

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
Mark 4:35-41; Proverbs 30:4,5; Acts 27:13-26

Thy Will Be Done

The lesson today is clearly that Christians should stay out of boats. Just kidding, of course, but it does seem that way, doesn't it? No, the lesson today has little to do with boats, and a lot to do with what we will pray later in this service, "*Thy will be done,*" and with Luther's biblical reminder concerning that petition that "God's good and gracious will certainly is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also."

In our second lesson, the Apostle Paul is on his way to Rome for his appeal to Caesar, and God had now told him through an angel that he would indeed have his day in court. Because of that revealed will of God, St. Paul could be confident that he and his fellow passengers on the boat would survive. God had made His will known, and what He wills must come to pass.

In our Holy Gospel, we find other apostles in a boat, this time with our Lord Himself. A horrible storm was whipped up on the sea and pounded them from every side. If you've ever been out on the water when a storm appears on the horizon, you know the feeling somewhat. If you've ever been caught outside without shelter in a storm, you can identify a little. You know the sense of panic that wells up, the concern for your life. So here were the apostles in the boat, straining against a storm, struggling for their lives, bailing water and wrestling with oars, and what was Jesus doing? "*He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.*"

All right, fellow Christians, you tell me what the apostles should have done. What would I tell you to do if your life was a mess, if you were trapped in some test or trial, if you were in desperate need of peace and hope? Where would I point you? Where would we turn? I would tell you to go to Jesus, wouldn't I; point you to Him and tell you to pray? And if it seemed Jesus was sleeping, wasn't listening, I would tell you to keep praying, to be the persistent widow pictured in our Lord's parable on prayer, right? So we can't fault the apostles for turning to Jesus, for waking Him, can we? No, I most certainly think we cannot. Indeed, I think they did exactly what they ought to have done in such fear. That wasn't the problem. So what was the problem?

The apostles, like the Apostle Paul, had the revealed will of God for that moment. Jesus couldn't die, and neither could they—not yet. No, Jesus had to suffer and die and rise three days later in precisely the way foretold in the Old Testament and reiterated in Jesus' own preaching. He had much living to do before His time for dying arrived, and thus they had much living to do as well before their day to die would come. They forgot the cross and empty tomb that awaited Jesus on the other side of this storm, this very nasty and frightening storm. Waking or sleeping, this storm was no match for the will of God. No wind could blow God off track on His path to Calvary, to the cross.

And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Do you sometimes feel like God might be in the boat but doesn't really care what is happening, like He made the watch of creation but now is just sitting back while it ticks its way out? Such times are no time to give up—be persistent in prayer—but such times are also the most important times of all to hold to the revealed will of God, not to get lost in what He has not revealed or promised. Such times are times to remember that no matter what storm arises, Christ is your anchor, and the hand that was pierced for your transgression is the same hand that guides human history and your own life to your ultimate salvation and eternal paradise. A lot can go wrong, but none of it can prevent God's will from going right, and from being right, and wise, and good, and best.

Our first lesson reminds us:

Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know! Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

Our Jesus has ascended to heaven and come down, has gathered the wind in His fists, has wrapped the waters in a garment, has established the ends of the earth. Our Jesus is God's son, and Savior is His name—surely you know. He is the very Word of God, and every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.

So, it's okay for Christians to go on boats, although I'd recommend a lifejacket just in case, but whether in a boat, or on dry land, or in a plane in the air, it is not all right for a Christian ever to forget who is in control, whose plan must come to pass, whose will is always wise, good, and done in the end, often even in spite of our objections and obfuscation. And it is with that confidence that we can pray prayers such as the Prayer of the Day and conclude them with a hearty Amen: "O Lord, our God, govern the nations on earth and direct the affairs of this world so that Your Church may worship You in peace and joy." Through Jesus Christ, we can with joy and hope petition, "*Thy will done.*" And His will will be done, especially and most importantly this, which we are reminded in the Small Catechism:

God's will is done when he breaks and defeats every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, which try to prevent us from keeping God's name holy and letting his kingdom come. And God's will is done when he strengthens and keeps us firm in his Word and in the faith as long as we live. This is his good and gracious will.

Amen.