

**MATTHEW 8:23-27**  
**JESUS IS “NEVER NOT-AWARE” !**

*Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!”*

*But He said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”*

Do you remember learning about “double negatives” in school? From the youngest grades on, I remember our teachers striving to correct us. It was not uncommon to hear, “I ain’t got no pencil.” Then Mrs. or Miss X would correctly say, “I don’t have any pencil.” We believed her, but we really didn’t get why. Oh, we did not much object to the “ain’t” part and the “got” part; but the “double negative” concept was a mystery. Why should “I don’t have no pencil” mean “I do have a pencil”? As we grew older, as I grew older, I began to understand, that to say “I have no pencil” or “I have zero pencils” is totally turned around when one says, “I do not have zero pencils.” It still takes a little to think that through. Perhaps this little anecdote of life is already far too long, but it helps explain the theme of this sermon this morning. “Jesus is never not-aware.” Jesus is always aware of you and your difficulties.

The Sea of Galilee comes up in many events from Jesus life, recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Note, that these four accounts are not a sequence of Jesus life—Matthew the first part, Mark the second part, Luke the third part, and John the fourth part. They are parallel accounts, some including one thing, some including another. The Sea of Galilee is mentioned in all of them. We find that the Sea has four names—the Sea of Chinnereth, the Sea of Gennesaret, the Sea of Tiberius, and the Sea of Galilee. This “sea” was really a big lake—about thirteen miles long and eight miles wide. It was known for its many fish. At least four of the disciples had been commercial fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. The lake is deep—some sources say 140 feet deep, others say deeper.

Jesus wanted to cross from the west side of the lake, where all the people were, to the east side of the lake. He needed some time away. Although He was true God, as clearly shown later in this text, He was also true man. He got thirsty, He got hungry, He got tired, He died! He came as your flesh and blood brother. He served for you, that you might reign with your Father in heaven. His time on earth was not about Himself, but about others. He gave love, healing, encouragement, and forgiveness. In Him, the sins that you have piled up against yourself have been removed. If you ever think that Jesus’ suffering in life and in death was easy, after all He was God, it was not easy. Here, we see that He needed a break, needed to get away. In another instance, the Bible says that He was so busy with the people that He did not even have time to eat. Does He still get “swamped” and need to take a break today? No. He is no longer in His state of Humiliation during which He set aside the full use of His infinite power and divinity. Now, He continually cares for you and all the world, without fatigue.

He and the disciples departed in a ship, a vessel. The term used was not the term for a small boat—like a rowboat. Just how big the vessel was, we don’t know. Maybe it was one the fishing boats in the area, large enough to hold a crew and its cargo. As they sailed Jesus slept. Mark tells us He was in the back of the ship on a pillow. Was there a place to lie down? Was there a covering over it providing shelter? Perhaps. Jesus must have been exhausted. Sleep is a blessing and gift from God. It refreshes body and mind. How do you feel the next day if you couldn’t sleep? To deprive the body of sleep for foolish reasons is not God-pleasing. To deprive the body of sleep because you think you must is to disdain God. *Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep (Psalm 127:1-2).* Sometimes sleeplessness is necessary because God has so seen fit. In that case, it is an opportunity to trust Him for strength. In Paul’s great list of hardships which he endured for the Lord, he says, *I was in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness . . . I take pleasure in distresses . . . for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (II Corinthians 11:26-27 and 12:10).*

*Suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves.* You do know how fast the weather can change, right? Some of you have likely been caught by surprise in bad weather—be it winter or summer. Here, without warning, a great tempest arose. There is nothing about lightning or rain here—just a tremendous windstorm. The Greek word is actually a great “shaking.” It’s the same word in Greek for “earthquake.” When this strong, blustering wind came upon the lake, the water was immediately set astir in roaring fashion. The swells and troughs of the waves must have been tremendous. *The boat was covered with the waves.* Whether this means the boat was at once filled with water and on the verge of sinking, or whether the boat was surrounded by crests of waves high overhead is not specified. The point is, How long could they hold out? Dire straits! And Jesus was sleeping.

*They woke Him.* They were afraid. And remember, at least four of these men were experienced boatmen from fishing days—Peter, Andrew, James, and John. “*Lord, save us! We perish!*” All were frightened, frightened to death. “Perish” means to be consumed in death and ruin; like “perishable” food going bad at the store. “Perish” is the same word that is used in *John 3:16—Whoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life!* Sinners like us are always in danger of perishing, because *The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).* Death is all around us—whether it’s getting run over by a cow, being flipped from a four-wheeler, banging your head on the ice, dozing at the wheel, or suffering a heart attack. The disciples did go to the right place for help—to Jesus. You too, when in dire straits, go to Jesus, your eternal Savior, brother, and friend. Nothing is too hard for the Lord!

Jesus said to them. “*Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?*”—timid, afraid, cowardly. In other words, “Why aren’t you trusting Me?” ----- Do you want to be considered a coward? “It’s just a little wind, a little storm; I’ve got my wits and the strength in my right (left) arm,” men might say. Does that sound like a coward? Actually, Yes! Do you know why? “I don’t trust in God; I trust in myself.” Why not trust the Lord? When things are out of control, you have to trust in the Lord. That’s when you are really brave! If you are lying at death’s door, it’s faith in the work of Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, that will “steel” you for the inevitable and lead you to welcome it calmly. “When I am weak, then I am strong!”

*Jesus arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.* Mark tells us, Jesus said “Peace! Be still!” Do you think Jesus shouted these words? Likely the disciples had shouted at him, “Lord, save us we perish!” Surely Jesus, the Master, simply gave the word to the unruly winds and waves. “Enough!” And there was a great calm. Done! Quiet. Calm. When we were at Lake Superior waiting for a boat excursion to take tourists to nearby islands, the wind was howling. The boat trip was canceled. The next morning the wind was quiet. We inquired again, but it was too soon to tell. We were informed that even though the wind had stopped, the water was still sloshing-about from the turbulence. That afternoon the captain did give the go-ahead. Here in this text, Jesus gave the order, the wind stopped, and immediately the sea also was at a great calm! The boat and the disciples were safe!

The event is similar to Easter Sunday, when, three days earlier, Jesus’ body had been put into the grave. In the final “sleep” of death. Surely it seemed to the disciples and others, all was lost. “He’s dead.” In helplessness and sorrow their hearts must have cried out to the Father, “Lord, save us! We perish!” Then, contrary to all logic and experience, on Sunday morning JESUS ROSE FROM THE GRAVE alive, well, and victorious! The message to Satan—“Enough! Finished. Battle over!” The message to helpless sinners, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith. Peace! Be still!” ----- Cling to the victorious Jesus! Stop trying to fix life yourself. Stop trying to fix yourself by yourself. You can’t. You are safe in Jesus’ hands.

A special note: Do you know what the part of the church—where you are sitting—is called? The entry is called the narthex, the altar-area is the chancel, the place where you are seated is called the “nave.” “Nave “comes from the Latin word “navis” for ship. (That’s why the United States’ fleet is called the “Navy.”) A church is often thought of as a ship, to get us through the waters and storms of life. In fact, the Holy Christian Church, the Invisible Church of God, all believers of all time, is often called an “Ark” in which we all believers are safe from the floods and onslaughts of both Satan and our own sinful flesh. In the “Ship of Christ’s Church” we are rescued and at peace!

*The disciples marveled, saying, “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”* “What sort of man is this?” He is Son of God and Son of Man, your dear Savior. In the Gospel of John, Jesus Himself said, *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, (John 10:27-28).* No matter what kind of tempest you face—your own sins and death—He knows you, loves you, forgives you, and gives you life—forever! “Jesus is Never Not-Aware”—it’s a good double-negative.

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---