**Mark 6:45-56 July 25, 2021**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

 Our text for this morning comes from the Gospel of Mark the 6th chapter here re-reading these words. “But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid”. This is our text.

 Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

 Whether you realize it or not, this entire month every single one of our Gospel lessons has come from the 6th chapter of the Gospel of Mark. And the beauty of the lectionary; the assigned readings for each week that the Church follows, whether it’s the one year of the three year, is that we get to see the entire picture of scenes in Jesus ministry. For example at the beginning of Mark chapter 6, all the way back on July 4th, we looked at how Jesus offended those in his hometown because to them he was nothing more than a carpenter’s son and yet he was speaking to them authoritatively. We saw how he didn’t perform many miracles at all among them, maybe just a few were healed here and there. Contrast that with the scene we see in Gennesaret at the end of Mark chapter 6 in our Gospel lesson today and there is a huge difference. Not only are the people seeking, but his name has spread far and wide as a healer, a miracle worker, as someone who has authority and who is using that authority and power out of mercy for the people in the marketplace where they are laying the sick down left and right. While those in Nazareth didn’t understand the full meaning of Christ’s ministry or that he wasn’t just a carpenter’s son but the Son of God, here in Gennesaret they followed him as the Savior, for he could take away the evidence of sin that was all around them.

 In the same way we see that while the disciples even at the feeding of the 5000 were astonished, they didn’t get the whole picture. Mark chapter 6 shows us all sorts of miracles of Jesus, even the authority that the disciples have to cast out demons in Jesus name is evidence of HIS power not the disciples. But despite these miraculous occurrences, the disciples remain confused. We find them here at the end of the chapter traveling by boat to the other side, battling the wind on their own, and making very little headway. And when they do see Christ, who comes out to them on the water, showing his power again over creation, showing his power and divinity to them, they don’t get it, they confuse him with a ghost. They become terrified and cry out at the one person who has provided for them and taken care of them. It’s reminiscent of a scene where a drowning person, faced with their own death, lashes out and hurts the one who came to save them. Here the disciples didn’t know what to do, that is until Jesus reassures them with these words. It is I, or in the Greek ego eimi.

 The great ego eimi, the I AM of the Old Testament, the words Moses was to use to describe who was sending him and by whose authority he came into the presence of Pharaoh. The words that Jesus uses in his own ministry not just here but in the great I AM statements, “I am the vine” “I am the Good Shepherd.” “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” While these words in the English are taken as more of a reminder of Jesus stating that it was the same man they had traveled with, properly understood they hold much more weight. They are the verbal identification of what he was proving, by standing on water and speaking to them, what he had proven by multiplying 5 loaves and 2 fish and feeding over 5000. What he was proving by sending them out and giving them authority, and what he would ultimately prove by dying and rising again. He was himself God, and the source of comfort and peace. Not just the source of earthly sustenance, he wasn’t simply a bread king, but he was the source of protection, of creation, and of peace itself. In his midst they had exactly what he tells them. No need to fear, no need to worry. He was there among them, and they were safe.

 Jesus came through miraculous means, by walking on the water itself, to show the disciples again who he was, the Son of God, and God himself. On their own the disciples couldn’t make it, they were struggling in vain, trying to accomplish something that was outside of their power. In that struggle they saw Christ and confused him, and were terrified. With Christ there was comfort from the fear, and no need to be scared, but outside of Christ, the truth was, they had every reason to be terrified.

 Just as we all do. Outside of Christ, outside of His Word, His Church, His promise to remain with us and be with us, and receive the gifts he gives us through faith, we have every right to be scared. There is no peace outside of Jesus, there is no hope, no comfort, and no life. And the winds of life, the winds of a world that is focused solely on the happiness of the individual at the expense of everyone else, does get treacherous. The winds pick up, suddenly things in our lives test our faith and our resolve just as they did the disciples. Bills start piling up, an illness derails us, a family member turns on us or gets into trouble, or we give in to a temptation that has hounded us our entire lives. Suddenly the winds rage, and try as we might, we can’t get past them. We can’t make headway in our lives on our own and it seems no matter what we chase after we can’t seem to get it. We are left hopeless, alone, and feeling abandoned. And instead of reaching out to Christ, and receiving his comfort and peace, we lash out in fear, as the disciples did on the sea. After all, it was Jesus who sent them ahead, it was Jesus who knew they would never make it. It is Jesus who deserves the blame for the bad things that happen in our own lives, just as the disciples were justified in blaming him here. That’s what our sinful nature wants us to think, that it is Christ that brings the suffering and pain, and not the sin that was brought into the world, by the actions of mankind. Instead of receiving help from the only source of peace, we push it away.

 In that rejection of Christ there is no comfort, but only fear. Fear and terror at the thought of a life that is lived outside of the presence of Jesus Christ. Which is what makes Jesus’ words that much sweeter when we understand them as being spoken not just to the disciples, but to each and every single one of us. For again, here today he has come to us. Through miraculous means, means that make no sense to our human intellect that is corrupted by sin, just as it makes no sense that a man could walk on water. But he comes through means that we know are true through the inspiration and proclamation of His Gospel. And through his coming to us, through bread and wine, his very body and blood present for us to eat and drink, we see his love. We see his comfort. We see his promise that he is the great “I AM” the same God who was present with Moses, with the Israelites, with David and the disciples, and remains with us today. The same God who tells us. “Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid.”

 For as Paul reminds us in our Epistle lesson, we come together, with a prayer to God himself, that we may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is breadth, and length, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. The love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding as you hear after every sermon I’ve ever preached to you. The revelation of Holy Scripture which is that Jesus comes to us through means that we can’t possibly understand every facet of, but means that we know are true. Means that we have had the opportunity to partake of, eating and drinking the body and blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins here at God’s altar. Means that we see given as a gift through the washing of Holy Baptism, where God continues to come miraculously through water, to create new faith in the hearts of His children.

 Throughout all of Mark chapter 6 we have seen Jesus Christ working through his disciples, through the crowds, and through the miracles he has performed, to prepare them for his ultimate act of compassion and love, which is His very own body given unto death, so that we would live forever. May that love stay with us, bring us comfort, peace, and calm our fears, as we battle the winds of this world, as we repent of our sins and the moments when we have failed, and as we go forth in His love, to continue the mission of His Church, which is to call those lost in fear and turmoil to the comfort and peace of God our Heavenly Father.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.