

EPIPHANY 4

February 3 2019 / D.M. Kerns

Jonah 1:1-17
Romans 13:8-10
Matthew 8:23-27

Standing...

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We come this morning to yet another great Epiphany of the Lord Jesus:

Jesus has authority over the wind and the waves,
In that they recognize His voice and obey.

Let us pray. These are Your words Holy Father. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Sitting...

Jesus and His disciples get into a boat.

Out at sea a raging storm moves in.

And while the disciples bail water, Jesus sleeps.

The creaking of boat does not awaken Him but their pleas for help do.

His solution? Calm the storm with His Word...and at His Word,
roaring winds obey.

Turbulent waves settle down.

And as one might imagine,
the disciples are left stunned—stupefied at the Lord's power.

Have you ever noticed the similarities between this event and the Old Testament reading for today?

For you see Jonah gets into a boat too, and out at sea a raging storm moves in.

While the crew bails water, Jonah sleeps.

The creaking of boat does not awaken him but their pleas for help do.

Jonah's solution?

Calm the storm by throwing Jonah overboard—which they do.

Willingly. Gladly.

And with that the roaring winds die down.

The turbulent waves settle.
 And the men on the boat are left stunned—stupefied
 at the Lord's power.

These events are not identical, but they have a tremendous amount in common...

Consider: Both Jonah and Jesus were called by God to preach.

Jonah, a sinful man from Israel, was called to preach to the people of Nineveh—the avowed enemy of Israel.

Jonah was sent to the Gentiles,

although his message would be heard by the Jews as well.

His was one of destruction,

"Forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed!"

Judgement, unless they repent.

Jesus though is a sinless man from Israel—called to preach to the people of Israel, although His message would be heard by the Gentiles as well.

His was to be a message of good news,

"Come to Me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest," and,

"I came that you might have life eternal."

Truly a prophet greater than Jonah is here.

Second, both Jonah and Jesus got into a boat one day, setting out to sea.

Jonah got in the boat to flee the mission God gave him.

He hated the Gentiles of Nineveh—

nothing would please him more than to see the Ninevites destroyed.

To the invitation to preach, given to him by God, Jonah said,

"Thank you, no."

Jesus though got in the boat to pursue the mission God gave Him.

He had already preached to the people on one side of the Sea of Galilee and He wanted to preach to those on the other side. Jesus didn't want to see anybody destroyed for their wickedness. He came that they may have life—life eternal.

To His invitation to preach Jesus said,

"Yes!—not My will, but Yours be done."

Truly a prophet greater than Jonah is here.

Third, both Jonah and Jesus are asleep—asleep when the weather started getting rough, and when their tiny ship was tossed...

Jonah fell asleep in guilt and shame, knowing he was in open rebellion against the Lord,
 but still, not willing to admit his sin,
 not willing to obey God's command.
 Does it ever amaze you how we think we can fight against God,
 and win?

Jesus though—He fell asleep out of exhaustion—
 the result of long hours dealing with people,
 teaching,
 healing,
 answering questions,
 even answering accusations.
 All out of love for God His Father and out of love for sinners.
 Jesus isn't fighting against God—not at all.
 Again, truly a prophet greater than Jonah is here.

Fourth, both Jonah and Jesus were awakened by terrified shipmates,
 men who had their sea legs, and worked long and hard to steady the ship.
 But in their defense, none had ever seen a storm like this.

The men on board Jonah's vessel were pagans.
 They didn't know the true God.
 When they woke Jonah, they begged him to pray to his God—
 hoping his God might keep them from drowning.
 "Call on your god! Maybe He will take notice of us,
 and we won't perish."

But Jesus' disciples, who knew quite well the God of Israel were less hopeful,
 less trusting, more afraid than the pagan sailors of old.
 "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"
 And that my friend is unbelief—the opposite of faith.
 Even though a prophet greater than Jonah was with them,
 in the same boat,
 they believed Christ would do them no good—
 and that both He and they were destined to perish in the
 storm.

Both Jonah and Jesus had a solution.
 Jonah confessed that he worshiped the LORD God of Israel,
 the Maker of the wind and the sea and everything else.

Jonah admitted that the storm was his fault,
because he was running away from the LORD's mission.

Jesus didn't need to tell the disciples who made the wind and the sea and everything else. They already knew—

Moreover, Jesus had no sin to confess; this storm wasn't His fault.

Instead, He had a rebuke for them.

"You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"

It wasn't, "Are you guys alright?!"

It wasn't, "I'm sorry I was asleep."

It wasn't, "Did we lose anybody?"

No—"You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"

It's a stinging question—revealing the sin underneath,

the sin that threatens even believers in Christ,

the sin that shoves Jesus to the side and says,

"Jesus is really not that good—

I mean, He's fine for Sunday morning I guess,

But no good with the real problems of life."

Beloved, it's the way sin works—where you are a child of God, baptized into Christ and clothed with Him, but when the going gets tough, which the going will always get tough, you have to work things out on your own, and Christ cannot help you at all.

"O you of little faith!" –Repent.

Both Jonah and Jesus offer their shipmates the solution that would save them. Jonah's solution: "Throw me overboard. Sacrifice me. Because this is all my fault. Sacrifice me, and you'll be saved." And he was right. As soon as Jonah is tossed overboard, the storm completely subsides. Seas calm. Winds cease. And the men on board glorify the God of Israel.

Jesus' solution? Speak. Use His almighty power as God—rebuke wind and wave. For before Him the forces of nature bow. And when they do, the men on board glorify the God of Israel. Truly a prophet greater than Jonah is here.

But let's not forget...

wind and wave are not the disciples biggest problems—

nor are they yours.

Our biggest problems are: sin and death.

What is Jesus' solution to these problems?

Well, it happens to be the same solution Jonah offered.

"Sacrifice Me! For when that happens, I take all your sin and make it mine."

"Sacrifice Me, for when that happens the storm of God's wrath against sinners like you completely subsides, and you will be saved—opening the way to everlasting life."

Truly, a prophet greater than Jonah is here.

You know, both Jonah and Jesus spent three days buried.

Jonah in the tomb of a great fish, buried in the ocean's depths, and Jesus buried in the belly of the earth.

Three days later, God eventually caused the great fish to vomit Jonah out—where after crawling onto the beach he says—"You win God. Please forgive me." Then Jonah went to preach to the people of Nineveh, who repented.

So too Jesus got up from the dead. With Him it was like holding a beach ball under water—Jesus wasn't staying dead and buried for long. But when He rises, He sent forth His disciples to preach to all the nations of the earth: preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name. Salvation by faith alone, for all who claim the righteousness of Christ before God.

Jonah's life, his experience, points you to Christ and begs you to trust in Him.

That is the epiphany of Jesus in the miraculous calming of the storm—
the epiphany of this prophet who is so much greater than Jonah.

In the Holy Name of Jesus.

Standing...

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.