

**Mark 4:35-41**

If you never have stormy weather in your life, you may not be interested in what this text is saying. But if your life, like mine, is at all like that boat on the Sea of Galilee, then you will want to open your ears to the teaching of the Holy Spirit this morning.

Galilee was notorious for its storms. And not just "slow-building" ones. Without warning a windstorm could sweep down from Mt. Herman to the north and turn that peaceful lake into a churning sea. That's what happened that night when Jesus and His disciples got into a boat to cross to the other side. And that's what happens here in peaceful Augusta, and in Washington, and Marthasville, and Defiance when, without warning, troubles come sweeping into our lives.

But it's not just here in east-central Missouri. The windstorms and churning waves are tossing the lives of people to and fro all over the world. You don't have to read but a page or two into the newspaper, or listen for more than a few minutes to a news reporter to understand that the troubles faced by the twelve on the Sea of Galilee are being faced today in every land, as well as in this land we call home.

So we can say that the picture of that boat riding through the storm on Galilee is a pretty accurate picture of life in our world today. But the vast majority of boats on this stormy sea are going to perish because Jesus is not in their boat. Billions of people are living without faith in Jesus their Savior; and without Christ no one will be able to survive the storms; no boat will make it to the other side.

Jesus is in your boat. You are a Christian. You are baptized into His death and resurrection. And so He is here for you. He is here to calm your storms. He is here to bring you across life to the other side. But here is a question, and it is an important question: Is Jesus awake, or is He sleeping in your boat?

He was sleeping in the boat with His disciples. They were struggling. They were working hard to keep from sinking. They were panicking. And Jesus? He was sleeping. How many Christians have a sleeping Jesus in their boat today? Judging by church attendance records...most of them. Judging by Holy Communion attendance, by Bible Study attendance, by the habit of daily Bible reading...most of them. And not just here, but everywhere. Most Christians apparently do not want an awake Jesus in their boat. They want a sleeping Jesus. They do not want Him active in their life, preaching His Word to them, instructing them in His Gospel, rebuking them for their sins and forgiving them with His pardon. All they want is a Jesus sleeping in the back of the boat. They don't want Him interfering with their life. They like knowing He's there in the back, but they do not want to listen to His words week after week, Sunday after Sunday, day after day.

But what good is a sleeping Jesus? That storm on Galilee did not stop just because Jesus was in the boat. It only stopped when He awoke and with His mouth spoke His powerful words. That night the twelve learned a lesson that we need to learn: Jesus, without His Word, is no help at all. A sleeping Jesus isn't going to save anyone. But when He is awake; when His words are being spoken and heard and believed, then He is the One who saves.

The disciples did not cause that massive storm that night, but they were powerless to stop it. Sometimes the storms in our life, like that one, come upon us and there was nothing we did to cause them. Other times we create our own storms. We put our self into a financial crisis by our poor decisions. By our own fault we bring ugly problems into our life. By our sinful habits we bring

difficulties upon our self. We're often quick to blame others for our problems, but the truth is that most of our problems are storms we have created.

And like the twelve, we are powerless to stop them. How do you stop feeling guilty? How do you bring peace to a troubled heart? How do you take back angry words? The storms we create do not come to an end just because we want them to; nor do they come to an end just because Jesus happens to be in our boat. If He's sleeping in the back, that storm is not going to cease. If His words are not a part of our life; if they're not coming into our ears, our storms are not going to cease.

But when His words are spoken, the storms come to an end. After waking, Jesus spoke to the storm, "Peace! Be still!" "And the wind ceased and there was a great calm." Wouldn't it be nice to have that great calm in your life? Wouldn't it be nice to have the violent winds cease? You don't have to wish for these blessings; they are yours right now because Jesus speaks His words to you today. "Peace be with you," are His words to you. "The peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Jesus brought the storm to a halt that night on Galilee. Today He calms the storms in this way...He allows the troubles to keep falling like rain, but He covers you like an umbrella so that you are kept safe and dry with Him. The umbrella of your baptism is your shelter through life. Covered with Christ, no storm can separate Him from you. Jesus speaks His words of peace into your ears to calm your troubled heart. Difficulties will still come into your life, but you belong to Jesus. They cannot sink your boat with their churning waves. They cannot drown you in their troubled waters. Jesus' words keep your boat afloat. His words keep you steady and safe in the midst of the storm. And no sin in your past, no poor decision, no angry word uttered from your mouth, no moment of weakness in giving in to temptation is a storm too great for your Savior to calm. Listen to His words of peace: I forgive you; go in peace, your sins are completely pardoned.

These words are for every one of you. No matter how badly your boat is being tossed to and fro by guilt; no matter how dark and foreboding your sins are on the horizon, Jesus' words, "Peace! Be still!" are for you. The storm is over. The darkness is no more. The Son is shining. Jesus gives you light and hope. He endured the storm of God's anger upon the cross for you. He suffered the punishment your sins deserved. With His words, "It is finished!" Jesus declared, once and for all, that the winds of hell's fury cannot sweep you away; that even though you are a sinner, you are forgiven--His death for you makes this certain. And His life for you makes your heart a place of great calm.

And so the sea is still churning. The winds are still blowing. And most boats out there are perishing. But Jesus is in your boat, and He's not sleeping; He is fully awake. And day after day, week after week He is speaking His words of peace into your heart and life. And that is why you will survive the storms. That is why you will make it across to the other side.

So what do we do about all the other boats? Billions of them are struggling in the storms, and they will not make it without Jesus. You can put Jesus into their boat...one at a time...by supporting the mission efforts of our church, by supporting our congregation's website which brings the good news of Christ all over the world, by supporting those who are sent to preach the Gospel.

And something else you can do...if you have a Christian friend, or spouse, or child, or brother or sister, who has Jesus in their boat, but He is not awake--He is sleeping, because His words are not being spoken into their ears; His words are not a part of their life--you can wake Him up for them.

You can invite them to church with you. You can lead them to the Pastor's Bible Class. You can tell the pastor when the door is open in their heart so he can go and bring Jesus' words to them.

No other words can still the storms. No other words can bring them, and us, to the other side. Jesus' words, "Peace! Be still! I forgive you," are for you, and for them, and for every boat struggling in the stormy seas of life. And as the twelve learned on that night, and as we learn through life, when Jesus' words are spoken, and heard, and believed, the winds cease and there is a great calm. Amen.