

We are at the time in the year when students are in transition. Some are moving from preschool to elementary school; others from elementary to middle school or junior high school; from middle school or junior high school to high school, from high school to college, and from college to professional life of getting a job and taking care of yourself. Going through these experiences can be difficult and tough.

Just as students in the world go through changes, in the same way, students of Christ must go through changes. The New Testament talks about Christians who drink milk and Christians who eat solid food. Hebrews 5:13-14 say, "Anyone who has to drink milk is still a baby, without experience in applying the Word about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by continuous exercise to distinguish good from evil." In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul wrote about how he fed the Corinthian Christians with milk because they were not ready for solid food.

There comes a time in our faith journey when followers and students of Christ must move from drinking milk to eating solid food. There comes a time when we must grow in Christ. The growth in Christ is what the Gospel lesson today is all about. Jesus had spent all day with people, teaching them, and healing them. At the end of the day, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go to the other side." After you spend so much time with others, there comes a time when you want to go to the other side for reflection, introspection, and transformation. The other side represents change and growth. The other side points to change. As we move from drinking milk to eating solid food in the faith, we move from one side to the other side. The other side is a sign of our maturity as Christians. When we get tired of being the same kind of Christians and we want to have a stronger faith, we move to the other side. When we get tired of the way we speak, the places we go, the things we do as believers and followers of Christ and we want to grow, we go to the other side. When we are ready for a deeper relationship with Christ, we travel from one side to another if we want to grow in Christ. Growing in Christ is not easy, and it has challenges. In this Gospel reading, we see what believers will go through as we grow in Christ.

After spending all day with the crowds, evening came. When evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." 36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. Have you been with the crowds long enough? Are you ready to leave the crowd behind and go to the other side? Are you ready

for a more intimate faith? Are you ready for a deeper relationship with Christ? Wonderful!

As you travel to the other side and grow in Christ, I want you to know there are times when we will feel insufficient. We read that as the disciples and Jesus were traveling to the other side in the boat, a great storm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. The storms of life can make us feel insufficient, like our faith is not enough.

When we are growing in Christ, there will be storms of all kinds. These storms will come in all forms. Some storms will make you question your faith in God and make you question whether the voice you hearing is the voice of God or whether it is your own voice. Other storms will make you question the promises of God. When you have medical issues, emotional problems, or spiritual difficulties, the storms will make you ask, "Where is God?"

A preacher said when storm is taking place in city or state, weather reporters tell us about these storms on TV. When they tell us about different storms, they use different colors like green, yellow, orange, and red to let us know how serious the storm is. Green means the storm is light. In our own lives, a green storm is when you have trouble getting ready for work or maybe just a trip to the grocery store and find that you have misplaced the car keys or your wallet. Yellow means the storm is serious. A yellow storm in your life could be problems in traffic or maybe the car won't start, and you are going to be late for a very important appointment. Orange means the storm is intense. An Orange storm could be having an accident where you are hurt, or a family member gets hurt or maybe someone you love and care about has a health emergency such as a heart attack or something serious. Red means the storm is dangerous. With the Red storm, life just stops, nothing else seems to matter when it hits. News of a loved one who just died unexpectedly or was killed in an accident. Even if we face a green storm that is light, a yellow storm that is serious, an orange storm that is intense, or a red storm that is dangerous, we have the promises of Christ that remind us in Psalms 23 "When I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me," and Matthew 28, "I will be with you to the end of the age."

When these storms happen, they can shake up our lives and make us feel our faith is insufficient. But they are all part of the process of growing in Christ. These storms help us grow from Christians who drink milk to Christians who eat solid food. These storms help us get to the other side and help us become more mature believers. Yet they can make us feel insufficient. The good news is that our faith is enough to help us through any kind of storm.

Secondly, as we move to the other side and grow in Christ, there are times we will feel insecure. In verse 38, we read that Jesus was in a different part of the boat, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" Jesus was in the boat with the disciples during the storm, but they felt insecure.

There are times when it will feel like Jesus is asleep during our storm and will start panicking. The disciples had been with Jesus when he healed the sick. They had watched him heal a man with a dried-up hand. They had heard him preach about faith. They had seen the power of God at work through him. This was the same Jesus who was baptized, and the heaven opened with a voice saying, you are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." It was this Jesus who had called them to follow him. This Jesus was asleep in the boat during a storm. The storm made them feel insufficient; now with Jesus asleep during the storm they were feeling insecure.

The storm was so bad the disciples went to Jesus as asked him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" When the storms of life are raging against us, we often feel insecure and run to Jesus with questions, "Jesus, don't you care that my child is sick?" "Jesus, don't you care that I am falling apart?" "Jesus, don't you care that I have no way to figure this out?" "Jesus, don't you care that my relative is dead?"

This is what Martha and Mary felt when their brother Lazarus was sick and they sent a message to Jesus to tell him, "Lord, your friend is sick," and Jesus did not show up until four days after Lazarus died and they buried him. During the days of Jesus, a woman who had a brother, son, husband, or a male relative in the house with her had protection. This is why Jesus asked John to take care of his mother before he died. Martha and Mary had lost their social protection when Lazarus died and here comes Jesus four days later. When Lazarus was sick, they probably wondered, "Where is Jesus? Does he not care that our brother, his friend, is sick?"

When we are growing in Christ, we will travel to a new side of maturity. During that process, we will experience storms of life that will make us feel insufficient. Even when we know Jesus is with us in the storm, we will still feel insecure, but the third thing is that Jesus reminds us to remain in step with him. To remain in step means keep following and keep on believing. Verses 39-41 tell us, He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

To walk in step with Jesus means to keep up with him. It means don't get lost and don't go astray. To walk in step with Jesus means imitating him and walking with him to be like him. This means going through the storm with Jesus and knowing He cares for you. It means serving as Jesus did. It means loving as Jesus does. It means viewing others as Jesus does. It means walking with others like Jesus. It means speaking the love language of Jesus. It means desiring the things of God like Jesus. It means obeying like Jesus. It means thinking like Jesus. It means caring for others like Jesus. It means praying like Jesus. It means enjoying the Word like Jesus. It means growing in Christ.

It is important for us to keep walking with Jesus because there are more challenges ahead. In chapter 5, when they got to the other side, they met a man who was possessed by many demons and Jesus raised a little girl from the dead.

Like students of the world moving from one stage to another, students and followers of Christ go through stages as we grow in faith from drinking milk to eating solid food. Growing in Jesus is what all believers are called to be and do. Growing in Christ leads us from point to another; this is what we find in this passage when Jesus wanted to travel to the other side of the lake. When we are growing in Christ, there will be storms that will make us feel insufficient. Jesus will be in the storm with us, but we will feel insecure because it will look as if he is not paying attention to the storm. But Jesus wants us to keep in step and walk with him. When we call upon him, he will calm the storm and ask us to keep faith in him. This is how He wants us to grow in Him. Let us call on God to do this. God bless us all. Amen.