

*“[Jesus] said to them, ‘Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?’ – Mark 4:40 (NRSV)*

Beloved Neighbors in Christ,

This July, I have picked this text from the Gospel of Mark as a reminder that even though we may be away on vacation, or visiting relatives, or simply taking a break, that our loving and forgiving God again reminds us to trust in the faith you have and the Holy Spirit that lives in and around you. This line from Mark comes from the story where the disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee when a storm arises, and Jesus is sleeping in the back of the boat. The disciples scream “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (v. 39) And suddenly Jesus arises, rebukes the wind and calms the rough seas by exclaiming in a loud voice, “Peace! Be still!” (v.40) And immediately the winds cease, and the waters become calm again. Then our Lord turns to the chosen ones he loves and says, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” (v.40)

I use this text as an allegory for our parish – right now. We are back to one pastor for three congregations, and some see (no pun intended) a storm on the horizon and are scared and concerned of the uncertainty of the future. And I get that, and I also empathize with you too. But I will tell you this, and I pray about this every single day – our seas will be calm, and the wind will cease in front of us. But I need your help. Your congregational leadership needs your help. And your Parish Council needs your help. Talk to us. Pray for us. Tell us what you are thinking and come to me and be as honest as you want...I can take it. Because we have to adapt to a new reality going forward. But I am confident and steadfast in my belief that the Neighbors in Christ Parish will continue on. It will continue to grow, and like the disciples in the boat, we will get to the other side of the sea safely.

Storms come in all kinds of shapes and sizes. For the disciples who travelled with the living God asleep in the back of the boat, their storm was a raging wind and chaos; they thought they were going to perish. For us as disciples of Jesus in the Neighbors in Christ Parish, I ask you to have faith and trust that the Holy Spirit will lead us to where we need to be. The disciples in the boat were filled with fear and lost all hope, but I encourage you to not lose hope in the one who gave himself for you. Instead, imagine Jesus saying to you, “Peace! Be still!” Peace be still, indeed.

The power of the living Christ was not just meant for others when they were in a time of trial. The power of Jesus was not just for others who were in need...the power of Jesus is for us in the *here* and *now*. I urge you to continue praying for our parish, our congregations, one another, and for me. We will get there my friends...wherever that may be.

See you in worship, and especially on the Wednesday nights. They are really a lot of fun!!!

In HIS sake,

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish

McCullough-Bade, J. &. (2006). *Daily Discipleship - Sunday, June 19-25 (B) - Mark 4:35-41*. Retrieved from [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org).

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