

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Middle School · Parent Edition

For the parent: Read each part aloud and work through the questions together. Your answers are printed in blue italics, so no preparation is needed. Your child uses the Student Edition.

Step 1 Understand the Collect

Most collects follow a five-part pattern: the **address** (the One to whom we pray), the **reason** (what God has done or promised), the **petition** (what we ask), the **purpose** (what we hope will result), and the **ending** (the closing that names the Trinity).

Almighty God, You know we live in the midst of so many dangers that in our frailty we cannot stand upright. Grant strength and protection to support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

1. Mark each part of the collect. Are any parts missing?

***Answer:** Address: "Almighty God." Reason: "You know we live in the midst of so many dangers that in our frailty we cannot stand upright." Petition: "Grant strength and protection." Purpose: "to support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations." Ending: "through Jesus Christ..." All five are present.*

2. The reason names something God knows about us. Why is that comforting?

***Answer:** God knows our weakness and does not expect us to stand alone. We can pray honestly.*

3. The collect names both dangers and temptations. What is the difference?

***Answer:** Dangers threaten body and life; temptations threaten the soul and our faith. God guards both.*

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

Read the Gospel on your own.

Matthew 8:23-27

23 And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. **24** And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. **25** And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." **26** And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. **27** And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

1. Several disciples were experienced fishermen. Why would they be terrified?

***Answer:** They knew the sea, and they knew the boat was sinking. This was a real storm.*

2. How could Jesus sleep in a storm?

***Answer:** He was a true man and tired. He also trusted His Father completely.*

3. Jesus asks, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" (v. 26). Did the disciples have faith?

***Answer:** A little, but real: they called on Him, and He saved them. Little faith in a great Savior still receives His help.*

4. The disciples ask, "What sort of man is this?" (v. 27). How would you answer?

***Answer:** He is God in the flesh, the Creator whom the winds and sea obey.*

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

1. Find at least two places where the collect's words appear in the Gospel. Explain each one.

Answer: *"So many dangers" matches the great storm (v. 24). "We cannot stand upright" matches "Save us, Lord; we are perishing" (v. 25). "Strength and protection" matches the great calm (v. 26). Any two, well explained, are enough.*

2. Psalm 107:28-29 says, "Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed." What does that psalm reveal about who was in the boat?

Answer: *The psalm says the LORD stills the storm. Jesus does exactly that, so He is the LORD Himself.*

Step 4 The Small Catechism

The First Article. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.
What does this mean? I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. **He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil.** All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

Cross-reference. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea." (Psalm 46:1-2)

1. Luther says God "defends me against all danger." Does that mean Christians never face storms?

Answer: *No. The disciples were in the storm with Jesus in the boat. God protects us in trouble and brings us through, and nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8:38-39).*

2. Luther says God does all this "without any merit or worthiness in me." How does the story show that?

Answer: *The disciples had little faith, yet Jesus saved them anyway.*

3. Luther ends, "It is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him." What did the disciples do after the calm?

Answer: *They marveled at Him. Wonder and praise are the right response.*

Parent note: the question they may ask. *"Why doesn't Jesus stop every storm, like hurricanes that hurt people?"* We live in a fallen world, and Christians suffer too. Jesus promises His presence and final safety, not an easy trip (Isaiah 43:2; Romans 8:38-39). Calming the sea shows who He is, and one day He will end every storm for good (Revelation 21:4).

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

1. Write a short collect of your own for this day. Use all five parts.

Answer: *Answers will vary. Example: "Lord Jesus, You calmed the wind and the sea with a word. When we are afraid, hear our cry and keep us safe in body and soul; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."*

Pray today's collect together. Then answer:

2. What does Jesus do for you when you are afraid?

Answer: *He is with me, hears me when I call, and keeps me safe. He calms my fears with His Word.*