

## Mark 4:35-41 - "Riding Out the Storms of Life"

Pr. Kurt A. Van Fossan - Proper 7B 2021

The theme for today's sermon, based especially on our Gospel reading, is "Riding Out the Storms of Life." As I studied our text, the picture on the front of our bulletin, which shows Jesus standing in a storm-tossed boat with His arms stretched out, reminded me of two things. First, it reminded me of a surfer not only riding out the storms of life but actually enjoying it. Because of our faith in Jesus as our Savior, St. Paul writes in Romans 5:3, "*we rejoice in our sufferings.*"

Paul is not telling us through these words that we should enjoy pain, but that we can rejoice in the midst of pain. How is that possible? God makes it possible by giving us faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Our faith in Jesus Christ is not a static gift from God, like a cross that we hang on our walls or wear around our neck. Our faith in Jesus Christ is a living, life-giving gift from God, who keeps on giving and strengthening our new and eternal life in Christ the more we meditate on what He tells us about our new life in Christ in the Bible. To help His disciples in our text to meditate on God's Word, Jesus asked them, "*Why are you so afraid?*"

That may sound like a silly question since the storm and waves that day were not only threatening to sink their boat, which was an important part of their livelihood as fishermen, but also to kill them. But when the question "*Why are you so afraid?*" is asked right after Jesus "*rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!'*" (or more dramatically: "*Shut up! Put a muzzle on it!*"), and the wind shut up/was muzzled "*and there was a great calm,*" it's not such a silly question. Instead, in the presence of someone possessing such power, it's more silly to be afraid. This is especially true when you know that this almighty one, who is with you, loves you.

Pastor Bryan Wolfmüller, in his book: [A Martyr's Faith in a Faithless World](#), points out that "Just as death wants to be worshiped by fear, so suffering wants to be worshiped by despair. The devil wants us to lose hope; wants to cause our faith to wither with suffering. But when we rejoice in our suffering, we refuse to let it be our god. We refuse to worship pain or pleasure" (p. 124).

How, again, can we "*rejoice in our sufferings*"? Through the other thing that Jesus' outstretched arms reminds us of, His arms stretched out on the cross. Nowhere does Jesus do a better job of reminding us that we can ride out the storms of life with joy rather than jitters than through His work on the cross. Through His damning death on the cross in payment for our sins, His resurrection from the dead in victory over the greatest storms of this life which threaten to kill us: sin, death and the devil, and His promise to be with us always, the Lord muzzles our fears so that we can not only be at peace but also demonstrate that peace through joyful living.

This, then, is the secret to not only a peaceful life, but also a joyful life. It's the good news of the Gospel—Jesus' death and resurrection through which He washes away our sins and restores to us the joy of our eternal salvation. Therefore, when we are troubled by the things of this world, who's asleep in our boat?

St. Augustine pointed out that since Christ is in the heart of all those who believe in Him, God is showing us that if our hearts are troubled by the storms of life, it's because our faith is asleep (see Augustine's commentary on Psalm 46). How does God awaken our faith? At times He starts with the storms of life which turn us to God in prayer, seeking His help.

That's what happened in our text when the storm caused the disciples to cry out to Jesus for help. Then, through the good news of Jesus' stilling the storm, and especially His resurrection from the dead, the Lord continues to work to calm our hearts troubled by sin, suffering and death, and give us eternal peace and joy in the midst of a world that continues to be tossed about by the storms of this life.

When this happens, we become a lighthouse to the world around us, especially when we sing praises to God in the midst of a congregation where the Gospel is proclaimed and distributed through God's Word and Sacraments. Through your lives of peace and joy during the week, together with your presence here today, God draws others to these same blessed shores.

All glory be to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Children's Sermon] In the sermon I was talking about riding out the storms of life in peace instead of in pieces—with a smile instead of a frown—because of our faith in Jesus. To help me show you what I mean, I need a volunteer.

First I want you to stand on the top step, facing the cross. Now, I want you to fall backwards into my arms. [When they look back to make sure I'm there, tell them: "Don't worry, I'll catch you."]

Why did you look back? [To make sure I was there to catch you.] Since we can't see Jesus, where do we look to reassure ourselves that Jesus has our back? We look to His promises in the Bible. Through Jesus' death on the cross He promises that our sins are forgiven. Then He promises, through His resurrection from the dead, that we too will rise up from all our problems in this life, even death itself, because He is with us, and actually in us.

To remind you of this I have a little boat for each of you that says on it's sail: "With Jesus in our boat we are unsinkable!" If you take this boat into a swimming pool or bath and push it under the water, then let it go, it will pop back up to the top of the water. Through Jesus' resurrection from the dead He promises that the same thing will happen to you and me because He is in us, or in our boat. He put Himself in us through His Word and Baptism. And every time we read or hear what God says in the Bible He reassures us that nothing will be able to keep us down, not even death. In the end, He will raise us up to heaven with Him.