

Scripture

Mark 4:35-41 NRSV

Meditation

**Can Jesus calm our fears?**

Pastor Riva Tabelisma

Please join me in prayer.

Hide me in your glory, gracious and loving God. And may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, my redeemer, and my refuge. Amen.

Fear and anxiety are almost a part of our daily lives. Fear and anxiety, although different in meaning is related to danger. We are bombarded with so many news that can cause fear and anxiety, not to mention the fake news that when spread causes exponential fear that can be life-threatening. This is the relaxation business is a huge hit. There are food that we can eat or beverage that we can drink to experience relaxation. Books and apps are readily available for people to access to help us with our anxieties and fears. In the age of having almost everything that we need in our phones, there are apps that can be downloaded to help people achieve relaxation. Some are free, some are paid subscription. A famous app – Calm was reported by CNBC to be valued at \$1 Billion in profit. Doctors and a lot of studies have come out that harmful hormones are produce when fears and anxieties are experienced. This is the reason why we invest in self-care fear and anxiety are almost inevitable in our lives. Self-care can be a lifeline for some people. With all of the things that we have undergone, especially in the last months, we have to make self-care a priority.

This is the situation of the disciples. And why would they not, they were experiencing windstorm as they are crossing the sea. For those who are not aware, Philippines is an archipelago, it is made up of islands. Crossing the sea to different places or travel is a very common practice particularly for those who cannot afford to purchase airline tickets. My father's family lived in a province/rural area is near the east side of the Philippines, the Philippine Sea or sometimes called the Pacific Ocean. And this part of the Pacific Ocean is a very tempestuous ocean. There is a running joke among us cousins that there are very few sharks and jelly fishes in the beaches that we would go to because the waves could be as high as our church building, and if there are storms, it could even be higher. Additionally, on average, there are 20 storms that ravage the country, and there are super typhoons that have ravaged towns in the country.

Reading the passage today reminds me of the typhoons that I have experienced growing up. When I was 8 years old, there was a forecast of a strong typhoon that one of the members of the church that my father was appointed to had to put long, heavy logs at the roof so that the roof stays on. My father at that time was coming from a conference in Manila, and on his way back, there was a landslide in the mountain range and all of the roads were blocked. He and his companions walked several days just for them to get home. This made an impression in my young mind how dangerous storms can be, and how fearful and anxious those who are affected. And eventually, how lives and livelihood can be lost. The fears and anxiety of the disciples were valid. More to that, their disappointment that Jesus was comfortably sleeping is very real. As I

imagine verse 38, I can sense their fear, anxiety and disappointment. They were maybe close to tears, because truthfully, they near death. So, imagine their awe when Jesus commanded the wind and became dead calm. But what is compelling in this scene is Jesus' reaction to the disciples as mentioned in verse 40 – 'why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?'

As I look at this passage in our context, I can imagine that we are facing a lot of windstorms. In different aspects of our lives. In our personal lives, we could be facing problems that sometimes does not seem to end. Our society, too, has faced a lot of windstorms. From the pandemic where all of a sudden, the world stopped and almost 4 million people died, the economy suffered, among all the other suffering that we have experienced and witness. Then the continuing violence that people of color are experiencing from police that should have been protecting them/us. Not to mention the continuing destruction of God's creation where the effects can be seen in countries that does not have the resources to help them recover. How, then, are reacting in the windstorms that we are experiencing? Do we feel that Jesus is asleep? Would Jesus turn back to us and say 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?'. Are we crippled by the fear and anxiety by the windstorms that we are experiencing that we cannot do anything but to cry out from our desperation? How are reacting to the windstorms that come our way? The huge question here is 'Can Jesus calm our fears?' or our anxieties and fears take over that we stopped becoming the hand and the feet of Christ to the world. May it be so. Amen.