

July 26, 2009  
Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

“Recognize who He is”

Text: Mark 6:45-56

Mothers are awesome, but children seldom seem to appreciate the fact. Mothers carry and give birth to children and that's just the beginning. They care for the children when they are helpless infants requiring constant feeding and cleaning and care. Then things get really dangerous as the kids become mobile and mothers are constantly on guard protecting the child from the world and in some cases the world from the child. Mothers are constantly on watch, looking for ways to help, guide and comfort their children. Behind the scenes mothers' hearts are often wrenching in empathy with their child's pains, struggles and failures.

The child seldom realizes or cares about this. There are certainly those times when children desperately need and want their Mom and she is all important for a brief moment. But while they are still children, I don't think they ever comprehend a fraction of what Mom really is to them. Often the child thinks and even speaks along the lines of, “Oh, that's just my Mom,” or worse yet, “Mom, would you just leave me alone! I can do it myself.” Children often want to relegate Mom to the background somewhere...that lady who they call when they find they need help, healing, supper, a ride or money.

Boy I wish this Gospel reading had come along on Mother's Day. Because these truths about mothers in a small way paint a picture of what is happening in Mark 6 in a big way and what continues to happen in our lives today.

The disciples have just seen Jesus feed 5000 men plus women and children with five loaves and two fish. It's getting late and Jesus tells the disciples to get in the boat and go to Bethsaida. He stays behind, dismisses the people and prays. Early in the morning Jesus follows the disciples across the Sea of Galilee in a way which only He can; by walking on the water.

Now you and I read this and it's no big deal. Jesus is God and if He wants to get somewhere walking on water, well, it's just Jesus being God. The big question is this: why don't the disciples recognize Jesus for who He is? Think about it. In Mark's Gospel up to this point the disciples have seen Jesus cast out demons, heal all sorts of afflictions, and even stand in the midst of a raging tempest in maybe this very same boat and shout “Peace! Be still!” and have nature itself obey Him, and the day just past have seen Him feed thousands with near nothing. They should recognize Jesus as the Son of God.

This may be why Jesus behaves in what we think is a strange way at first. “*He meant to pass by them,*” the text says. Why would Jesus want to walk by them? Actually it makes perfect sense. There isn't a big storm going on and threatening the boat like before, but the wind is against the disciples in the boat. They aren't making good time. Jesus is doing fine walking. I mean, if you're in traffic in the lane that is moving why would you want to get in the lane that's stopped?

More than that, Jesus is giving the disciples an opportunity to recognize Him for who He is. They should see Jesus and react with awe and wonder saying, “Look at Jesus walking on water! Jesus is the awesome Son of God!”

They don't. Instead they freak out and think He's a ghost. They do not recognize Jesus as the Son of God and are terrified. Jesus has to call out to them, come to them. “*Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.*” He gets in the boat and the wind is calmed, yet Mark makes sure to tell us that

even now, the disciples just don't get it. *"And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened."*

Silly disciples. They should have known what we know. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is God. Then again, look at you and me. Look at how we often perceive Jesus. I think we can say of ourselves, "Silly disciples."

Isn't the way we treat Jesus a lot like the way kids often treat their mothers? As children, there is this whole reality of what our mother is doing for us that we just dismiss so we can focus on our friends or our toys or our TV shows. We recognize the Mom is there in our life, but unless something comes along that we can't handle and makes us yell "Mooooom!" we just aren't thinking about her much. Worse yet, how often as kids are we up to what Mom says we shouldn't be doing, but sneaking around and pushing the limits trying to see how much we can get away with?

We do this with Christ all the time. We should recognize who He is, what He has done for us, the power that He has over us and all creation. It has been made very clear to us that Jesus is our Lord God and Savior who gave His life to make us His heavenly children. He has defeated death and all things in heaven and earth have been placed under His rule. Yet we don't recognize Him as such. We somehow manage to push that reality into the background.

There are T-shirts around that say, "Jesus is my BFF," meaning "best friend forever" and "Jesus is my homeboy." They are cute, but they are wrong. They don't recognize Christ for what He is. That's kind of like if after Pentecost, knowing all that Jesus had accomplished before ascending into heaven, the disciples had proclaimed, "Jesus? Yeah, He's my rabbi."

We are believers, but in our sinfulness we start wanting Jesus to be like that, to be smaller than He really is. We want Him to be the Mom we can run to when we need Him, but that we ignore and take for granted when we don't. We want the love, comfort and forgiveness He offers, but we want to push our relationship with Him into the background when sinful mischief comes calling.

Jesus isn't Mom. Jesus is God. Jesus is the one who created our mothers and everything else that is. Jesus is not just some historical figure who walked the earth some 2000 years ago. Jesus is here today and it is under His authority and power that the sun rises in the morning, the rain falls the plants grow and that you are able to draw every breath you take.

Jesus is the mighty Savior who took your sins and the sins of the whole world on Himself and suffered in your place the torment and abandonment by God that we all deserve. Jesus is the one who rose to eternal life and it is only through Him that anyone else is made able to rise also.

Moreover, Jesus is the mighty judge who is coming back to carry out God's justice. We need to remember that one day we will stand before Him and He is not going to be our "BFF" that will let us get away with anything. He will be the one who calls us to account for our sins. If we push Him away in life and try to have Him just be that Jesus guy in the background and refuse to recognize Him as the Son of God who has power and authority over our life, we may recognize His true majesty much too late.

Thankfully Jesus doesn't stand for that with you and I. Jesus didn't continue past the disciples' boat. He turned and came to them and said, "It is I." He turns and comes to us again in many ways...in Word, Sacrament and the mutual fellowship of the family of faith. He calls us to clearly experience His awesome forgiveness in concrete ways. He does such wonders for us that we cannot help but stand in awe and say, "Jesus is God. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is above all things."

Psalm 46:10 says *"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"* Don't let your life get so busy with your work and your play and

your toys and your everything that you forget the enormity of Jesus. His is a big deal. He is the biggest deal. Pause and contemplate all that He is. Remember that He is the judge who demands respect and fear. Remember that He is the loving God who suffered humiliation and pain unfathomable to purchase you for glory.

Pause often and be small. Be still. Be silent and recognize Jesus as the all-powerful Son of God. And know that for reasons perhaps only He can fathom, He is lovingly embracing you as His dear child forever.