

Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald

On Nov. 10, 1975, the SS *Edmund Fitzgerald* – a 730-foot American Great Lakes freighter – sank in Canadian waters, taking all 29 souls on board down with her.

When launched on June 7, 1958, she was the largest ship on North America's Great Lakes, and she remains the largest to have sunk there.

In the midst of one of the worst storms in Great Lakes history, she lost her radar and began taking on water in the raging seas. With visibility all but negated by driving snow, and absent of operational radar navigation, the SS *Edmund Fitzgerald* was sailing blind in search of safe harbor.



“We’re in a big sea. I’ve never seen anything like it in my life,” reported Capt. Ernest McSorely. Nearly two hours later, though, the captain reported that the ship and crew were “holding our own.”

A mere 10 minutes later, she disappeared from radar and could not be hailed by radio. There was not even time for a distress signal. Whatever took the “Mighty Fitz” was both quick and cataclysmic.

Each year since its recovery in 1995, on the anniversary of its mysterious sinking, the bell from the *Fitzgerald* has rung 29 times, once for each person lost in what has become America’s most infamous modern-era sinking.

In 2012, at the annual memorial service at the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum in Paradise, Michigan, the Rev. Richard Ingalls Jr. quoted Gordon Lightfoot’s famous ballad, *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*, in hopes of bringing some measure of peace to those who still mourn its loss: “Where does the love of God go when the waves turn the minutes to hours? The answer is that it does not go anywhere, even if we in our mortal fear cannot see it.”

That question, said Lauren Green, *Fox News* religion correspondent, speaks to the larger human condition. She said the reverend went on to compare us all to “mariners navigating the seas of life, looking for safe harbors.”

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Mysteries like the sinking of the *Fitzgerald*, she reported Rev. Ingalls as saying, “teach a lesson that we are not in total control, and that there is only one truly safe harbor.”

Up until moments before she went down, the captain and crew felt they were “holding their own.” The challenges of life can come at us as swiftly and unexpectedly as the storm that overtook the Mighty Fitz.

The truth is that we are incapable of “holding our own.” God alone can anchor us in the midst of the storm. He alone can guide us to safe harbor. Indeed, He alone *is* our safe harbor.

Gordon Lightfoot was right. In the long hours of trial, God’s love doesn’t go anywhere; it is ever-present. We have no need to fear. He is in control.

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging (Psalm 46:1-3 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter

