

MATTHEW 8:23-27

²³When he got into a boat, his disciples followed him. ²⁴Suddenly a terrible storm came up on the sea, so that their boat was covered by the waves. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵They went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to die!" ²⁶He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up, rebuked the wind and the sea, and there was a complete calm. ²⁷The men were amazed, saying, "What kind of a man is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"



Who is He? He's a tired man worn out by hard work sleeping soundly in a boat. Who is He?

Jesus is a real man. He sleeps because He is tired. The boat in which He is sleeping is being swamped by storm driven waves and He sleeps right through it. But when you are dog-tired, you sleep.

There is nothing in Jesus' humanity that makes Him less than a genuine human being in every respect. It's true that He is without sin. It's true that He is incapable of sin. But if he had to be sinful in order to be a man then God didn't create the first humans in His image. We'd have to say that neither Adam nor Eve was fully human until the devil tricked them and they fell into sin. As a matter of fact, it is precisely in Jesus' purity as the one and only human who never sinned that he is more human than anyone else is. He is what God created all of us to be. He is holy. He wants only what is good. He is full of love. He forgives even His enemies. He trusts God without any doubts of any kind. When He is mocked, He does not respond with hatred or anger. When He is slandered, He doesn't issue threats. The perfect love required by every one of God's commandments is perfectly met in Him: in His every thought, His every word, and His every deed.

No man ever lived who was like this man!

His true humanity is impossible to deny. It was not a pretend sleep in the boat, but a real sleep of a man worn out by doing good. It wasn't pretend blood He shed. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. This same man descended in hell to declare His victory over the devil. This same man rose from the dead on the third day after He died. This same man ascended into heaven forty days later in order to fill all things and be present with His church here on earth until the end of times.

Yes, He most certainly was, is, and ever shall be a true human.

He is the Son of Man but He is not the Son of a man. He is the Son of a woman, not a man. His humanity comes from His mother alone. He is the virgin born. Because He is the eternally begotten Son of God, He is the Lord God. He is the creator of heaven and earth. While He chooses to set aside the full use of His divine powers, He cannot choose to be anything less than what He is. He is almighty God equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit from eternity.

What a wonderful event is related in our Gospel lesson! It is not enough that God governs the wind and the waves. We already knew that. Only a fool would deny that as the psalm

says. Who else but the Creator can be in charge of the creation? That is not such a wonderful fact all by itself. What is so wonderful about this event is that it is not just God who commands and controls the laws of nature. It is the God-man who does so. We worship a God who has become a man. Our Creator is our brother. Our Lord has assumed our own flesh and blood and has chosen to live with us as one of us. He not only

comes to us where we live, but He actually lives with us, that is, He lives within our own humanity.

There is nothing we face that He hasn't faced. There is no sorrow or loss or temptation that any human being has ever experienced that our God is our brother has not experienced. True, He has not committed any sins as we have, but He most certainly has experienced our sins. As St. Paul puts it, "God made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us." (2 Corinthians 5:21a) God has joined us, and not only for time but for eternity.

Why were the disciples afraid? They based their faith on what they experienced with their five senses. They saw the waves pour over the side of the boat. They felt the spray of water on their faces. They heard the howling of the wind. Their senses were filled with disaster, and they saw Jesus sound asleep. They were afraid because they grounded their faith in what they could feel and experience.

The faith that trusts in what it feels is a false faith.

The Christian Church is pictured as a boat or a ship. The place where you are sitting is called the nave – where we get the word navy. The church is the ark of salvation. As eight souls found refuge in the ark and were saved from the worldwide destruction of the flood, we find refuge in the church where we will be rescued from the destruction of the world on Judgment Day

We see in this event a picture of the dangers the church faces. We sing "I walk in danger all the way." We don't



always feel the danger. Sitting in the boat on a calm sea with just enough of a breeze to cool you off, enjoying the beauty of the sun glistening off the water, you feel at peace. You are at peace. The church usually feels this way. It's place of peace and calmness.

Then the storm comes. The same body of water that gave us serene feelings of contentment has become a threat to our lives. The church in America lives in a raging sea of open immorality, obscenity, blasphemy, and mockery of God. From without, the leaders of the popular culture despise the church's very existence. From within, at least among those who claim to be Christian, fewer and fewer teach what the Bible teaches about right and wrong.

Like the disciples we cry out "We are perishing! Don't you care?" Who is this that let's the world rock the boat so badly?

The last thing you want to do is to jump ship. When you have doubts about God's promises, when you begin to question why God permits what just happened to you, when you fall into a sin you thought you'd never do, but now you've done it and you don't want to face it, whatever you do, don't jump ship. Stay inside. Stay with the church. Don't leave. This is where you are safe. It may not seem safe. But if you jump overboard and you will be drowned in the sea of godlessness. The ship, the church, isn't going to sink. When it looks like it will you cry out to Jesus, "Lord, save me! I am perishing!" Because that is who this is. He is the one who loves you and is willing and able to deliver you from every trouble.

Jesus speaks to the disciples, encouraging and strengthening their faith. The power is God's word. The same word that calmed their fears and the wind and waves settles and secures our faith. Throughout our lives God directs our faith back to where it was born. It is only on account of the power of God's word that makes water a washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit. By the power of God's almighty word that the sacramental bread and wine are the body and the blood of Jesus by which the believer is set free from sin.

Our faith cannot live on anything less powerful than God's almighty word. The displays of Jesus' deity saved no one in the end. The displays of His power took away no one's sins. The Jesus we love to watch blessing children, healing the sick is not saving us by what we are seeing. It is the Jesus we cannot bear to look at who is taking away what we cannot carry. It is the Jesus who is no beautiful Savior, but whose "his appearance was so disfigured that he did not look like a man, and his form was disfigured more than any other person (Isaiah 52:14) The only thing that could finally and forever take away our fear was when and where Jesus displayed His courage. It was when His innocence bore the sin of the world. It was when in what appeared to be shameful weakness He destroyed forever the power of death.

Jesus doesn't despise us in our fear and doubts. When our faith flickers like a candle in the wind, Jesus protects it and sustains us in it.

Jesus commanded the wind and the waves and the wind and the waves obeyed him. The man who slept in the back of the ship is our God, Jesus Christ ...

.. our Savior, our brother.

