

# Sermon for Sunday, June 24, 2018 - "God - In the Same Boat"

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost  
June 24, 2018  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Decorah, Iowa  
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson  
Mark 4:35-41

[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus - God with us.

When Jesus tells his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side", they likely are pretty surprised. Jews like them don't go to the other side of the lake where the unclean Gentiles live. But, they certainly know how to navigate across to get there - they're fisherman, well acquainted with sailing. So, they take Jesus into the boat and head off for another day on the lake.

They're tooling along doing their everyday thing that they've done a thousand times. But then things get ugly. Things get out of control. The wind comes up, the waves crash, the boat is taking on water, it looks like they're heading for the bottom.

Jesus has been sleeping away in the back of the boat through the whole storm until one of the disciples remembers he's back there and wakes him up with a terror filled, embittered cry of, "Don't you care?" Jesus sits up, and I imagine, rubs his eyes, stretches a bit, tells the storm to quit and it does. No big deal - he was there with them the whole time.

Why did they wait so long? Jesus was there the whole time. Were they too busy to notice him snoring away in the boat with them? Did they figure, "Oh we've got this, no problem", until things got out of hand? They didn't bother him - or maybe they didn't bother *with* him - until they thought they were going to die, and then they got mad at him for not seeming to care! Why'd they wait?

How about us? When do we remember to bother Jesus - or to bother *with* Jesus?

When we face storms in our own lives, as a country - and, oh my, are we in stormy times - we so often panic as if we are without any hope, without any help.

Jesus is with us just as surely as he was in the boat with the disciples. Jesus is Immanuel - God with us. God does not remain at a distance but comes to us in Jesus to be in the same boat with all of humanity. And this Jesus, who is so very vulnerable, who sleeps, who hangs on a cross - this Jesus has power that is made perfect in his very weakness. He brings peace; he subdues the storms by entering them with us and transforming the storms and each of us from the inside.

We are not alone in the storm.

Yet we so often act as if everything depends upon us, as if Jesus isn't there; or maybe he's just some extra cargo we're hauling with us. We keep busy doing what we always do, we think we can handle it. We leave Jesus tucked away on a cushion and neglect to call upon him. We focus on everything we have to do.

That's not to say that our work in the midst of storms isn't important - it is. We need to chart a good course the best we can. We need to tend to the ship, the sails, and the welfare of those around us.

But we also need to wake up to the good news that Jesus is in the boat with us. And because Jesus is in the boat with us, we have what we need. The One who overcame death, who works always to bring peace and subdue storms, evil and chaos - this One is at work in us, for us and through us. We have hope, we have help. It does not all depend upon us. We need to wake up to Jesus' presence with us and call upon Jesus to help us.

When we call upon Jesus, that doesn't mean that all the storms will be stilled, that evil and chaos will immediately be vanquished. As we heard in our second reading today, the Apostles Paul and Timothy endured afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, and hunger. Jesus' presence does not protect us from the storms, and Jesus doesn't still all the storms.

Yet being awake to Jesus' presence and calling upon him does mean that we can approach the storms differently. We can remain calm and kind and hopeful. We can work with hope and purpose trusting that Jesus is also at work. We can care for others rather than fixating on our own safety and security. We can take risks and cross to the other side rather than staying where it is familiar and comfortable.

Jesus is in the boat with us.

A boat is an ancient metaphor for the church. The part of the sanctuary where worshippers gather is called a nave - from the Latin word for ship. When we gather as the church, in the nave, we are reminded that God, in Jesus, is in the same boat with us. We are also assured of Jesus' power made perfect in weakness. When we gather for worship, we practice paying attention to the presence of God with us. We practice asking for help.

Then we are sent out to do these things amidst the storms of life. We are sent to be a hopeful, helpful presence in our world. We are sent to cross to the other side to be with those who are seen as unclean.

We can do all these things because we are not alone - Jesus is in the boat with us.

Let's take some time for silent prayer.



