified to this at Jesus' baptism when he declared, "**This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.**" (Matthew 3:17) We have heard about evidence of Jesus' glory in the miracles he performed. He changed water into wine. He placed his hand on a leper and healed him. He also healed the centurion's servant not by coming and laying hands on him, but just by saying the word from some distance away. His works revealed the glory of God. His word demonstrated his authority. But Moses also performed miracles. And God also provided healing through the prophet Elisha. So how do we know that Jesus is not just another prophet? Today's gospel proclaims it in the most vivid terms.

Jesus and his disciples had climbed into a boat to sail from the western shore of the Sea of Galilee to the eastern shore. **Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"** (Matthew 8:24,25) There is quite a contrast between Jesus and everything else Matthew writes about. The Sea of Galilee was raging in the midst of a violent storm. But Jesus kept on sleeping. The disciples, many of them familiar with these waters as professional fishermen, were terrified and greatly alarmed. Jesus kept on sleeping.

It is not that Jesus was oblivious to the storm, to his disciples, or to anything else. The Lord is never ignorant. But the Lord never loses control, either. Jesus is the Lord – God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God. Through Jesus, all things were made, and in Jesus all things hold together. Yes, there was a mighty storm. But in the middle of that mighty storm was the almighty God. Though the storm was beyond all human control, it was not beyond God's control. Therefore, he could sleep calmly and comfortably in the middle of it. It did not control him; he controlled it.

It was the same back in the days of Moses. The Lord had led the Israelites out of Egypt and away from the burden of slavery. But after the Israelites were gone, Pharaoh had a change of heart. He did not want to lose his forced, free labor. So he gathered his army and pursued the Israelites into the desert. The Israelites found themselves in big trouble. In front of them was the Red Sea. Behind them was the most powerful army on the face of the earth. In the midst of them stood God's prophet, Moses. He was out of answers and out of options. So, he cried out to the Lord.

The Lord answered Moses' prayer. He provided deliverance for Israel yet again. All that night, the Lord commanded the winds, and they blew across the Red Sea. All that night, the Lord commanded the waves, and they withdrew to make a path on the floor of the sea. The Creator commanded; the creation obeyed. Even the winds and the waves obeyed him, and God's people were delivered.

That same Lord was sleeping in a boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. The winds were blowing violently. The waves were crashing across the bow and on top of the boat. The disciples were out of options and out of their minds with fear. **The disciples went**

and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. (Matthew 8:25,26) It went from being a great storm to a great calm. The disciples had recognized that Jesus is the Christ, but they had not grasped what this truly meant. **The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!” (Matthew 8:27)**

What kind of man is this? He is God in the flesh. He is the God who loves you enough to come into your world, into your life, and into your problems. He is the God who has never relinquished control of the universe. He is the God who commands, and his creation listens. The disease left the leper. Strength was restored to the legs of the centurion’s paralyzed servant. The water became wine. The demons submitted to him. Even the winds and the waves obey him. All creation knows its master’s voice – all except one: man.

Man wants to have control. Man wants to be like God, more than that – to be God! That is why you trust your strength, your cunning, your savvy, your winsome personality, your feelings, your wealth, and your reputation. These should save you. These should sustain you. You expect these to sustain you in good times and in bad. But they will always let you down. They will fail you. Only when they fail you do you recognize that you are weak, frail, helpless, hopeless, and lost. Your strength falters. Your wealth is never enough. Your personality gains you nothing. Your feelings are dread and fear. Your cunning will not add to your life, and your savvy will not let you escape the grave. Repent, and do not put any trust in mortal flesh – especially in your own.

Consider the disciples in the storm on the Sea of Galilee. Do you think anyone was wondering which of them was the greatest? Did anyone care who had the most money, the most friends, the biggest house, the prettiest wife, the brightest teeth, the nicest hair, or the newest clothes? When all they could feel was fear and death, only one thing mattered: **“Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” (Matthew 8:25)** The disciples craved only that they would be delivered from death. They knew that they had zero control over it. So they cried out to Jesus in full panic.

For their panic, Jesus rebuked them, **“You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” (Matthew 8:26)** For their prayer, Jesus answered them. **He got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. (Matthew 8:26)** Even the winds and the waves obey him, for he is true God.

And he is the God who saves you. You do not have to pray to God in a full panic, but in full confidence. **Lord, save us! Hosanna in the highest!** And he has heard your prayer. Your God has come to save you from bitter death and from pains of hell. Even though the world around Jesus seemed chaotic and beyond his control, Jesus went to the cross in total control of your salvation. He was not surprised by his betrayal and arrest. He was not thrown off by a phony trial and false witnesses. He was not intimidated by Jewish authorities or Roman authorities. He went to the cross by his own volition. He willingly laid down his life of his own accord. While the disciples were hiding in fear and panic, Jesus rested in the grave and on the third day rose from the dead. There was no need for panic. The angels urged the women at the tomb not to fear. Sin has been paid for. Death has been destroyed. Hell cannot touch you; for Jesus has claimed you.

The Lord has heard your cries of “Hosanna!” The Lord has saved you. He does not despise you even if you are one of little faith. And if it seems like our Lord is sleeping

when you cry out to him, don't get the idea that means the Lord is no longer with you or that he does not know your fears. He is always Immanuel. He is always "God with us." He always knows that you need his salvation. And he always forgives, always comforts, and always saves. The demons hear his voice and submit to him. The grave hears his command and gives up its dead. Even the winds and the waves obey him. For, he is the Lord. He is good, and his mercy endures forever.

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.