

O Lord God Almighty, by the word of the Lord the heavens were made and by the breath of your mouth all of their host. You spoke, it was done. You command and it holds fast. We pray this morning as we read and preach your word that you will indeed command a blessing in this place even life forevermore, O God. Come by the power of your light and brighten the darkness of our lives. Come by the power of your word, O God, instill the storms in our hearts and in our lives, and grant us confidence to know that though the wrong seems oft so strong, Christ is the ruler yet. Help us, O God, and give us eyes to see the light and the knowledge of his glory in this text this morning, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Please take your seats, and if you would, turn with me in your copy of the Gospel of John to John chapter six. You remember the theme in John chapter six is the exodus. It begins with the Passover, and then just like Israel, with Moses crossing a stormy, turbulent sea, Jesus leads his disciples across a stormy, turbulent sea to the wilderness on the far side where there is the discussion of the bread of life. and the manna from heaven. And so that's the theme this morning, and we're gonna read together the word of God from John 6, 15, down to verse 21. Please listen carefully. This is the word of God. With what measure you use, it'll be measured back to you. Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. When the evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rode about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, it is I, or literally I, I am. Do not be afraid. Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. Amen. The grass withers and the flower falls off, but the word of God endures forever this morning. May he add his blessing to his preaching and to its reading. Well, this morning in our text, we find Jesus in the midst, or sorry, the disciples in the midst of a terrifying storm, surrounded by the darkness, buffeted by the waves, and Jesus was not there. I imagine they felt a little bit like the crew of the Andrea Gale leaving Massachusetts Harbor. out into the ocean back in September the 21st, 1991. A journey, you remember, that was fated and made famous by the book and the movie entitled The Perfect Storm. And this crew are going out into the Atlantic Ocean, and they had no idea what was to befall them. Three storm systems were converging on their little boat, one from the north coming down the east coast, One from the west coming from Canada and sweeping through into New England. And then the remnants of Hurricane Grace was barreling up the east

coast toward them. And these three storms collided over that ship and tore it to ribbons. They only found a few pieces of wood and I think the name of the boat washed up on the shore some months later. But the crew and the ship were never seen or heard of. Again, I wonder, have you ever felt like that this morning? Do you remember a time when the storm came at you from all directions? One direction would have been bad enough, but you found a storm coming from all sides. There'd be a storm in your health. Maybe a tingling in your hand, or a numbness in your arm, or a heaviness in your chest when you took your morning walk, or maybe a lump where you ought not to have a lump, and you told your spouse, and they told you to go to the doctor. But fear suggested a more conservative approach. Denial. But you couldn't deny the fear. that clawed at the fabric of your soul. What's wrong with me? If that was bad enough, you had maybe a problem in your home as well. Maybe a child or a grandchild off at college, and reports came back through friends of too many parties, too much alcohol, not enough studying. And you began to worry for their soul. Your soul maybe felt like a bubbling pot of pasta on the stove, overflowing with its starchy broth, and you found your heart venting frustration at your spouse, your husband, your wife, and they vented frustration back as maybe each of you blamed the other for what you suspected was, at least in some measure, your own fault. Or maybe you had a storm coming at you from your business all at the same time. 2008, the bottom falls out of the market in the subprime crisis. Maybe just bad quarterly earnings, an underperforming hedge fund, market fund, and you find your money just, the return is not there, and your boss not happy. Maybe you got the much dreaded pink slip. Any one of these three problems would have been a disaster, but they come at you at once sometimes, and you find yourself terrified. And then, just when you needed him most, Maybe you find Jesus wasn't there and you're left alone to curse the darkness and battle the waves in a desperate attempt to make headway. Ever been there? Maybe not the case of having been there. Maybe you're there this morning. and distracting thoughts are clawing at your mind as you struggle to pay attention to this message. Well, this morning I want you to see the disciples. And this story will tell in three acts. We see them first of all in the grip of the storm without Christ. Then we'll see them in the grip of terror before Christ. And before it's all said and done, we'll see them in the grip of peace with Christ. First of all, this morning, we see them in the grip of the storm without Christ. Now, the last words of the Andre Adele captain was, it's coming on strong. Boys, it's coming on strong. And in this chapter, there's a storm coming on strong, but the disciples didn't seem to

know it yet, and Jesus sends them out to face it alone, right? Picture the scene. It's been a long day's ministry. The disciples are exhausted. They've just done cleanup for about 15,000 to 20,000 people. There were 5,000 men at this

party eating bread that Jesus made and fish. But with the women and their children, it's not hard to imagine that number greatly increased, maybe 20,000. And the disciples are doing cleanup. And towards the end of the afternoon, they're exhausted, the sun is beginning to set, and a riot begins to ferment in the crowd. The crowd are asking all the right questions, but they're coming up with the wrong answer. Is Jesus the prophet that Moses spoke about in Deuteronomy 18? The answer, of course, is yes, but their conclusion is quite different. Let's take him by force and make him king. Now Jesus knew exactly what was going on, and he knew exactly what that would mean. If they did come and take him by force and make him king, Rome wouldn't play around. Their response would be swift and severe. Christ would be crucified, but too soon. Too soon for him to lay the foundation for the early church. Too soon to complete the discipleship of his disciples. Too soon to prepare them to stand firm against the fury of the Jews and the Romans who be arraigned against them. If Peter denied Christ at the end of Christ's three years instruction, what would have befallen Peter and the rest of the disciples if Christ had been crucified here at the very beginning of his ministry? And so in my mind's eye, I see Jesus do a bit of a Jason Bourne, changes his cloak, puts a baseball cap on, and kind of ducks out through the crowds. Before he does, though, Mark tells us he sends his disciples out onto the sea ahead of him. So we knew how they ended up in the storm. Jesus sent them. And we knew what Christ was doing while they were there. He was up on the mountain praying. So picture the scene then. They're

in the boat. The night falls down dark and suddenly a storm arises. Now that was common in those days. The Sea of Galilee nestled about almost 700 feet below sea level in a natural basin. And high above it to the north was Mount Hermon, 9,200 feet high. almost 10,000 feet of difference. And the cold air of Mount Hermon had this habit of sinking, as cold airs want to do. And as it would sink, it would accelerate, and it would be channeled down through the narrow ravines and valleys and river basins that fed into the Sea of Galilee. And it would whistle down these ravines. Ancient travelers to the Holy Land tell the story of this wind rustling, whistling, whipping down through these valleys and suddenly bursting out the bottom like a child coming out of a water slide onto the lake and stirring up the waters of the lake almost in an instant into a boiling cauldron of chaos and destructive power. That's what's happening this evening. And as the disciples sail out on this boat initially,

and the wind picks up, ArKent Hughes imagines Peter taking charge. Lower the sails, otherwise the ship would be overturned. Man the oars, trim the ship, men. Pull for your lives. And they row into the wind, through the waves, surrounded by the storm. And Matthew tells us that Jesus got to them in the fourth watch of the night between 3 a.m. and 9 a.m. That means they've been rowing for nine hours. You'd normally row three to four miles in an hour, an hour and a half tops. They've been rowing nine hours to make that distance. They're making pitiful headway. They're out in the middle of the lake. And Christ is not there. But notice what John says. They got into a boat, verse 17, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. That's important. Some of you need to hear that not yet this morning, because here you are in the storm coming at you from all directions, and you're misinterpreting the not yet as a not ever. Christ might not have come to you yet. That does not mean he won't come to you before long. Why would Christ delay? Why would Christ send his disciples out into the storm alone? Well, there are a number of reasons.

He needed to pray. He needed to be alone. His mind was probably topsy-turvy with the talk of riot and the king and the devil tempting him to fear what might become of this uprising that could occur. He needed strength, he needed to pray for himself. He needed also to pray for his disciples. He'd seen them fall flat on their face when he said to them in the previous passage, where are we going to buy bread for this food, for this crowd? And you remember, they heard him say, where are you going to buy bread for this food? And they totally missed the point. And so Christ retreats to the mountain high up where he prays and where he watches them. Mark tells us, After he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out in the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night, he came to them. He saw them. Christian, you might not sense Christ with you, but Mark and John want you to know he's watching you. He's sitting at the right hand of the majesty on high, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion in every name that is named, both in this age and in the age to come, and His eyes are on you. He has not lost sight of you. He's not forgotten you. He's not abandoned you. He's watching you, and as He watches you, He prays for you. He prayed for them. He's praying for you. One of my favorite verses. Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 7 a second, quickly. I love this verse. Hebrews 7, 25. Many of you know

this by memory. Consequently, that's a fine word. Therefore, it gets to the point a bit better. He is able to save to the uttermost. Let that word sink into your soul. Therefore, he is able to save to the uttermost, those who come to God to him, the uttermost, no matter how far away you've wandered. No matter how deep you've been pressed into the ocean of trial, down, down, down you've sank because of sin, because of Satan, because of your own stupidity. And you're sinking down, down, down. Doesn't matter how far down you go, the word uttermost covers it, doesn't it? He's able to save to the uttermost. As far, as far, as far away you can be. As deep, as deep, as deep, as deep the trouble might be. As dark, as dark, as dark the night might be. An F6 tornado of chaos coming in like the finger of God sucking the blacktop off the road and stripping the bark from the trees. But Christ is able to save you to the uttermost. Why? Well, because he always lives to make intercession for you. He always lives. Now, you remember the context here in Hebrews 7. The writer's been comparing Jesus to Levi, and Levi's priesthood was hampered by two pretty big things. First of all, their priesthood was interrupted by death, and secondly, their priesthood was corrupted by sin. And the writer says, none of that's true of Jesus. He ministers in the power of an endless life. And therefore, he prays for you in the power of endless prayers. He will not die. He'll never stop praying for you. He will never sin. He'll not be cast out of God's presence. He's pure. He's holy. He's blameless. He's undefiled. And therefore, he's able to keep you and to hold you no matter what you do, no matter what you face. God has sworn and will not change his mind. You are a priest forever. This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant than any Old Testament thing. The former priests were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever consequently. Therefore, he's able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting indeed that we should have a high priest, such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, unstained and exalted above the heavens. He's separated from you and that your corruption can't corrupt him. Your failure can't disqualify him, but he's not disinterested in you. He always lives to make intercession for me. And you need to be reminded of that, Christian, this morning. Maybe you're so discouraged, you've stopped praying. You think it's no hope. Your troubles are too great. Your problem's too hard. Your burden's too heavy. And you've stopped praying. Oh, but Jesus hasn't stopped praying for you. He's praying for you all day, every day. and his prayers will carry you through. In the grip of the storm, without

Christ. Secondly, we see the disciples in the grip of terror, or fear, before Christ. Jesus comes, and sometimes when Christ comes, things get worse before they get better. When they had rowed about three or four miles, verse 19, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. Why would the presence of gentle

Jesus, meek and wild, frighten anyone? Well, Mark tells us it was because they thought he was a ghost, one of those mystical supernatural spirits that Jews believed haunted the stormy waters of Galilee. That was initially the truth. But John, who was an eyewitness, says even when they recognized Jesus, the fears didn't dissipate. I actually rather suspect they

intensified. Notice what John said. He didn't say, when we saw what we thought was a ghost walking in the sea, we were frightened. No, he said, when we saw Jesus, even when we knew it was Jesus walking on the sea, planting his footsteps in the sea and riding upon the storm, we were frightened. Why would anyone be frightened of Jesus? Well, because he's so overwhelmingly great and so bewilderingly good, so overwhelmingly great, we instinctively know he could obliterate us beyond dust, beyond atoms, to nothing, just by a flash of his will. He's not safe, this Jesus. but he's also good, he's great, but he's also bewilderingly good, that he would welcome us in, forgive us our sins, bear the blame himself, and make us his brothers forever. He's overwhelmingly great and bewilderingly good, and together these realities cause us to tremble. I'm indebted to Michael Reeves

for his wonderful illustration from *Wind in the Willows*, Graham's famous book. You remember when Rat and Mole go looking for Portly, Otter's son. And they are drawn by this ethereal music through the woods, out into the depths of creation, and they do find Otter's son eventually, Portly, but before they find Portly, they find Pan. They find, well, Pan, yes, but the Piper at the gates of the dawn. which is Graham's way of describing Pan, who's a pagan deity. Now, I realize Pan doesn't exist, but Graham captures this sense of goodness and severity and trembling before the goodness and the severity of the glory of a figure who's just too big to get her arms around. Listen. Then suddenly the mole

felt a great awe fall upon him. an awe that turned his muscles to water, bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground. There was no panic, terror. Indeed, he felt wonderfully at peace and happy. But it was an awe that smoked and held him, and without seeing, he knew it could only mean that some august presence was very, very near. With difficulty, He turned to look for his friend and saw him at his side, cowed, stricken, and trembling violently. And still there was utter silence in the populous, bird-haunted branches around him. And still the light grew and grew. Perhaps he would never have dared

to raise his eyes. But that, though the piping was now hushed, The call and the summons seemed still dominant and imperious. He might not refuse were death himself waiting to strike him instantly. Once he had looked with mortal eye on things rightly kept hidden. Trembling, he obeyed and raised his humble head. And then, in that utter clearness of the imminent dawn, while nature, flushed with fullness of incredible color, seemed to hold her breath for the event, he looked in the very eyes of that friend and helper, the piper of the wings of the dawn. And still as he looked, he lived. And still as he lived, he wondered. Rat, he found breath to whisper, shaking. Are you afraid? Afraid, murmured the rat, his eyes shining with unutterable love. Afraid of him? Oh, oh, never, never. And yet, I am afraid. Then the two animals crouching to the earth bowed their heads and did worship. That's it in a nutshell. These men, these little animals looking and living, and as they lived, they wondered. And seeing the glory of this appearing one coming into their presence and them coming into his presence, and the one saying to the other, are you afraid? And the other saying back, afraid of him? And yet, I am afraid. Is that your experience of Jesus this morning, my brother and my sister? Do you know what it is to tremble before him with joy? And the angels ask you, are you afraid of him? And you go, afraid of Jesus? Never, never. Yet, I am afraid. That's never been your experience of Jesus. I don't think you know Jesus very well. Perhaps you've never really known him at all. He's so big. He walks on the wings of the wind this morning with feet like burnished bronze and his face like the sun shining in its strength, his hair white like wool, and his voice like the sound of many waters. We do well to tremble before

him. To know Jesus is to fear him in his goodness and in his severity. As John Murray said, the fear of God, the fear of Christ, is the very soul of godliness. Do you fear Jesus this morning?

Have you seen his glory, his greatness above you, and yet his nearness to you? Gripped by the storm without Christ, gripped with fear before Christ, and lastly, gripped with peace, in the grip of peace with Christ. Did you notice, as we bring this sermon to a close this morning, that it was only as Christ spoke to them that the terror, in a sense, lifted. It is I, I, I am, do not be afraid. And we shouldn't make too much of this word. Egoi, me, I, I am, was a regular, here, it's me, in Greek. And yet we shouldn't make too little of it either. The Jews reading this would know immediately the echoes of Genesis or Exodus 3 when God comes in the burning bush to Moses and says, I, I am. What is your name? Tell him that the I am has sent me to you. And John, you remember how he meditates upon that through his letter, as he speaks again and again, Jesus says, before Abraham was, I, I am. I am the bread of life. I am

the light of this world. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the good shepherd who lays down his life for the flock. I am the vine. I am the way and the truth and the life. Seven times These I am statements thunder through the book of John and they whisper in our ears as we think, who is this? As Jesus comes to them and says, I, I am. And it should not surprise us either that it was the word of Christ that brought them peace. Because this is the theme of the book in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God, you remember. And how he threw the book again and again and again, it's the word of Christ that does the work. In John 2, Mary says to the servants, whatever he tells you, do it. In John 4, you have the Samaritan woman, come see a man who told me all the things that I ever did. Then later there's a man terrified, his son's dying, he wants a miracle, and Jesus sends him back with a word, a word of life, that raises his son. And in John 5, if the man crippled 38 years, Jesus says, pick up your bed and walk his word. At the end of the chapter, Jesus prophesied a time is coming when the dead in Christ will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. Then in this chapter, whenever the disciples are fretting, how are we going to feed all these people? Jesus says, let the people sit down. At the end of the chapter, people are leaving and scattering away, and Jesus says to his disciples, will you leave me also? What do they say? Where else can we go? You alone have the words of everlasting life. Many scholars believe John is alluding here to Psalm 107. And the psalmist describes men going down into the sea to do business in the water, and they saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven. They went down to the depths. Their courage melted away in their evil plight. They reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, And he brought them to their desired haven. He brought them. What happens here? Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. They were in the middle of the sea, and then suddenly they're immediately at the haven. Why? Because of the presence of Christ. And there's no trouble there because Jesus Christ is God. He designed the laws of physics, which is just a way of describing how he ordinarily holds the world together. And because the laws of physics belong to him, the laws of thermodynamics and fluid mechanics and all those other different laws, laws of gravity and space and time and



everything else, because he designed them, he made them, he spoke them into existence, Is it too great of a reach to believe that Jesus Christ has the right to monkey with the physics? Immediately the boat goes from the middle of the sea to the harbor, and they're safe. And having Jesus in the boat made all the difference. And I'm telling you, my brother and my sister, having Jesus in your soul makes all the difference. In the storm, you might feel you're there alone this morning, but Christ is here. Open your soul, open your heart, and welcome the Savior in. He is not a threat to you. Though you must lay down your autonomy and repent from your sins, he is here to save you. to forgive you, to cleanse you, to save you from God, by God, and to bring you safely home to God in the end. Come, let me come into you, Jesus says. Let me come in and in and into you and take the darkness of your heart and make it light, and the lostness of your condition and make you safe, and the filthiness of your soul and make it clean with my purity. Oh, welcome, Jesus. Maybe you're here this morning, and the devil's whispering in your ear, you're not going to survive the storm. It's too big for you. Jesus whispers to you, I am the storm. Fierce was the wild below, Dark was the night. Oars labored heavily. Foam glimmered white. Trembled the mariners. Peril was nigh. Then said the God of God, peace, it is I. Ridge of the mountain wave, lower thy crest. Wail of Uruk-Hlidon, peace, be at rest. Sorrow can never be, darkness must. fly. Where saith the light of light, peace it is I. Jesus deliverer, come thou to me. Soothe thou my voyaging over life's sea. And thou, when the storm of death roars sweeping by, Whisper, oh truth of truth, peace, it is I. Let's pray together. Our God and our Father, we thank you for Jesus. His glory, His majesty, His power, His dominion, His greatness above us, His nearness to us, His goodness, His severity. We wouldn't change Him. If you could be changed, less would not satisfy, more can only be desired. We pray this morning, O Lord, in these meditations that you would draw near to the soul of every man, woman, boy, and girl, and give them eyes to see Jesus, his beauty, his glory, his majesty, his willingness to receive them in the storm, from the storm, as the storm, and grant you would speak peace into the heart of young and old, rich and poor, every nation, tribe, and tongue gathered in this place for Christ's sake.