

In the name of the God who stills the storm and makes a place for silence, Amen

“When evening had come, Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Let us go across to the other side.’ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.”

This morning’s reading follows on the heels of Jesus’ teaching and preaching for a day on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The crowds were so huge that He had to sit in a boat, off the edge of the shore, in order to preach and teach while not being crushed by the crowd. At the end of what was undoubtedly a long day, Jesus told the Disciples that He wanted them to take Him across to the other side – again, apparently to avoid the crowds and to get some rest. Now to understand what happened next, we really need a little background.

The Sea of Galilee is not actually a sea. In reality it is an inland lake – the lake known elsewhere in Scripture as Gennesaret. The lake is 13 miles long and 8 miles wide at its widest point. It averages only 84 feet in depth – which is very shallow for a large lake. That is important because of physics. Shallow bodies of water feel more effects from wind than do deep bodies of water. If you blow across the top of a bowl of water, you will not create much in the way of water turbulence. But if you blow across a *saucer*

of water, you can watch the waves completely leave the saucer. The deeper water can absorb the wind energy better than the shallower water can. And that is important because of the wind conditions around the Sea of Galilee.

The surface of the water is 680 feet below sea level. The Mediterranean Sea is not that far away – meaning that sea breezes come in from the west. On the east side of the lake there are cliffs that are over 700 feet high. The breezes come from the west and cool the air at the surface of the lake. Then the east winds come off the top of the cliffs – hot and dry – and meet that cool air. The result is violent wind storms that materialize almost in an instant.

That’s what happened to Jesus and the Disciples that day. It was late afternoon in the heat of the day and they started across the lake in something like a 20 foot row boat that seated about 15. Weather experts from the area say that storms on the lake routinely whip up waves tall enough to capsize a boat of this size. The Disciples were worried that the boat would turn over, let alone be swamped by the waves. It was in this situation that they woke Jesus, in fear for their lives.

And Jesus “rebuked the wind, and said to the sea,

‘Peace! Be still!’ Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.”

This story has something very powerful to say to us. But how many of us have actually been in a small boat, in a howling storm, in fear for our lives? Probably not nearly as many as would have been around when the Gospel writer Mark first told this

story. This is one of those stories that can – on some levels – escape us if we’re not careful; simply because we don’t have the same life experiences that Mark’s original audience had. It is at times like this that I try to look for other ways to connect the message to things that are more current.

And with that, please listen to these lyrics;

{Playing the song *Easy Silence*, by Dan Wilson, Natalie Maines,
Martie Maguire, Emily Robison }

When the calls and conversations
Accidents and accusations
Messages and misperceptions
Paralyze my mind
Busses, cars, and airplanes leaving
Burnin' fumes of gasoline and
And everyone is running and I
Come to find a refuge in the

Easy silence that you make for me
It's okay when there's nothing more to say to me
And the peaceful quiet you create for me
And the way you keep the world at bay for me
The way you keep the world at bay

Monkeys on the barricades
Are warning us to back away
They form commissions trying to find
The next one they can crucify
And anger plays on every station
Answers only make more questions
I need something to believe in
Breathe in sanctuary in the

Easy silence that you make for me
It's okay when there's nothing more to say to me
And the peaceful quiet you create for me
And the way you keep the world at bay for me
The way you keep the world at bay

Children lose their youth too soon
Watching war made us immune
And I've got all the world to lose
But I just want to hold on to the

Easy silence that you make for me
It's okay when there's nothing more to say to me
And the peaceful quiet you create for me
And the way you keep the world at bay for me

The easy silence that you make for me
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And the way you keep the world at bay for me
The way you keep the world at bay for me
The way you keep the world at bay

Jesus said, Peace. Be still.

We *can* make a place in these lives full of cars, computers, cell phones, instant messaging, *Twittering*, and listening to hate-spewing radio and television. When the

storms of modern life blow up in such frightening and unexpected ways, the Holy Spirit will be with us in an easy silence – if we'll only make room for it. Our real refuge is in the easy silence that the Creator of the Universe puts in place for our benefit.

Peace. Be still. Listen for the still small voice that can only be heard in the easy silence. And give thanks for the God who comes to us most often when we choose to accept easy silence.

Amen.