

Master of Storms

June 23, 2024

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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Welcome everyone. Good morning. We are here continuing our series on *Journey with Jesus*. We are in our third week of our *Journey with Jesus*, and if you have not been here the last couple of weeks, I want to catch you up on a couple of things that Pastor John focused on the previous couple of weeks. Two weeks ago, Pastor John told us how, as we go through Mark, one of the main themes is the unveiling of the kingdom of God. And he had us hold our hands over our eyes and open them up a little bit and being able to gradually see more and more. I liked that analogy, but I also was having a little bit of difficulty connecting with unveiling because I do not unveil a lot of things often. And as he was talking about it, the only veil that I remember thinking about was at a wedding. I do not even know if my wife had her veil on her face. No, she shook her head. No.

But what I really connected with was a relationship. It is almost like an unveiling or a revealing or getting to know someone better. On the first date in a relationship, you are going to keep things at a very surface level. You are not going to give away your deepest, darkest secrets. But as you get to know someone, as you grow in love and trust and connection, you are going to share more about your motivations, about your fears and insecurities. So, I think that is a great way to think about this unveiling or revealing of the kingdom of God, growing closer in a relationship.

In thinking about relationships, and as we dive into our story for today's gospel reading, it is important to think about where the disciples were in their relationship with Jesus. On this side of Easter, we have the perfect picture. We have all the connections. We know where everything was going. But where the disciples were, they did not fully know who Jesus was. They had not yet reached the point where Peter confessed that Jesus is the Messiah. That is four chapters from where we are reading today. So, they did not really have a full picture of who Jesus was. And I think that is really important to understand our story today.

Today's reading is the *Calming of the Storm*. It is maybe one that you are pretty familiar with. We have already heard a lot about this story. We know what happens here. Jesus was teaching, and they went off in a boat; there was this big storm on the sea, and so the disciples were terrified. So, they wake up Jesus, and He says, "Everything's great, peace be still." And so, we can learn, have faith. Jesus is going to calm every storm. It will all be okay. But is that really what we are supposed to take away from this story? Maybe. Maybe that is what you have been thinking or maybe what you assumed from your Sunday school experience. But I want you to know that there is more going on here. There is more happening in this story. Just look at the last verse. This section ends with the disciples being absolutely, absolutely terrified. That does not sound like peace for them at the end. That seems like something else is going on that this section wants us to learn something else.

Let's look at what happened just before. The disciples had seen someone who they called a man here. They saw this person just speak. And things that they do not think should listen, listened—the wind and the waves. Now, as a parent, as a dad, when I ask my kids for help to clean the dishes or clean up, and they say, okay, I am shocked. I do not expect that kind of reaction even. I am expecting a little bit of a fight. But the disciples saw immediate obedience at just these words from this man. And so, the question is, what is the power of words, and especially what is the power of words from this man?

I want to tell you a story to help connect some of these ideas. And it is going to start with someone named Susan. When Susan was at the end of her high school career, she ended up in a little bit of an accident and got a concussion. And because of this concussion, she could not read for a little bit. As she was waiting for her brain to put itself back together, she was told by one of her friends to go audit some college classes, just go walk into some classes and just kill some time a little bit. She could still learn. She just could not read. One of the classes that she walked into was to teach sign language. And she became very fascinated with sign language and pursued it as a career.

A few years down the line, Susan ended up in a community college class teaching reading skill. As she walked into this room, it was very, very busy—lots of people communicating with signs, very, very active. But she

noticed one person sitting in the corner all by himself, kind of sitting there. He was kind of like creating his own straitjacket, just kind of alone. So, she asked the teacher there, "What about him? Why is he all disconnected from everyone?" She learned that this man's name was Ildefonso. And Ildefonso was brought there every day by a very insistent uncle. But they really did not know what to do with him. He had been in a bunch of classes and just kind of would sit there. So, she decided to go up and just get to know him. She just went up and introduced herself, signing. "Hello, my name is Susan." Here's when something weird happened.

Instead of Ildefonso signing back his name, he signed back, "Hello. My name is Susan." "Wait a second," she was like, "Wait, wait. No, my name is Susan." She signed that back to him, and he copied the same thing back to her, "No, my name is Susan." And she tried a few more things and all she got trying to connect with this man was just repeating back copying. And she realized. This man at 27 years old did not have a language. No one had taught him. He had been deaf his whole life, and he had no way to connect. He thought that everyone just connected visually, and he was somehow lost, or dumb, or just had not quite figured it out yet. So, Susan decided to try and teach him. So, she tried to teach him the word for book, and when she signed the word for book, he thought that she was telling him to open a book. So, he would open a book. Or, when she tried to teach him the word for stand, he would stand up. So that was not working.

She could have given up, but Susan decided to do something different. She said to herself she was going to ignore him. She was going to play the part as both the teacher and the student in front of Ildefonso and see if that would make any difference. So, she got up there and set up two desks and like, would sign the word for cat and then move over to like the student side and pretend to pet a cat and hold up a picture of a cat. And then also she would write the word for cat on the board because it was a reading skills class. At first, Ildefonso kind of just sat there looking bored, but at least he was not copying her anymore or thought that she was telling him to do something. It took some time, but eventually, one day as she was still doing this, she noticed out of the corner of her eye, Ildefonso sat up, and his eyes got bigger and bigger. And suddenly he stood up and slapped his hands on the desk. And he had the realization that everything has a name. I do not think I could imagine not having words for things. When

Ildefonso discovered that everything had a name, it changed his life completely. Ildefonso started to collect all sorts of words and write them on a piece of paper, remembering them all, and it brought him connections. He was able to converse with people and discovered that he was not alone or dumb or forever unredeemable. When he understood words, these words changed his life.

But much more so than these words and names that Ildefonso collected, God's Word has the power. That is why we are so much focused on God's Word because God's Word is not just names. It is more than just names for things. We see in the Calming of the Storm, Jesus spoke. He spoke to His creation, and it obeyed. God's Word speaks to the creation. It goes out and does what He sends it to do. You may already know this, or maybe have not made the connection. If you go back to Genesis, God spoke and created the world. And if you think about it, you can see that thread throughout all of scripture. When God speaks, it happens. And God's Word speaks also to you. And when it does, it changes our hearts and minds. And God calls us by name. Isaiah 43 shows us what happens when we are baptized. God gives us a name and calls us His own.

When Jesus calmed the storm, He showed the disciples that He is God. He is the Word of God, and when He speaks, all of creation listens and obeys. And when the disciples saw Him do this, they could no longer view Him as just a man. And it really terrified them to know that Jesus had that kind of power. But we know He is our God who loves us. And we hold on to His great love for us. And with this love, He called us and declared us His own. And by His Word, He changes our hearts and minds. May we hold on to this Word, and may we dive into it.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we thank You that You showed the disciples that You are God. When You speak, heaven and earth listen. And we thank You that You have also spoken to us, that You have called us by name, and You give us a way we can hold on to tangibly to remember that we have been washed in the waters of baptism and made Your Children.

We pray that you would help us to grow to know you more and to dive deep into your word, remembering that it can change our hearts and minds and speak into and change our eternities. We thank you, Jesus, and pray in Your name. Amen.