

From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark
RIDING THE STORM

Text: And There Arose a Great Storm of Wind, and the Waves Beat Into the Ship, So That It Was Now Full. Mark 4:37.

Let us consider the secret of riding the storms of life. No one can help us achieve this mastery like Christ. This Master-Mariner knew what it meant to be storm tossed. One of the earliest incidents in His life (recorded by St. Mark) has the tang of the sea in it. To be sure, the Sea of Galilee seems like a mere lake; it is only thirteen miles long and at its widest part it is about seven miles across. But it lies in a tropical trench seven hundred feet below sea level. This great depth, along with the gullies which funnel the wind into it from the east, makes it subject to sudden storms. It is one of these storms that St. Mark describes so vividly. St. Matthew and St. Luke have parallel versions of the same storm, but Mark's account carries vivid details which only Peter, the veteran fisherman, could supply; for Mark's Gospel, as you know, incorporates many personal reminiscences of the sailor-apostle.



REV. D. M. CLARK

"And the same day," says Mark, the same day that He had been teaching by parables to the crowd. Fatigued by the drain upon his nervous and spiritual energies, that evening He suggested that He and the disciples push off from the shore and get some rest. As soon as the boat moved, He fell asleep in the stern. He had a pillow, Peter told young Mark; it may have been the nets piled there. As the boat moved through the water, "there arose a great storm, and the waves beat into the ship, so that now it was full." You may be sure those tried sailors handled the craft as expertly as they could. But it was too much for them. Panic seized them. They awakened Jesus, so relaxed, so tired, so confident of God's care on sea or land, that He slept on through the crisis. They cried out in alarm and put to Him their stupid question: "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?"

Have you not cried out angrily like that when anxiety swamped your boat? When sorrows like sea billows rolled? "Where is God? Why doesn't He do something?" The Lord of life sleeping on and His disciples battling for dear life! Jesus awakened, amazed at their panic. "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" You would think that with such a passenger they would know that no storm could overwhelm their little bark.

"And He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, 'Peace, be still.' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Did it really happen? We can believe that in the sphere where spirit acts upon spirit He could bring peace to a troubled mind. But in the realm of inanimate nature? There are some Christians who find this hard to believe and cannot receive it. Given the personality of Christ as outlined in the Gospels, I find it possible to believe that He achieved results in the "realm of inanimate nature" which transcend the ordinary categories of cause and effect as they are understood at present. His power over the minds and spirits of men and women is more staggering than the narratives of His works of wonder in the New Testament. At least, it is the part of intellectual modesty to await such further light as may come before making a dogmatic assertion against these narratives.

We, too, know what storms on the sea of life mean. He looks into the face of His frightened disciples of this year of tempest and asks: "Why are you afraid? Where is your faith?" Why are we afraid? We learn of a physical ailment; we fear the physician's diagnosis; we approach an operation or other treatment with fear and trembling. A hard task faces us and we say we do not know how to do it. A task is never well done if it is undertaken with timidity. Old age



Church Directory

DEADLINE for church news and photos is Friday noon preceding the next Thursday publication date at the Rev. Clark's home, 1676 North 'E' St., phone 642-1560. All items submitted must be accompanied by the sender's name, address and (if available) phone number.

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approaches, and instead of riding out that storm we grow afraid, and much precious energy is dissipated. Just when we need all our resources, fear denies us the use of them. So Jesus devoted much of His life to dispelling fear from the inner life of people. "Where is your faith?" It isn't gone; it isn't lost. It is tucked back there in the corner of the soul. We can call it back. Keep your eyes fixed upon the Author of faith and the unfailingly courageous Companion and He will help to release its power. "Why are ye so fearful?" You have given up something to embark upon the adventure of Christian discipleship. You have committed your little ship into the keeping of the Admiral. And you give way!

Much can be said about the conquest of fear, but this sentence is the crux of the matter: Jesus saves men not FROM storms but IN storms. He will not place His hand upon the tiller; it is not the wind and waves that need attention; it is you.

Against our fear stands faith. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." The mind of Jesus was stayed on His Father. Therefore He could sleep in the storm. Does that mean if we trust God we shall always be delivered from shipwreck? Not from the shipwreck of our material hopes, nor from the loss of much cargo that seems precious.

The trusting heart is the secret of the tranquil life. Don't be afraid. Your Father knoweth. Your Father worketh. Your Father careth. His will is love. His purpose is wise and kind. As we trust Him our souls grow calmer. We know that nothing hurtful can ever truly harm us.

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Holyday Masses: 9:30 am and 7:30 pm
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