

**Sermon Notes – June 23, 2024**  
**The Holy Gospel of St. Mark 4: 35-41**  
**Peace Lutheran Church**  
**“Now is the Acceptable Time!”**

We love achievement and all the credit it brings us. In America, we say that great Americans lift themselves up by their bootstraps, going from nobodies to somebodies seemingly overnight. We seek status and greatness in everything: we want to make gains at the gym; bring in a seven-figure income; break a world record; write a *New York Times* best seller; and raise morally upright, socially adjusted and successful children. And many flaunt their wins on Facebook or twitter for their followers to see, with posts tagged with #blessed or #achievementunlocked or #100000hours.

But what if I were to redirect, and say that the Christian life is not about achievement, but rather about gratitude and humility? What if everything you've ever accomplished is not the result of your massive talent, but rather because of God's bountiful grace?

In a reading from 1 Samuel, David faces off against Goliath and wins. That earns David some gloating rights, doesn't it? Imagine David's Instagram the next day, flexing in front of Goliath's dead body with the hashtags #thebiggertheyare #thehardertheyfall. However, David doesn't claim this victory for himself at all. He gives credit solely to God (1 Sam. 17: 46-47).

This appears to be the gratitude of the faithful. They have the humility to see that their skills and strengths are gifts from the Father, and the gratitude to give thanks to Him for all they have. All the characters in today's readings seem to be in various stages of learning this lesson. In Job 38: 1-11, God reminds Job that he is not entitled to anything. There are teachings Job cannot possibly understand; his only option is to gain some humility and trust God.

The disciples learn a similar lesson in Mark's gospel. As their boat sinks and Jesus snoozes, they panic, wake Jesus, and cry, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” This is no cry for help, but rather a cry of despair. The disciples are hopeless as they realize there is nothing they can do for themselves (if only they had remembered Psalm 107: 23-32, they would have known that their gracious God rescues sailors in distress). Jesus wakes, rebukes the waves, and then rebukes the disciples, splashing them with some humility. We cannot save ourselves from peril - only God can do that.

Finally, in our reading from 2 Corinthians, Paul rattles off a long list of his experiences for the sake of the gospel, but he does not claim credit for any of them. Rather, he humbly points to the Father. He urges the Corinthians “not to accept the grace of God in vain” (6: 1). Whatever strength Paul has to endure his afflictions has come not from himself, he says, but from God's grace.

St. Augustine once wrote, “*I wish you to prepare for yourself no other way of seizing and holding the truth than that which has been prepared by Him who, as God, saw the weakness*”

*of our goings. In that way the first part of humility; the second humility; the third, humility; and this I would continue to repeat as often as often as you might ask direction.” Augustine knew that the only way we can ever follow Jesus is through humility, humility, humility.*

Today's readings remind us to trust in God's grace rather than our own strength or achievements. The vital truth is simply about gratitude and humility before God the Father. All that we were, all that we are, and all that we will become is due not to our own reason or strength, but to God alone. As people of humility, we acknowledge this truth. As people of gratitude, we give thanks to our Father in Heaven for it. Now is the Accepted Time!