

Pentecost 5
June 24, 2018

Mark 4:35-41
449-768*-760**-433

*CW-S – “How Firm a Foundation”

**CW-S – “When Peace Like a River”

“Now Faith Is Being Sure/Certain...”

I. Of God’s love.

II. Of God’s power.

Dear Christian friends,

As I studied these verses I ran across an IMPORTANT POINT. The disciples here were **not** UNBELIEVERS but LITTLE believers. They had faith but it was a LITTLE faith. Matthew has Jesus saying, **“You of little faith, why are you so afraid?”** Luke has Jesus asking, **“Where is your faith?”** Their faith was a **“smoldering wick”** not a BLAZING BONFIRE. We can all relate to that, right? It’s not that we’re unbelievers but our faith can be PRETTY LITTLE and **awfully weak** at times.

Faith is TRUSTING God – taking God at His Word – counting on God to **keep His promises**. Hebrews 11 gives us the CLASSIC DEFINITION of faith – **“Faith is being sure of what we hope for, certain of what we do not see.”** Looking at these verses TO STRENGTHEN our own faith we see that **“faith is being sure/certain...”** 1)of God’s love and 2)of God’s power.

I. Of God’s love.

“Now faith is being sure/certain” of God’s LOVE. Job in the OT reading wasn’t too sure of God’s love. Everything happening in his life SEEMED TO SAY that there was no way God loved him. His ten children all killed in one day – he’s financially ruined – his health is a **disaster**. His wife has advised him to **“curse God and die.”** His friends who came to **comfort** him **basically** ACCUSE him of really ticking off God. **Job himself** has been demanding an explanation from God. Job was not an UNBELIEVER but his faith was shaky – it was LITTLE.

Paul in the second reading was **“sure/certain”** of God’s love EVEN THOUGH the circumstances in his life **said otherwise**. Caught in that storm while sailing to Rome the other passengers **“finally gave up all hope of being saved.”** But NOT PAUL! Paul didn’t build his faith on the OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES of his life. He had God’s promise and IN FAITH Paul was **“sure/confident”** that God loved him and would keep His promise. Paul told his fellow passengers, **“So keep up your courage, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as He told me.”**

The disciples here weren’t real **“sure/confident”** of God’s love. At Jesus’ command they were MAKING a **late-night crossing** of the Sea of Galilee. Suddenly – **“without warning”** Matthew says – **“a great windstorm arose, and the waves were splashing into the boat, so that the boat was quickly filling up.”** Now remember that Peter and Andrew, James and John, had grown up along the Sea of Galilee. They had made their living PROFESSIONALLY fishing this lake. **I’m sure** they had been caught in other **“furious squalls”** before this one. BUT THIS ONE was **different!** They were convinced they were going to drown. And WHERE’S JESUS during all this? **“In the stern, sleeping on a cushion.”** They actually had to **“wake Him up”** and that’s when they asked Him, **“Teacher, don’t you care that we are about to drown?”**

Have you ever wanted to ask God that question, **“Don’t You care?”** Oh, there are variations on it. “WHERE are You, God? WHY aren’t You doing something about **whatever?** If You really love me then WHY are You letting this happen to me?” The psalmist put it this way, **“Why, O LORD, do You stand far off? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble? How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?”**

“Teacher, don’t You care?” WHAT IF God threw that question right back at us – “WHY SHOULD I care?” Then God could drag up all our sins AS PROOF for why He shouldn’t care for us at all. Just take what we see here. **“Jesus rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ The wind stopped, and there was a great calm.”** Jesus didn’t have to tell the wind and waves a SECOND or THIRD time to be still. The wind and waves didn’t ignore Jesus – didn’t argue with Jesus – didn’t tell Jesus to LEAVE them alone and not be so bossy. The wind and waves did exactly what Jesus told them to RIGHT AWAY and **without any hesitation**. Pretty sad, isn’t it? The forces of nature obey God BETTER than we the **“crown of creation”** obey Him!

HOW can we be “sure/certain” of God’s love? Don’t go looking for God’s love in the **wrong** places. Don’t measure God’s love by HOW THINGS are going for you. Life is GOOD – GOD is **good**. What happens when **life isn’t** so good – when you’re struggling with all kinds of **unending** problems? Do you know some people who GAVE UP on God – who became bitter toward God – because God DIDN’T DO what **they wanted**?

How can we be **“sure/certain”** of God’s love? Listen to these passages. **“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”** Jesus Himself is the ULTIMATE PROOF of **just how much** God really does love us.

When you’re tempted to doubt or **question** God’s LOVE FOR YOU go kneel again at the manger – stand again at Jesus’ **blood-soaked** cross – take another good look at Jesus’ **empty** grave. THAT’S HOW MUCH God loves you – **“He did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all.”** We have God’s OWN SON born our brother to be our PERSONAL and PERFECT Savior. Jesus gives us all the credit for His perfect life. Jesus took the blame and **burden** for the sins of the whole world – Jesus suffered and died on the cross to PERSONALLY PAY for all our sins in full – Jesus shares with us His **Easter victory** over death and the grave. BECAUSE of Jesus – trusting in Jesus – we have God’s forgiveness of all our sins – **we are** the redeemed, beloved children of God – we are going straight to heaven when we die. With our **“eyes fixed on Jesus”** we are SURE/CERTAIN – “God really does love ME! Oh, WOW!”

The disciples had THEIR QUESTION for Jesus. Now Jesus has HIS OWN question for them. **“Why are you so afraid? Do you still lack faith?”** Faith is “being sure/certain” of BOTH God’s love and...

II. Of God’s power.

Jesus didn’t rebuke the disciples for being RUDE and waking Him up. Jesus didn’t say, “WOW! The **really was quite the storm**, guys!” Jesus didn’t BELITTLE them for their **“little faith.”** Jesus asked His question because He **wanted them** to THINK this over and GROW more **“sure/certain”** in their faith.

“Why are you so afraid?” At first glance they had GOOD REASONS to be afraid. That storm was **real**. The water piling up in their boat was **real** – and it ONLY MEANT **one thing** – their boat was about to go down and they were going down with it. The disciples weren’t exaggerating this storm – MAKING A MOUNTAIN out of a molehill.

Their problem was their LITTLE faith. They correctly saw the **storm** but they DIDN’T SEE Jesus **right there** with them. They saw Jesus “sleeping” but they didn’t see Jesus IN CONTROL. They saw how helpless THEY were but they had lost sight of Jesus’ ALMIGHTY power. They had already witnessed many of Jesus’ miracles but they didn’t learn the **lessons** of those miracles – Jesus’ LOVE and **almighty POWER**.

When we see our **problems** but we don't see Jesus WITH us and IN CONTROL then life does get hairy and **scary**. Life often reminds us that WE'RE NOT **in control** – we don't have all the answers – we can't fix every problem. Life can cruelly remind us of just HOW WEAK and **powerless** we really are. That's scary but we also NEED TO SEE and learn well those **very truths**. God loves us so much that He uses those BAD, CRUEL, UNFORTUNATE **difficulties** of life to teach us those lessons AND to draw us closer to Him – to help us grow in our faith.

We actually need to BE CAREFUL **here**. Having Jesus WITH us and IN CONTROL doesn't mean that life **will always be** SMOOTH SAILING, so to speak. What if Jesus HADN'T BEEN physically, visibly present with them in that boat? Would that have **then** been a GOOD REASON for them to **be afraid**? What if Jesus HADN'T STOPPED that storm but He let the boat sink and the disciples drown – that only Jesus survived the shipwreck? Would that have **then** been a GOOD REASON for them to **be afraid**?

The answer is no and we need to CLEARLY UNDERSTAND that. Faith is being **“sure/certain”** of God's POWER even when it DOESN'T LOOK like **God's in control**. WE don't see Jesus with our eyes. We can't grab His shoulder to get His attention. But we DO HAVE His promises – **“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”** IN FAITH we are counting on Jesus to **keep that promise** – we are **“sure/certain”** Jesus IS WITH us even when we may feel totally abandoned by God.

Bad things happening to us DON'T MEAN that God has lost control of the world. Many Christians have drowned at sea – been killed by tornadoes, hurricanes, etc. – been struck with DEVASTATING **diseases** and illnesses. That doesn't mean God DOESN'T LOVE us or that He's NOT ALMIGHTY. God has bluntly warned us – we **could say** He's promised us – that we will have all kinds of trials and tribulations in this life. But God has ALSO PROMISED us – **“Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you, and you will glorify Me.”** – promised us to **“work all things for the good of those who love Him”** – to **“meet all our needs,”** etc. IN FAITH we are counting on God to **keep** those promise – we are **“sure/certain”** God WILL DO just that for us somehow or other. God CAN miraculously solve our problems – He can give us the strength to **endure** our difficulties – He can take us home to heaven. IN FAITH we are **“sure/certain”** God will do what HE KNOWS IS BEST for us. He's promised us that and He HAS THE POWER to keep His promises.

This is a FAMILIAR miracle. I like using it on **hospital** calls. It has such important lessons for our lives of faith. Faith is being **“sure/certain”** of God's LOVE and His POWER. Amen.

HYMN #760