



“Let not your heart be troubled” These very words of Jesus give us reassurance of who He is. It is the same reassurance conveyed by the miracle of Jesus which is the subject of today’s devotion. This miracle is recorded in two other Gospels – Mark 4 & Luke 8.

²³ And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. ²⁴ And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. ²⁵ And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. ²⁶ And he saith unto them, **Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?** Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. ²⁷ But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him! (Matthew 8:23-27)

The heart of man, absent the power and love of Christ, is as a rudderless ship upon the troubled and tumultuous sea of doubt and unrest. The storms of life often overwhelm her bow, and the tempestuous gales rip at her sails. Her colors flown from her top mast are the colors of death and hopelessness. Before those seas can be calmed, she must run up a flag of surrender. Then the Ensign of love can be lifted on high and reign above her renewed hope and comfort. The consoling voice of Christ will penetrate the storm and bring a calm hitherto unknown. The Holy Ghost, as a boarding party, will take charge of her sails and re-fit her cluttered deck.

He who has the power to calm the turbulent sea has also the power to soothe and calm the troubled heart. Have you not known this? If you have known it, then this

devotion will serve merely to encourage your hand on the helm. But, if not, this truth received, digested, and metabolized will nourish a dying body and convey a new life which is unending in Christ.

Just as storms and great winds disturb the face of the Sea, so do the constant struggles of life and winds of doubt trouble our hearts. But Christ gives the Word: ***"Peace, be still."*** (Mark 4:39) " and the tempest of our hearts are made calm. It is the storm WITHIN the heart, and not the one without, that will lead to certain shipwreck.

The sea that we confront is not imagined, but real. It is the world and all her cheap glimmerings. God has given us prescriptions, in His Word, for survival in making our vessel seaworthy in weathering the storm - just as He gave to Noah the blueprint for the Ark. But unlike Noah, we may not have followed the precise commandment of the Lord, and we find we are breaking upon the shoals. Actually, without Christ as the Captain of our Ship, and the Master of our Souls, there is no hope of navigating these dangerous waters of the world.

The disciples of Jesus felt quite confident in being with Jesus while He was astonishing the multitudes with His miracles of healing and love, but profound miracles do not occur with common regularity, so when they are upon the stormy seas, their confidence suddenly ebbs. He is with them, yet He is sleeping! He is not standing on the mountain brow commanding demons depart a soul, or sight to return to the blind – He seems to be unaware of the peril in which the entire ship is faced. He is not standing on the mountain, but sleeping in the hull of the ship. The faith of the disciples has not developed to the point of trust under all circumstances. They do not utter a prayer of great oratorical prose but simply, ***"Lord, save us: we perish!"*** A simple prayer is always preferred to a fancy one especially if the fanciful words are intended to impress those around and not appeal to the heart of God. Just a bit later, Peter was able to muster the faith to actually step out of the ship and walk upon the sea (as long as he kept his focus on Christ), but this moment of faith has not matured as of yet.

If we are WITH Christ, and IN, Christ, what safer Ark of Salvation can we afford? It is said that *"when Caesar was crossing the rough waters of river, the rowers were becoming frightened. He encouraged them by saying, ""You are carrying Caesar: you need fear nothing." "These are the proud and vain words of a mortal potentate, but they become starkly true when compared to the immovable North Star of our Faith – Jesus Christ. So whatever soul carries Christ need not fear the worst storm of trouble or temptation which ever assailed man." – Caesarem Vehis.*

The Voyage of Life, painted by Thomas Cole in 1842, is a series of paintings that represent an allegory of the four stages of human life: childhood, youth, manhood, and old age. The paintings follow a voyager who travels in a boat on a river through the mid-19th-century American wilderness. In each painting, accompanied by a guardian angel, the voyager rides the boat on the River of Life. The landscape, corresponding to the seasons of the year, plays a major role in telling the story. In each picture, the boat's direction of travel is reversed from the previous picture. In childhood, the infant glides from a dark cave into a rich, green landscape. As a youth, the boy takes control of the boat and aims for a shining castle in the sky. In manhood, the adult relies on prayer and religious faith to sustain him through rough waters and a threatening landscape. Finally, the man becomes old and the angel guides him to heaven across the waters of eternity. The angel is unseen during the rough tides of life by the man, yet He is there nonetheless just as Christ is with us always. (Suggestive Illustrations)

When we examine the background of this miracle, we see that Jesus has just performed a series of amazing miracles. The multitudes witnessed the miracles, yet one man claims a desire to follow Christ, but begs leave to bury his dead first: *“Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, **Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.**”* (Matt 8:21-22) And who, pray tell, are the dead? They are all the lost and wandering souls who know not Christ as Lord and Savior – and follow Him. *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* (Eph 2:1,5-6)

If we look closely, we see that the disciples followed Jesus into the ship, but the crowd behind did not! If we will belong to Christ, we must follow wherever He leads. *“And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.”* Those footprints of Jesus lead by the peaceful and exhilarating waters of the Sea of Galilee and of the Fair Banks of Jordan Waters; yet, they also lead along the bloody way of Dolorosa to a crude wooden cross on Calvary’s brow. Let us abide by the words of the old hymn, “Where He Leads Me, I will Follow.”

Following Christ does not assure us of calm seas in life. *“And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.”* With, or without, Christ, storms will always arise in our lives; yet, with Christ we are assured of shining through to the Haven of Rest. God does not forever exercise the power of His presence by our sides. He often will test our faith as a father a child whom he teaches to ride a bike. As we grow stronger in the knowledge of His constant presence, He will gently release His hand from our shoulder to be sure we can proceed without falling. Even when the seas of the world overwhelm our decks and topple our Main Sail, He will see us through to Calm Seas.

*“And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, **Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?** Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.”* The inquiry of Christ provides the answer as well. The disciples were fearful due to their lack of faith. I wonder at the courage and manly conviction of the Reformers who stood boldly in the burning flames rather than deny a single line of Holy Scripture. Where are those men today? Where do we find these faithless wonders of modern error who dominate the pulpits of America and of the world, and who have received the brazen brand of “COWARD”: on their foreheads?

Jesus rebuked the *“winds and the sea”* and there was not only a calm, but a *“GREAT Calm.”* That same majestic Voice that had penetrated the Halls of Eternity from before the world was formed; had penetrated the stone sarcophagus at Bethany of Lazarus and the dead tissue of His heart; had spoken to the dear maiden, daughter of Jairus, with the simple words, *“**Talitha Cumi,**”* (meaning: Damsel, ARISE), and she immediately arose – THAT Voice! The same that is the last voice the unrepentant sinner shall ever hear uttered from the Throne of Judgment.

Mortal man can never comprehend the marvelous powers of God, but he can accept the Savior who wields those powers! *“But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”* Our modern theologians do not wish to admit that any scriptural truth is beyond their understanding. They parse and decimate the Word of God until it is truly like their own words and without a single hint of mystery; yet, God remains Immutable in His Power,

His Truth, and His Righteousness. The godly man or woman will forever marvel at the power of Christ – in the natural world, and in the spiritual.

Oftentimes, our hearts are troubled with doubts for the future. “What will become of us?” Our hope lies not in the absence of danger, but in the Presence of Christ.

CROSSING THE BAR

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Sunset and evening star
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For though from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

But the Master of the Sea, and the Master of our Hearts, gives us peace by saying: “ *In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*” (John 14:2)

Have you reserved your accommodations there, my friends?