

## Barre Congregational Church

June 20, 2021: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ Fourth Sunday after Pentecost ~

***“Who is This? Even the Wind and the Sea Obey Him!”***

Our services can be found on our website at [www.barrechurch.com](http://www.barrechurch.com) and Facebook page.

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### Scripture Reading: Mark 4 v 35-41

#### I. Introduction:

I may have shared with you that I am not a swimmer, but several years ago I found myself with a few colleagues on a motorboat down the Connecticut River! I looked at some old pictures a while ago and could not believe that I did that! Rivers can be calm, but they can also be dangerous, and we know that boats can capsize, and people can drown.

Fortunately, we were fine, and returned safely back to our offices. Let us have a look at Jesus and His disciples as they crossed the river in a boat, and what an experience that was!

#### II. A Boat, Wind, and Waves

In our passage we have the familiar setting of Jesus and His disciples finishing up the day on which He was preaching, teaching, performing miracles and being surrounded by a crowd. He suggested to the disciples that they cross the river on a boat to go to the other side, towards the Southeastern Shore. Jesus would continue with His ministry in that region, as we see in Mark Chapter 5. They, experienced fishermen and sailors, got into the boat, and set out on their journey. There were other boats in their vicinity, meaning there would have been some among the crowd who followed them. Not long after that, they encountered a fierce storm with strong winds and waves which broke onto the boat, threatening to overturn it. One can only imagine the fear among the disciples, as well as those in the surrounding boats. The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by hills on all sides and is known for the development of unexpected storms. The cooler air from the hills would collide with the warm air in the lake's basin, creating sudden squalls, describes Mark Strauss in his book on Mark. The disciples realized they were in an extremely dangerous situation and needed help. They found Jesus asleep, obviously tired after the long day of ministering to the crowd. They rebuked Him for falling asleep, not understanding why He would sleep, when they were in danger. I would be upset myself,

wondering why the Lord Jesus Christ, who suggested they cross the Lake, and who is the One performing miracles, would not do anything!

### **III. Jesus acts, but not without His own Rebuke!**

We see Jesus wake up, see the commotion, and immediately rebuked the wind and the waves to “Be quiet, to be still”! That’s it. He spoke a few words, and the forces of wind and water obeyed. They were quiet. What power in His words, His presence, and His actions! What security He offered those around Him! The same Christ who healed the sick, who drove out demonic forces, now acted as the Lord over the wind and the waves. He demonstrated to them the power of God working through Him. In the Old Testament we see Yahweh’s powerful interventions through nature as well, for example leading the Israelites through the Red Sea, providing for them through the blessings of nature. When they were hungry, they could eat manna, and when they were thirsty, they could drink water from a rock. God is the Sovereign God over humanity and nature, and intervenes in the experiences of humanity, through the power of God’s will says William Lane. Similarly, the Son of God reveals His divine nature through the power of His presence and actions, delivering all of them from the threat of the dangerous storm. The Son of God is more powerful than the forces of nature. He exercises His Divine Authority over the forces of negativity, of evil, of danger. He speaks a word, and the Divine power is at work.

He does not only rebuke the wind and the waters, but He also rebukes His disciples, whom He thought must have had more courage than the fear they displayed, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”, He asked them. By now they have seen Him do so much, and perhaps He expected them to speak their own words of divine power He gave them, or perhaps He expected them to know that his mere presence would take care of the situation? We don’t know what He was thinking, but He definitely questions their fear and their lack of faith in that situation.

### **IV. Conclusion**

Who is this person, the disciples asked...even the wind and the waves obey Him, they remarked? Jesus’ presence in the storm constitutes an affirmation of life and the defeat of death. His whole ministry and life were about restoring those who were sick, brought back to life those who had

died, and through the power of God Almighty, overcame death Himself. He muzzled the force of the sea, says Lane, as He subdued it with His sovereign word of authority.

To call His Name and to lean on Him means to cry out and surrender the pain and the struggles of our earthly storms, because it is there where we find our help. It is there where we see the light and experience life in its most meaningful way, where we find strength and courage and comfort, safety, and direction. To turn away from Him, means to live in darkness, to suffer without hope, to always wonder about our purpose in this life.

In Early Christianity, according to Lane, the church was depicted as a boat driven upon a perilous sea. With Christ they had nothing to fear. For them being in a boat with Him, would have been a lesson they would not forget as they went on to preach about Him in the developing of the early church, and endured persecution for their message. As the church today, we have found ourselves in a perilous sea of a pandemic that challenged us about who we are, and how we would survive and come back and review who we are as a church. We have been shaken as a people, as a world, and as a church. We have become more vulnerable to the forces that threatened our health and our existence. But here we are, and we are not alone in this boat. Christ, who is our Lord, spoke in His divine authority to the forces of nature. He can speak now again if we let Him. We don't know what the outcome of that powerful word would look like, but if we cry out to Him, and maybe let Him know that we are not happy with this craziness going on, and ask Him if He is awake, if we speak like that for real, Christ might give us a powerful answer, instead of "why are you afraid, and why do you have such little faith"? We have work to do. Let our faith and courage do it for us. Let the God of the ages intervene for us and let the church in Barre walk in that power and love and light of Christ. Let us move from a place of vulnerability into the light and divine power of Christ, of God. Amen