

Grace and Peace from God Our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

When you go to the beach nature has a way of reminding you of its awesome power: the incessant pounding of the waves, the way the surf reclaims everything you fashion out of the sand, the power of the surf against your body or under your body if you surf or body surf. Most often when I've been at the shore there's at least one major storm, a day of fierce winds and pounding raindrops on the windows and the roof of the porch. And after nature's display of power, all manner of detritus litters the beach: trash, shells, driftwood, the occasional human artifact like a toilet seat, a buoy float, part of a cooler or whatever. ***The beach is covered with what the storm washes up.*** On top of all that there is all the sea creatures that find themselves stranded on dry land: helpless, vulnerable, afraid, and sometimes already dead.

On the Atlantic seaboard – where we lived for so long – one creature that decorated beaches after storms are the strange, well ***armored horseshoe crab***. These strange, prehistoric, tank-like animals have clunky horseshoe shaped shells, a hinged spikey midsection and a long dagger like tail. Often during the daylight hours delighted young boys carry the carcass by the tail, chasing after screaming younger syblings or girls.

After a stormy afternoon on an early evening walk, a friend spotted a live horseshoe crab on the beach flipped over on its back with its vulnerable underside exposed. It tried desperately to right itself, to flip

itself over using that long spiny dagger shaped tail. The crab would lift its body by flexing its spiny tail against the ground, but not far enough to push itself over which it could easily do in the water. My friends walked over to it, intending to turn it over so that it could re-enter the ocean, and back in its environment, the place it belonged. But as he reached down to help it the crab pushed up that spiny dagger shaped tail towards him and extended its claws threateningly.

He could have easily turned it over, but instead decided to watch the crabs own vain effort to right itself, and return to the ocean. After watching the crab struggle for a few minute, the tide mercifully reached up the beach and the ocean water began lapping at the crab. Before too long, the waves overwhelmed it, and the ocean recaptured one of its own.

In life, we too, experience such storms. Storms which seem to rival all others, leaving us helpless, vulnerable, overwhelmed by what has happened, and afraid because we are in an unknown place and unsure of our surroundings. ***In such situations we find ourselves stranded, powerless and are out of control, like the disciples and Jesus in our Gospel lesson.***

The twelve cross the Sea of Galilee as Jesus instructs them ***in order to gain some rest from the crowds in the busy days they experienced.*** Desiring nothing more than rest and a little calm, ***they find themselves in the midst of a great storm with strong winds stirring up the sea and threatening to swamp their small boat.***

Things for the disciples – some of whom were experienced

fishermen – *quickly spun out of control*. Their boat could turn over at any moment miles from land, drowning them all. Even though some of them are fisherman and most of them are somewhat accustomed to the storms which whipped up on the Sea of Galilee, *they find themselves on a boat filling with water – a desperate situation, overwhelmed and afraid.*

Fortunately for them, Jesus is in the boat with them asleep in the stern. The disciples aren't even sure if Jesus cares, waking Him and asking, "*Teacher, do you not care if we perish?*" **Without so much as a word to them, Jesus takes control** of the situation, and stills the wind and the sea, saying only, "*Peace, be still.*" *The words Jesus speaks are spoken not only to the wind and waves, but also to all of us who are Jesus disciples.*

Implying by his question that they shouldn't be afraid; they should have faith, He asks them, "*Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?*" The disciples in awe of the miracle Jesus had performed ask, "*Who then is this that even wind and Sea obey him?*"

We know who Jesus is, even if the disciples did not know at that time. Jesus is the Son of God. *The message of the story is for us to have faith in Jesus, who is the Son of God. He is the one who is in control – even when things seem desperately out of control. And he is the one who is present with us during the time when we, like the horseshoe crab, find ourselves helpless, totally out of our element.*

Far too seldom do we call upon Jesus to come to our aid, to calm our fears and still our unrest. Instead, we fall into the human trap of trying to right ourselves. We use our strong points and all our defense mechanisms in an attempt to deal with the pain and brokenness, the fear and unrest which we experience in life.

Yet in spite of all our efforts, try as we might, we are powerless to turn ourselves over and crawl away from the stormy situations of our lives. We just don't have that kind of control and that kind of power, *but God has that kind of control and power.* Through Jesus Christ God takes control over the water, and the water of Holy Baptism washes over us like an overwhelming wave of grace, drawing us back to Himself, back to where we belong, back to where we can live again.

Martin Luther spoke about remembering our baptism every day, and drowning through daily repentance so that we might rise up and live a new life each day. It is **the Father's** continued creation that is at work in our Baptism. It is **the Holy Spirit** dwelling in us as baptized children of God. It is **Jesus Christ** who is present for us in control of us, helping us to weather the storms which cause upheaval and pain in our lives.

For the disciples there was peace because of the presence of Christ with them. For us there is peace because Christ chooses to be present with us. Our faith is in that one who is the solid rock, the anchor, the pilot, the eternal Savior. The One who makes the wind and the waves cease with a word.

AMEN!!