

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
ELKHORN, NEBRASKA  
JUNE 24, 2007  
PASTOR WENDA FRY

1 PASTOR WENDA FRY: We have been thinking about that  
2 question, where in the world will our faith take us, and our  
3 faith takes us into the world.

4 And I thought about that question this past week and  
5 what has been happening, not only within the Bethany family,  
6 but in the world where our missionaries are going.

7 I thought it takes a lot of faith. It takes a lot  
8 of faith to go into the world to do what Christ asks us to  
9 do, and that's to share his love and his forgiveness.

10 So I thought today we would look at a story where  
11 Jesus teaches us about the nature of faith.

12 Would you turn with me to the Gospel of Mark,  
13 Chapter 4.

14 We are going to look at probably one of my favorite  
15 stories in the Bible.

16 I saw some new things in this story this time.  
17 Mark, Chapter 4, Verses 35 to 41.

18 I have it on page 36 in my Bible, which is similar  
19 to your pew Bible.

20 Please bring your own Bible when you come to Bethany  
21 so you can write in them and underline things.

22 "On that day, when evening had come, Jesus said to  
23 them, let us go across to the other side.

24 "And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with  
25 them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him.

1            "A great windstorm arose and the waves beat into the  
2 boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.

3            "But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion, and  
4 they woke him up and said to him, teacher, do you not care  
5 that we are perishing?

6            "He woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the  
7 sea, peace, be still. Then the wind ceased and there was a  
8 dead calm.

9            "He said to them, why were you afraid? Have you  
10 still no faith?

11           "And they were filled with great awe and said to one  
12 another, who then is this, that even the wind and the sea  
13 obey him?"

14           Let's pray. Good teacher, thank you for your word.  
15 Thank you for teaching from the boat.

16           Teach us today. Teach this crowd from the boat of  
17 your love and favor. Help us to hear you across the water.

18           In your name, amen.

19           As of last Thursday we are officially into summer,  
20 aren't we?

21           Wasn't Thursday the first day of summer, and with  
22 summer, of course, comes picnics and family vacations and  
23 family gatherings.

24           It's just a different time of the year, isn't it?  
25 Different schedules for everybody, and it was not the first

1 day of summer that ushered in summer for me and my family.

2 I come from a family of four girls and the thing  
3 that ushered in summer for us was coming home on the last day  
4 of school and on the refrigerator in big print, SUMMER RULES.

5 So that's when we knew that summer had begun and we  
6 just rolled our eyes and looked at mom's rules.

7 Well, then when I had a family of my own, I thought  
8 after a couple of experiences that was a good idea.

9 So that is what also ushered in summer for our kids,  
10 were those summer rules on the refrigerator.

11 But kids are home, it's a different schedule,  
12 there's different activities, and for a lot of families they  
13 plan during this time of the year to go to one of America's  
14 amusement park.

15 Is that a tradition for any of you? Raise your  
16 hands if your family looked forward to an annual trip to an  
17 amusement park.

18 For a lot of families, and a lot of Americans, they  
19 attend an amusement park once a year because they like the  
20 roller coaster.

21 This is the Boomerang at Six Flags in Texas, San  
22 Antonio, and this is a description of that roller coaster.

23 "What goes around comes around fast. Ride the  
24 coaster that always finds its way back home backwards at  
25 breathtaking speeds. The Boomerang packs in high speed, high

1 altitude twists and turns, and then doubles the fun by  
2 suddenly reversing course. Ascend 20 stories and plunge into  
3 coaster insanity fly through two inverted loops and a  
4 corkscrew. Rocket through the whole harrowing ride a second  
5 time backwards."

6 No thanks. Just the description alone makes me a  
7 bit queasy.

8 We took our kids to the Mall of America. I think  
9 it's called the Snoopy ride, it's a little roller coaster,  
10 and that's about all I can do, but that's just a moderate  
11 thrill.

12 I got on rollercoaster.com, because that really kind  
13 of interested me.

14 I thought what is this all about if the Boomerang is  
15 only moderate.

16 At the same park there is the Superman Krypton  
17 Coaster and you can fly sixteen stories high at 70 miles per  
18 hour and they boast "with nothing between you and Texas."

19 Again, no thank you. I wouldn't care for that at  
20 all.

21 And on the home page of rollercoaster.com, I thought  
22 it was kind of interesting, with just one look, this is what  
23 it had on the home page.

24 It's obvious why roller coasters are often called  
25 scream machines.

1           This is a great picture of this kid screaming on  
2 this roller coaster. I love that picture.

3           "What began as a simple car that rolled down a hill  
4 has evolved into an engineering marvel.

5           "Roller coasters are taller, faster, and wilder than  
6 ever before. The tallest is the size of a modern sky scraper  
7 and the fastest travels at nearly twice the highway speed  
8 limit.

9           "So if they are big, fast, and intimidating and  
10 scary, then why do we ride roller coasts?

11           "We are thrill seekers, it's a love affair with the  
12 excitement of a roller coaster.

13           "For others, a roller coaster is a scary experience.  
14 Tackling one's fears, despite being scared, is a challenge  
15 that is as rewarding as it is exciting."

16           Well, it wasn't for those disciples on the Sea  
17 of Galilee that day.

18           They didn't think there was anything exciting about  
19 that roller coaster ride that they found themselves on.

20           And that word in Verse 37, when it says a great  
21 windstorm arose, the root word of that, the meaning of that  
22 is furious storm or hurricane squall. Furious storm or  
23 hurricane squall.

24           Sounds like a couple of good names for a couple of  
25 high tech rides in our day, doesn't it?

1 "Mom and dad, let's go to Furious Storm and  
2 Hurricane Squall at Six Flags."

3 Sounds like a roller coaster ride, doesn't it?

4 But the disciples that day on the Sea of Galilee  
5 were on a furious storm and hurricane squall ride and they  
6 weren't excited at all about tackling their fears. They  
7 didn't think that was a fun thing at all.

8 The boat they got into to go to the other side had  
9 become a scream machine. They were terrified.

10 I always wondered about this, because didn't the  
11 disciples grow up around water? Weren't most of them  
12 fishermen?

13 I always think to myself, it must have been a  
14 serious storm that day on the Sea of Galilee and they were  
15 afraid of dying. They were freaking out.

16 They were losing it and that's why they yelled at  
17 Jesus.

18 Teacher, is it of any concern to you whatsoever what  
19 we're going through?

20 Do you care at all? Can't you see that we are about  
21 ready to meet our maker at the bottom of the Sea of Galilee?

22 They yelled at him. We do that sometimes when we  
23 are afraid. We yell.

24 We yell at somebody else to help release our fears,  
25 so they were yelling at Jesus. They were freaking out.

1           So let's look a little more carefully at that story.  
2       I invite you to turn to page 36 of the New Testament and what  
3       we are going to do is look at how the disciples got to that  
4       place.

5           Mark, in the Student Bible, if you want to have a  
6       good Bible, the New Student Bible is an excellent Bible  
7       because it has descriptions in the front part of every book  
8       of the Bible that says something about it, helps you  
9       understand it, and there are little notes within the Bible  
10      that help to describe.

11          The New Student Bible says that Mark is a fast-paced  
12      gospel, and it is.

13          It's like a movie. The commentator in that Student  
14      Bible suggests that Mark is like a movie.

15          Let's go to Mark, Chapter 1, and in that chapter  
16      already Jesus is baptized, right in the very first part of  
17      that, Verse 9, Jesus comes and he's baptized by John.

18          And then immediately, Verse 12, it's like a  
19      fast-moving movie, every scene, we jump to the next scene.

20          The next thing we know about Jesus is he's out in  
21      the wilderness being tempted.

22          And then after that he begins to call his disciples.

23          This is all like in the first twenty verses of the  
24      first chapter of the Gospel of Mark.

25          And then he begins his healing and his teaching

1 ministry immediately.

2           And in the Gospel of Mark you'll see that the word  
3 immediately is used throughout the gospel, because things  
4 happened that quickly.

5           He is full into his healing and teaching ministry in  
6 Chapters 2 & 3 and he is gaining in popularity.

7           So look with me at Chapter 3, Verses 1 to 6. He has  
8 entered the synagogue and there is a man there who has a  
9 withered hand and he heals that hand.

10           And right after that, Verse 6, the Pharisees went  
11 out and immediately, there it is again, conspired with the  
12 Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

13           So Jesus is gaining in popularity and in success.  
14 He's having success and people are seeing that he's healing  
15 people and making a difference.

16           But notice, I want you to notice that the negative  
17 response to Jesus is just about as strong as the positive  
18 response to Jesus. We see that there is a negative response.

19           Then in Verse 9 Jesus tells the disciples to get a  
20 boat ready for him in Verse 9 of Chapter 3 because of the  
21 crowds, so they wouldn't crush him. A positive response.

22           A lot of people are responding to what Jesus had to  
23 say, and we know that through Verse 7.

24           He departed with his disciples to the sea and a  
25 great multitude followed him.

1           So there is a positive response and there is a  
2 negative response.

3           The Pharisees want to kill him and the people want  
4 to hear him.

5           And then in Verse 11, again just like two verses  
6 later, we find that the demons worship him.

7           They fear him, they bow down to him, they fall down  
8 before him in Verse 11.

9           Again, a partially positive, partially negative  
10 response from the unclean spirits.

11           And then in Verses 13 to 19 he calls the disciples  
12 and in 21 he learns that his family thinks he's nuts.

13           I don't know if that has ever happened to any of  
14 you, but I find comfort in that.

15           I find comfort in the fact that Jesus' own family  
16 thought his mental state was askew, and so they question  
17 that.

18           But again in Chapter 4, Verse 1, he again began to  
19 teach beside the sea.

20           He dismissed that and kept his focus. He kept to  
21 what he was supposed to be doing, and that was healing the  
22 people and teaching the people.

23           So Chapter 4, Verse 1, again he began to teach  
24 beside the sea, a very loud crowd had gathered around, and he  
25 got into the boat on the sea and he sat there and then he

1 taught them.

2 Then at the end of Chapter 4, after a whole bunch of  
3 teaching from the boat, comes the story that we read, the  
4 story about Jesus asleep in the boat.

5 And I guess I had wondered always why was he  
6 sleeping with a hurricane going on.

7 But it wasn't until I kind of looked back in the  
8 Gospel of Mark to see what he had actually been doing.

9 I can see where he would be really tired. He was  
10 taking a nap and the boat now becomes a napping place for  
11 him.

12 But while he's asleep a furious storm, a hurricane  
13 squall, arises on the Sea of Galilee.

14 And I just want to take a couple of minutes to talk  
15 about these two important images in the Bible, storms and  
16 sleep.

17 Huge images in the Bible, particularly in the Old  
18 Testament.

19 So if you have your Bibles, jump back with me to  
20 Psalm 89, Verses 8 and 9.

21 The disciples would have known this, because they  
22 knew the Psalms and they would have read them together.

23 Psalm 89, Verses 8 and 9 says, "O Lord God of hosts,  
24 who is as mighty as you, O Lord? Your faithfulness surrounds  
25 you. You rule the raging of the sea. When its waves rise,

1 you still them."

2 That's just one example, but this is also in Job and  
3 in other places in the Old Testament.

4 Storms, when they arise, the only person who has the  
5 power to still the storm is God almighty.

6 So he is the one. It's his power. It's his mighty  
7 power that can still even the raging sea, and that's a  
8 typical image in the Old Testament.

9 And then another image is that image of sleep.  
10 Let's look at Psalm 44, Verses 23 to 26.

11 And, again, this is just one instance about the  
12 nature of sleep in the Bible.

13 But sleep, if someone is peacefully sleeping,  
14 according to the Old Testament image of sleep, that means  
15 that they are trusting that God is taking care of them.

16 Have you ever had a sleepless night? According to  
17 the Old Testament, sleepless nights mean that you're lacking  
18 trust in the fact that God is going to provide for you.

19 And I had never seen it before, but really maybe  
20 Jesus was taking a nap because he was so tired from what he  
21 had been doing.

22 But also I'm wondering if he wasn't trying to show  
23 the disciples what it looks like to rest in the Father's  
24 care, to lay back on the cushion of God's love and trust that  
25 in the midst of storms the Father is going to care for you

1 and provide for you.

2           So if you look at Psalm 44, Verses 23 to 26, it's  
3 one thing to rest in God's care, and then in the Old  
4 Testament, if there was distress, or affliction, or  
5 oppression of any kind, then people would immediately jump to  
6 the conclusion that God was sleeping, not watching over them,  
7 so Verses 23 to 26.

8           "Rouse yourself. Why do you sleep, O Lord? Awake,  
9 do not cast us off forever.

10           "Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our  
11 affliction and oppression?"

12           The idea being that if we were going through  
13 distress, if God's people were going through distress, then  
14 God must be asleep.

15           That's why I'm thinking the disciples knew these  
16 Psalms, and that's why they say to Jesus, rouse yourself,  
17 don't you care that we're perishing, Lord? Wake and save us  
18 from this distress.

19           That's what the disciples were doing. They were  
20 asking the Lord to rouse himself and before he did he was  
21 sleeping peacefully and I believe showing the disciples in  
22 that boat what it looks like to rest in the Father's care.

23           So then, as we all know, he wakes up, he calms the  
24 storm, and there's a dead calm.

25           Now, I think every one of us that is sitting here

1 today, that is present here, knows that we are not always  
2 going to be safe in the harbor.

3 I know what some of your family situations are. I  
4 know some of the things you have been through.

5 So I know that you know that we're not always going  
6 to be able to have our boat safely parked in the harbor.

7 Sometimes our friends will take us out into the  
8 rough seas.

9 Sometimes our spouses will take us out into the  
10 rough sea.

11 We don't want to go there, but they take us there.  
12 You know that we are going to have some rough rides.

13 This is not going to be easy. You know there is  
14 going to be unfaithful spouses.

15 You know that there are going to be back-stabbing  
16 friends.

17 You know that there is going to be job loss.

18 You know there is going to be cancer.

19 You know that the seas are going to be rough and  
20 it's not going to be easy.

21 And we know we can't just say Jesus, I think there  
22 is an old song maybe from the '40s, stop the world, I want to  
23 get off.

24 We know we can't say to Jesus I want to get off this  
25 ride when it's rough. That's just part of life.

1           Jesus wants us to have faith. He wants us to hold  
2 on to that faith and that's why he says, you mean you still  
3 don't have faith? Have you still no faith?

4           In other words, you mean after everything we've been  
5 through you still don't have faith?

6           You heard the voice from heaven when I was baptized,  
7 saying this is my son, listen to him, follow him.

8           You saw me restore the withered hand. You have been  
9 eating with me. You've been providing food for the crowds, I  
10 have been blessing it, we have been breaking little bits of  
11 fish and bread and they are eating, and you still don't have  
12 faith? Jesus is disappointed in their puny faith.

13           Jack Kingsbury was a guy that was at our seminary,  
14 not at the same time we were, but he wrote an article called  
15 "The Stilling of the Storm".

16           When I read the first phrase I had to stop. It kind  
17 of caught my heart.

18           "Disappointed in their puny faith, Jesus nonetheless  
19 rebuked the sea and the wind, delivering them from danger."

20           "Disappointed in their puny faith, Jesus nonetheless  
21 rebuked the sea and the wind, delivering them from danger.

22           "That we all sit here today is evidence that Jesus  
23 did not later abandon his fearful disciples to the storm  
24 quake that shook the community after his crucifixion, but  
25 that he sustained them and still sustains us with the grace

1 and power of his presence."

2 That we all sit here in this boat today, in the  
3 harbor, right now, with Jesus, asleep, teaching us how to  
4 rest in the Father's care, that we are here in this boat  
5 today tells us that Jesus has not abandoned us to the storm  
6 quakes of this life.

7 Don't you still yet have faith, he says.

8 We must have faith. Faith.

9 We know that the storms are going to rise on the  
10 sea. We know that.

11 We know it's always not going to be smooth sailing.  
12 We've got rough waters ahead of us.

13 But we must have faith; faith that Jesus loves us,  
14 and that he's working right now in your life for the ultimate  
15 good in your life.

16 We must have faith that the Holy Spirit is praying  
17 for us, even when we can't put words to the prayer, when all  
18 we can do is cry or sigh.

19 Disciples, those of us who sit here in this boat  
20 today, we must have faith.

21 Faith that God is the creator of the universe, and  
22 that God is still in control, even though the chaos and the  
23 evil seem to triumph.

24 We sang that hymn at 7:45, "Though the wrong seem  
25 oft so strong, God is the ruler yet. This is my Father's

1 world."

2 We must have faith. Jesus says to us, after  
3 everything we've been through together, you still don't have  
4 faith?

5 I don't want Jesus being disappointed in my puny  
6 faith.

7 Disciples, let's have faith. He doesn't say let's  
8 get in the boat and go to the other side so that we can  
9 drown.

10 He doesn't send us out into the world with the  
11 message of love and forgiveness and flotation so that our  
12 voices will be drowned out by the chaos of that world.

13 That's not how Jesus operates. He says let's get  
14 into the boat, and then he shows us how to rest under the  
15 Father's care.

16 He doesn't say let's get in and go over to the other  
17 side so we can drown.

18 He does not condone faithlessness. He does not  
19 condone faintheartedness.

20 He says I'll be with you in the boat. The water may  
21 beat against us, the waves may beat against us, the water may  
22 come in and we may even feel like we are sinking, but he says  
23 you won't sink, because I'm your flotation cushion.

24 Wendolyn, my prayer advocate's daughter, yesterday  
25 said that God gave her, she said, "I didn't come up with it,

1 he just gave it to me. You know who my GPS is?"

2 I said, "Who?"

3 "God's Perfect Son."

4 GPS, Global Positioning System. She claims God's  
5 Perfect Son as her global positioning system.

6 Disciples, let's do that. Let's claim Jesus as our  
7 perfect Savior and the perfect Son of God who is our  
8 flotation and he gives us that message of love and  
9 forgiveness and flotation in the midst of the seas of life.

10 We must have faith. We must have faith, so we ask  
11 God right now to increase that faith in us so that we can  
12 trust that we will get to the other side, wherever that is  
13 for you, that we will go to the other side.

14 Pastor Mark, do you want to lead us in a time of  
15 response?

16 PASTOR MARK FRY: Two things come to me. The motto  
17 of the Coast Guard is, "We must go out, but we might not come  
18 back."

19 And they go out into those stormy seas, and they  
20 don't have any call but to go. It's not guaranteed they are  
21 going to come back.

22 So I think it's a good call for us as flotation  
23 devices for the world as well.

24 The roller coaster thing amazes me. You said there  
25 is nothing between the people and Texas. There would be my

1 vomit between us and Texas.

2 (Laughter)

3 And it always amazes me when I'm on a roller coaster  
4 ride, you know the people that put their hands up, some of us  
5 do that when we worship, and that's just a sign of thank you,  
6 Lord.

7 If you are on a roller coaster ride it increases the  
8 intensity when you put your hands up, but you don't want to  
9 stand up when you do that.

10 So I thought our response today would be to remain  
11 seated, where you are, and because the boat, you see, that  
12 we're in here is somewhat stable right now.

13 But as you go from this place today, I suspect that,  
14 as Wenda says, you're going to have some tumult, that old  
15 hymn, Jesus calls us over the tumult of life's restless seas.

16 So if you want to raise your hands in worship, it's  
17 okay to do that.

18 It doesn't mean you're weird; it just means you're  
19 feeling the intensity and you are really enjoying the ride.

20 So let's pray for a minute, but stay seated, because  
21 it's going to be rough enough soon enough. Let's pray for a  
22 moment.

23 Lord, it's a great story, we thank you for it, that  
24 even the winds and the seas obey you.

25 We want to obey you. We want to be obedient, and

1 so, Lord, as we are sitting here in the calmness of this  
2 naive, the navel of your love, we thank you and we ask you,  
3 Lord, that we might go, and maybe not come back, we don't  
4 know what we are going to find, but we know you are going to  
5 be with us.

6 So thank you, Lord, for being awake when we are on  
7 the journey, for hearing our call.

8 Sometimes, Lord, when we start to pray at night  
9 we'll fall asleep, and we've felt guilty about that before.

10 But I like that picture of that, Lord, that it's  
11 like a little child in his daddy's lap when he's sort of  
12 reading and singing and then falling asleep.

13 So, Lord, keep us centered on your lap as we go from  
14 this place today.

15 We thank you and now we ask, Lord, that you send us  
16 in the name of Jesus, our captain. Amen. Have a wonderful  
17 week.

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25