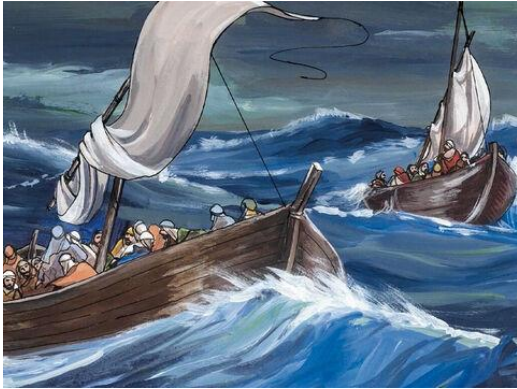


## Jesus

### Sermon on 4th Sunday before Lent Mark 4, 35-41



35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." 36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" 39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. 40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" 41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Jesus got into a small boat, the disciples followed him and it was just before sunset. Actually the most dangerous time on the Sea of Galilee. At this time the wind came over the valleys of the mountains and could turn the small lake into a raging storm in a few minutes. The fishing boat of the disciples, in which Jesus sat with his disciples, was very small. I once saw such a boat from Jesus' time in a museum in Israel. The boat is really so small you cannot imagine that 13 people can fit in that. Compared to the huge storm on the Sea of Galilee, this boat is like a nutshell. This image of Jesus with his disciples in a small boat in a threatening situation is significant and no coincidence. The story shows us, firstly, that following Jesus is dangerous and that we will not always see Jesus in this situation. Secondly, this story shows us who Jesus is and thirdly, this story shows us that Jesus will also calm the final storms of the heart.

The disciples of Jesus in a dangerous boat have always been an image of the church and indicate the situation of the church. These disciples had just experienced miraculous things with Jesus. Jesus had been preaching all day long. Through his word, the fog of human lies was simply wiped away. Through Jesus and his word, God himself had visibly come among people. His truth and his love convinced and warmed people's hearts. And then Jesus also spoke his word over the sick, the possessed and many other people. His word brought salvation and life. And yet it could not go on like this forever. The disciples had to follow Jesus. Into the depths of the boat and into the depths of the storm. And very soon we are presented with an image that we all know in one way or another. Jesus is sleeping and the disciples are trembling with fear. Jesus' disciples were experienced fishermen. They knew exactly what to do in such a situation. They fought and struggled. They used all their knowledge. And yet it was not enough. At some point the water splashed into the boat and it was clear to everyone that the disciples would sink with Jesus. Human knowledge and human strength have their limits. At some point, our strength is not enough to save us. And Jesus was sleeping. This image of people being in deep distress and feeling that God is absent in the same distress is not a new one. The lament psalm prays in Psalm 44:24-25: "Wake up! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Awake, do not cast us off forever! Why do you hide your face, forgetting our misery and our distress?" The story of the sleeping Jesus in the midst of great danger to his life is both a question and a challenge to us as a church. What do we do when we no longer know what to do? What do we do when, like the disciples, we have done everything we can to save ourselves and the ship is still in danger of sinking?

The story of Jesus and his disciples wants to show us that our faith and the church are challenged in every case. We do not only have good times with Jesus, when his word is presented to us so clearly and so distinctly. Sometimes we can no longer see Jesus and his power. Sometimes we are like the disciples in that we are constantly scooping water out of the boat. And there is much more water coming into the boat than we can ever scoop out. We are simply doing our work out of desperation. When everything seems so hopeless, we actually doubt God. Why doesn't God do anything? Why does he always remain hidden? ...

Master, do you not care that we perish?

The hardship that the disciples experienced made them doubt. Jesus, who healed so many people and who had an open heart for so many in need, is now simply sleeping while his closest confidants have to die. What the disciples experienced is important. It shows us that we Christians really will not see God in many areas of our lives. He remains hidden from our eyes and our feelings. This is a challenge to our faith. And some people have lost their faith in this situation. The sleeping Jesus in the boat wants to show us that our challenges are not unusual. God really does let us go through very hard times sometimes. Jesus himself says it: "In the world you have fear!" The German word Angst originally comes from the word "Angu". This word means narrow. The word narrow describes very well what we Christians experience in this world. When an illness comes our way, or when I lose my job, or when I get a rejection from the federal office, then things get tight around my neck. I see no way out of the situation. In this narrow, repressed feeling, there is no room for God. Like the disciples, you are in a nutshell in the raging sea. And your eyes are only open to the terrible danger! But God is there, especially when the need is great. Jesus says: "In the world you have fear. But I have overcome the world." In the story about the calming of the storm, Jesus shows us impressively how this happens. Jesus remains calm despite the raging of the sea. He does not cry out a prayer to God. He does not even try to comfort the frightened disciples. No, he simply stands in the small boat, which is like a nutshell, and speaks his word. "Be quiet and be still!" And the sea became completely still.

At that point, the storm continued to rage among the disciples in a completely different way. First, Jesus' disciples had asked: "Why don't you do anything?" The second question they asked was much more important. They now asked about Jesus.

"Who is he? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

This last question from the disciples is important. It is the question about Jesus himself. Who is he? It is also the crucial question for our church. Who is Jesus? And who are we dealing with in the church? Not with smart people. Not with a cultural heritage either! Our church is also not dependent on how much we can do. Or what we can accomplish. Speaking within the image of the calming the storm: It does not matter "how much water we can get out of the boat". No, the question that stands over our lives, our church and everyone is ultimately this question:

"Who is he? Even the wind and the sea obey him!" Who is Jesus?

He is the one to whom the wind and the waves obey. HE is the one who was and is and remains above all. Who holds the world and the universe in his hand. If this Jesus holds the whole universe in his hand, how much more will he hold his church. Jesus is amazed at the disciples and their lack of faith. The disciples are amazed at Jesus. The miracle alone will not make them believe in Jesus because miracles are always ambiguous. The miracle of the Holy Spirit would open the hearts and the secrets of the Scripture later so that these disciples would understand everything. I am sure that these disciples had enough reasons to be afraid in the future. Probably also many temptations that were not to be trifled with. We Christians are part of the world. And we cannot protect ourselves from the storms of despair, fear and lack of faith. Sometimes a desperate cry comes: "Where is God?" Sometimes we are afraid precisely because we know very well that God is there and also

know who he is. On the mountain of Golgotha, Jesus spoke his last word about all these storms. All the waves of hatred and opposition to God were gathered on this mountain. All my doubts and my many sins are also on this mountain of Golgotha. The story on the mountain of Golgotha is not a pretty story, it is instead a story where all the storms of the world came to bear on one person. And then another word came from our Lord Jesus. It was the last word of our Lord Jesus: "It is finished!" And it became quiet.

Today we will all walk out of this church together again. We do not know what will happen to us this week. Even less will we be able to say what will happen next year or the years after that. Without a doubt, at some point we will be sitting in a very small space with the disciples of Jesus. There will be no prospect of salvation around us. And then I want Jesus to speak these words over my life: "It is finished!" Ultimately, the goal of our Lord Jesus is to calm this last and greatest storm of our hearts. Ultimately, all of Jesus' actions are aimed at helping us survive this last storm. The storm on Lake Galilee wants to show us all of this. To show that we as a church and as Christians do indeed have to struggle with fear. And secondly, to show that the sleeping Jesus is nevertheless standing over us with his watchful hand. And thirdly, that we will overcome the very last storm of our lives. Then we will sing with Paul Gerhard: "The roar of the sea and the rushing of the wind

your praise will never fade; your works, Lord, great and strong, show us your power so clearly." Amen.