

Come As You Are -- 1 Samuel 17:1a, 4, 10-11, 32, 38-45,48, 49; Mark 4:35-41  
9:00 a.m. worship June 17, 2012 Saint Marks UMC

I can only imagine how Jesus must have felt when today's Gospel lesson begins. I have some small idea, based on how it is for me after I finish Sunday morning worship.

Jesus, however, had had a really long day. He had just finished the monumental task of selecting twelve whom He called "apostles," had had a run in with those who did not seem to understand Him (including a tiff with his mother, sisters and brothers). And then he went to preach to such a large crowd gathered to hear Him, that he had to preach from a boat out on the Sea of Galilee, so that He wouldn't be malled by the crowd pressing in on Him.

Finally -- as our lesson today begins -- "**on that day, when evening had come, ...**" this powerful incident with the storm happened.

It's such a familiar story. And yet, for the very first time, as I read this story I noticed something completely different -- in verse 36: "**And leaving the crowd behind, they took Him with them in the boat, JUST AS HE WAS ....**"

**JUST AS HE WAS ...** What did that mean? One thing I know: particularly in the fast moving Gospel of Mark, there are not "extra words" -- words that have no meaning.

As I wrestled with it, I came to think upon how Jesus must have felt. After the day that He had had, I know that He had to be absolutely exhausted.

We tend to worship Jesus Christ, the Son of God, so very much, it is often easy for us to forget that while He was fully God, He was also FULLY HUMAN.

But, here -- **JUST AS HE WAS ...** we see Him acting powerfully demonstrating God's power in His life.

So what does that mean? Then I remembered what the Old Testament lesson was about. David also acted powerfully demonstrating God's Power in His life. He couldn't do it with Saul's armor and sword. He had to do it **just as he was.**

You and I live in a time when it seems like the world all around us is being shaped by earthshaking events -- cataclysm, death, destruction, wars, riots, ethnic cleansing. We are told over and over how this is an age of crisis. Civilization is at a crossroads.

For most of us, however, it is really not the world shattering events that make our lives what they are. The things that deprive us of the joy, love, and satisfaction we yearn for are seldom the affairs of nations. Rather, they are the strife and catastrophes that happen in our own daily living -- things that happen to us, to our family, to those whom we care for very much.

Look back upon the broken times in our lives -- when it seemed that the walls were caving in on us -- when we experienced great pain. Were these times caused by great catastrophes in the world? Were these times the subject of the network national evening news broadcasts?

No. What really strikes us so powerfully in our lives comes -- and often times without any warning -- in moments just as we are.

Life gets lived out that way, most of the time.

Please do NOT hear me to be saying that what happens on a large scale around the world is not important.

Do not hear me to say that the business of the Church is to only take care of our own people in our own little village.

The Church does have a mission and it is an important mission to provide Good News, and to be agents of God's *Shalom* of Peace with Justice throughout creation.

But, let's face facts. Most of what really moves us is what happens in the small confines of our daily lives -- just as we are.

It might just have something to do with the fact that **WE AMERICANS – OFR THE MOST PART --HAVE SO MUCH TO LIVE ON AND SO LITTLE TO LIVE FOR.**

We experience far too much pain and frustration in the confines of our daily lives -- just as we are -- because we don't allow the focus of our lives to move beyond "just us."

Let me share the story of another David -- of David and Allen:

David and Allen stole apples from the supermarket. They had been taught that stealing is wrong, and after they had eaten the apples, they began to feel uncomfortable about what they had done. After talking about it, they agreed that if they had some money, they would pay for the apples. But they didn't.

Allen continued to feel uncomfortable for a long, long time. He felt kind of cheap when he thought about it, so he tried not to think about it very often. He didn't like to go near the supermarket anymore because it reminded him. So he found excuses to not run errands there for his mother. Finally, he convinced himself that he had forgotten the whole thing. But, he never liked apples anymore.

David continued to feel uncomfortable about it, too. He couldn't stand feeling that way, so he went to the market and asked to see the manager. He wanted to crawl into a hole when the manager walked in. But there wasn't any hole there. So, after talking around for awhile about nothing, he blurted out that he had stolen the apples.

The store manager asked him if he was sorry, and he said, "Oh, yes. You can bet I wouldn't be here right now if I wasn't. I can't pay for the apples, but I thought maybe you needed the front walk swept or something. I could do that."

David opened and unpacked cartons of canned goods for awhile, and then the manager said he had a couple of apples coming. David really like the store manager once he got over wanting to crawl in a hole. He liked the market, too, and thought that perhaps next year he might be able to get a summer job there. And he still liked apples.

Allen and David both felt bad about stealing the apples. Allen felt **REMORSE**. David felt **REPENTANCE**.

Both acted from just where they were. But they had very different outcomes.

Nine year old Makenzie Snyder says she "felt really sad" when she heard that many foster children used trash bags to move their belongings each time they were placed in a new home. So this spunky Maryland girl decided that she could do something about it -- just as she was. She began collecting used suitcases and duffel bags. Out of her efforts came the **Children-to Children** program, which has distributed more than 1,000 suitcases -- with a note and stuffed animal inside -- to foster children around Washington, D.C.

Makenzie Snyder did something about a situation she had heard about -- just as she was.

The joy and satisfaction we receive in life comes from how we handle the situation right where we are.

But -- **please hear me carefully** -- just as the Gospel and Old Testament lessons show us -- it **does not meant that we have to rely upon our own power**. Jesus and David relied upon a power greater than themselves to work these miracles just as they were.

Let me share just one more story:

Once there were two streams standing at the foot of a mountain. On top of the mountain was a great lake, and in front of the base of the mountain was a great desert.

Both streams wanted to water the desert, and one day they began to talk about how to do it. "I think that to be successful, we must climb the mountain and get attached to the lake," said the one stream.

"What a waste of time! the other stream said. "I'm just going to go over there and water this parched land, right now."

So the second stream flowed out into the desert. As the sun got hotter and hotter and the land drier and drier, the stream got smaller and smaller. Eventually it dried up and died, itself.

In the meantime, the first stream worked it's way up the mountain and connected to the lake, and said, "Will you help me to go out and water the desert?"

"I will," was the answer. So together the lake and stream flowed down the mountain and into the desert, making the dry land rich and fertile.

Here's the upshot of the story: Prayer helps us do what that stream did, to make ourselves one with the resource of the lake. Because of that union, our lives can be so much more productive than when we try to "DO GOOD" on our own.

It happened in Jesus' life just as He was. It happened in David's life just as He was.

**But -- it takes God's Power to make the powerful work occur.**

What's going on in your life right now -- just as you are?

Is your focus just on what's going on? Or -- are you ready to hear God's call to you just as you are -- to lift you out of whatever storm may be going on -- to a powerful experience like no other.

Let me note, quickly, just one more part of today's Gospel lesson. Jesus said to the disciples, in verse 35: "**Let us go across to the other side.**"

It may just be that He was only talking about "to the other side of the Sea of Galilee." But, when I see what happened, I get the idea that Jesus really meant for them to come with Him **to the other side of just as they were** -- to that place where the Kingdom of God intersects with where we are in life.

It's right here -- just as we are. But when we step into that Kingdom -- the storms of life just as we are -- can get transformed into something altogether different. **It's like the Baptismal Covenant says: "Do you accept the FREEDOM AND POWER GOD GIVES YOU to resist evil and injustice in whatever forms you find them?"**

Are you content just as you are? Or are you, too, ready to **go across to the other side**? It's a decision that only you can make for you, and I can make for me. Nobody else can do it for you.