



And the way to repent is to have the same urgency as the disciples. “Lord, save us, we are re perishing.” For, because of our sins, our thoughts, words, and deeds that are opposed in every way to God’s will as revealed in His Word, we are all dying men.

I recently had the opportunity to administer the Rite of the Commendation of the Dying to a member’s mother. I made sure to do a little catechizing beforehand, and made the point to teach that what I am doing is not pronouncing a death sentence, as people often think “Last Rites” implies. Instead we confess that we are all dying men. We are all just at different stages. I administer the Rite as one dying man to another. As we will sing in one of the Communion hymns today, “unknown waves before me roll; hiding rock and treacherous shoal.” Life’s tempestuous seas give us uncertainty at best. We are but a shipwreck moment away from our earthly sojourn coming to an immediate end. We can and we should confess as the disciples did, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” The difference then is the disciples pleaded out of fear of losing their earthly lives. The Christian, however, confesses in certainty that our passage from this life into the next because of Jesus is nothing to fear.

I copied and pasted a paragraph from my 2020 Christmas Eve sermon that I think is appropriate to hear again today. “A seven year old (at that time) in our congregation shortly after the Pandemic hit the News 24/7 back in March (2020) asked her mom why people were so afraid of the virus. Her mom explained to her, quote: “It’s something new that we don’t understand and people are afraid of getting sick and dying.” The young girl said without skipping a beat that it reminded her of the story in the Bible where Jesus was in the boat with the disciples during a storm and they were all freaking out, thinking that they were going to die. So they woke Jesus up and said in that young girl’s words, quote: “Don’t you know we’re about to die?” And Jesus said, “Why are you afraid and have such little faith?” The seven-year old continued, “So what, the waves are crashing around you – the Savior is there with you in the storm! Do you really think he’s going to let you drown?”

That’s the child-like faith that Jesus commends in Scripture. It shames we who are tempted to think and believe, “If only Jesus was here with us, we wouldn’t be afraid.” The example of the disciples teaches us otherwise. Our life experience especially in the last two years, teaches us otherwise. It demonstrates our own weakness of faith. We have Jesus’ promise, “**Lo, I will be with you always even to the end of the world**” (Mt 28:20). We have Jesus’ promise that wherever two or more are gathered in His name, there is He is among them (Mt 18:20). We have Jesus’ promise that He comes to us in His body and blood under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:26-28). He is here. What are we so afraid of? Save us, Lord, we are perishing from our lack of trust in You.

Paul writes in our Epistle today, “**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us**” (Rom 8:18). In today’s world, someone would probably accuse Paul of being too insensitive here. “How dare he say our sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that is to come. Our sufferings are painful!” But Paul means what he says. Two of our men lost a parent this past week. We only get one mom in this life as the one said. We only get one dad. And yet, Paul is not being insensitive. He’s not degrading or downplaying your suffering. He’s directing us all to trust He who “**rebuked the winds and the sea, and there became a great calm**” (Mt 8:26). If Christ can quell the calamities of creation, He can and will certainly calm the storms of your life, too. Such suffering is not even worth comparing to how great the glory of heaven is that our loved ones in the faith are receiving now! By faith you will join theirs ranks when Christ calls you home.

In the meantime, that’s the reason we conclude every sermon with the words of **Philippians 4:7**, “**Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, Amen.**” It’s a prayer and a blessing that it is Christ alone who can protect you, deliver you, and keep you faithful, enabling you to abide in Him until life everlasting. He has answered our prayers to save us since we are perishing. He has died on the cross for our sins. He has risen from the dead. And now He gives us new life in Him. Thank God for Jesus. In Jesus’ name, Amen.