

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

*“Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain,”* the Wizard of Oz told the four companions having returned from their quest with the broomstick of the Wicked Witch of the West. What they had seen the previous time, and again this time, was terrifying — a great head, a fiery apparition, with a voice like out of a whirlwind. But they did not heed that warning. Dorothy pulled back the curtain and asked, *“Who are you?”*

This is the same question that’s on the disciples’ minds — with a bit of fear — as the curtain is pulled back to reveal something of Jesus at the end of our Gospel lesson today. *“Who is this guy that we have come to follow? Who is this Jesus whom the wind and sea obey? Who is this that can speak a word to the elements, and they do His bidding? Who is this man who seemingly without a care in the world can sleep through a storm on a sinking ship?”* Who is He?

Mark, our Gospel writer, doesn’t supply the answer. We’re at the end of this chapter, and the next sentence is: *“They came to the other side of the sea ...”* Mark just leaves the question hanging, *“Who is this guy?”*

Now the answer may seem pretty obvious for you — you have the benefit of knowing the end of the story. You know; you just confessed, He is *“God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God ... of one substance with the Father.”* But the disciples hadn’t worked all this out yet; they hadn’t seen Jesus being transfigured before them on the mountain, yet. They hadn’t heard the *“voice ... borne to [them] by the Majestic Glory.”* They didn’t know what was there behind the curtain of Jesus’ flesh.

As Jews, they knew that the Lord came down to sit on His mercy seat in the temple, hidden behind the curtain. They had heard Jesus speak of His own body as the temple. Still, they didn’t get all of this, not until after He had been raised from the dead.

What they did know on this occasion was that whoever this Jesus was, He spoke from the midst of a great windstorm — could we even say, a whirlwind? — and did some amazing things. He spoke, *“Peace. Be still.”* And it was so. Who could do such a thing except Him who *“laid the foundation of the earth”* and *“determined its measurements”*? Who could do such a thing except Him who *“shuts in the seas”* and *“prescribes limits for it”*? Except Him who wrapped the earth with a blanket of clouds?

Who is this guy? The answer was beginning to take hold in the disciples — with fear and trembling. They were in the presence of the Great and Powerful God Himself, the creator of the universe. And that *“is a fearful thing.”* For this *“living*

God” Himself said, “*Vengeance is mine; I will repay.*” And again, “*The Lord will judge his people.*”

For “*my God is so big, so strong, and so mighty. There’s nothing my God cannot do.*” That’s one of the songs Mrs. Bornheimer taught our iCAN kids—with hand motions. (I struggle with the hand motions.) “*The mountains are His,*” the song continues. “*The rivers are His. The stars are His handiwork, too. My God is so big, ...*” the song repeats.

But if that’s all there is, what shall we think? Sure, the mountains are His, and He doesn’t like people climbing on them, or stripping and taking naked photos on them—so that “*the earth gives way*” and the “*mountains tremble*”? It’s been in the news. Sure, the rivers are His, and He floods people’s homes in deluges, and He sweeps people away in flash floods? It’s been in the news here and in Texas. Sure, the stars are His, and maybe we should be glad that they’re not close enough that God might use them to destroy us completely!

Those are some of the implications of Jesus quieting the wind and calming the seas. That He is exactly who He appears to be: the Lord God Almighty, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. And before the Great and Powerful God of the Universe, reasonable creatures should be quaking more than the “*clinking, clanking, clattering collection of caliginous junk,*” the Tin Man in the Wizard of Oz. We poor sinners are by nature heartless, witless, cowardly, and homeless.

But you’re not gathered here quaking and cowering in your seats. Why not? Because the answer to the question, “*Who is this guy?*” is more than just: He is God. He is that, to be sure. His command of the elements bears witness to that, for who could do that but God alone? But He is more than that — and again, that’s good, for God’s bigness, His strength, His might, are not necessarily good news for sinners, small and weak.

Let me continue my Wizard of Oz illustration. You see, it wasn’t the unapproachable Wizard of Oz, Great and Powerful, impressive, wholly other, that was the one to help the four companions who had travelled to the Emerald City for his help. Indeed, he gave them what he thought was an impossible task, and when they, through their resourcefulness, returned to the Wizard, he callously told them, “*Come back tomorrow.*”

But then they uncovered the “*man behind the curtain,*” the Great and Powerful Wizard of Oz in the flesh, who as a man didn’t seem so great and powerful. They approached him without fear — he was a man. In fact, he did as a man what he seemed incapable of doing as the fiery apparition. He showed them compassion. He took care of them, and gave them what they sought: courage, a heart, a brain, and he was preparing to take Dorothy home.

This is who Jesus is for us, for we, too, have been given a truly impossible task — holiness, godliness, and none of our resourcefulness will suffice. We need to rely on the one behind the curtain. And who is that? He is the great and powerful God of the universe, the creator of all things, truly. But more than that, He is a man — the only Son of God, who came in our flesh, and became one of us. As God He had no fear of the elements — not *“though the earth give way, [and] though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.”* He had no fear in that boat, for He is Lord also of wind and wave.

But as man, He certainly could be troubled by the duty the Father had given Him. *“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.”* And there was reason to be troubled — the living God’s vengeance for sin would be meted out upon this man. There was a reason to be troubled — the Father would judge His Son guilty for our sin, and punish Him in our place.

You see, Jesus’ purpose was none other than the salvation of the world — Jesus offering up His life unto death, to forgive sinners, small and weak, like us, who rightly quake in fear before *“the living God,”* but who rejoice that this God cares for us so much — He does not want to see us perish — He cares for us so much that He came in our flesh, experienced our weakness, defeated our enemies, and now showers us with the spoils of His victory.

Some of those spoils come by water. Like when Jesus added His voice to the water and peace resulted, so when Jesus’ word is added to the waters in the font and they are poured over us, there also is peace. God bestows His favor on us. We are pulled from the stormy waters into a boat sailing the peaceful waters that carry us home to heaven.

And He who cares for you in troubled waters is with you all along the way — as your refuge and strength, even when the waters roar and foam. The same God who can utter His voice and melt the earth, is the One who says to you *“Peace. Be still. Know that I, Jesus, am your God. I am with you. I am your fortress.”* He gives you more of the spoils of His passion and resurrection. You hear forgiveness in His name. You eat His body and drink His blood, and You hear, *“Depart in peace.”* And you do, because the living God became man. He redeemed with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. And your Redeemer lives. He lives to silence all your fears.

So my question to you is: whom do you want to deal with? The Great and Powerful Creator God who makes you quake that you are perishing in your sins? Or the man who brings redemption by His blood, the forgiveness of sins, peace with God. Of course, the good thing is you don’t have to choose. He is One and the

same Christ, your Redeemer, sent to lead you home to the Father. He is God hidden behind a curtain of flesh; He is your mediator before God: the man, Christ Jesus. Trust in Him. And the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.