## ****Storm-Proof****

### ****Mayday! Mayday! All Hands On Deck!****

Mark 4:35-41

On vacation recently a pastor visited a state park built in the 1930's.

In the middle of the park was a chapel with a cross on the steeple.

At the front of the chapel was a prayer thanking God for creating the beauty of the forests, and addressing Him in the name of Jesus Christ.

It must be the best-kept secret but who knows how long it will be before someone complains and it is removed.

There was a time a generation or so ago when it seemed like everyone was either a Christian or knew what it was to be a Christian.

Churches were full.

It seemed all you had to do was put up a sign, knock on some doors, invite your friends and neighbors, and churches almost started themselves.

People in our country had a sense of God almighty.

If they chose not to believe in Christ as Savior, they were respectful of the Christian faith.

The leaders of the community were churchgoers, and one of the most respected vocations in society was that of the minister.

Movies, books, and television shows were careful not to offend their Christian audiences.

How different it is today.

The people we work on the job with, who live next door to us, and who pass us in the shops at the marketplace may know nothing about Christianity.

They may pray to a God by the name of Allah, or Krishna, or worship the earth itself, as one nearby community recently experienced with a school of the Wicca religion.

The idea of one faith being true over all others is suspect today of extremism.

A close friend may reply to our heartfelt witness of faith, "That's good for you to believe, but I have my own beliefs."

Even in Christian families, children who have been baptized, gone to Sunday School, church and have been baptized may wander from the Christian faith and confess another world religion that stands in direct contradiction to the faith of the family they were raised in.

I still love to hear the song the Gospel Lads used to sing a song entitled “Oh Buddha”… Listen to the words.

Well ol' Buddah was a man   
And I'm sure that he meant well   
But I pray for his disciples   
Less they wind up in Hell   
And I'm sure that ol' Muhammad   
Thought he knew the way   
But it won't be Hare Krishna   
We stand before on the Judgment Day   
  
Chorus:   
'Cause it won't be ol' Buddah   
A-that's sittin' on the throne   
It won't be Muhammad   
That's callin' us home   
It won't be Hare Krishna   
That plays that trumpet tune   
And we're going to see the Son   
Not reverend moon   
  
Well I don't hate anybody   
So please don't take me wrong   
But there really is a message   
In this simple song   
'Cause there's only one way: Jesus   
If eternal life is your goal   
The meditation of the mind   
Won't save your soul   
  
Repeat Chorus   
  
Well you may call yourself a Baptist   
  
And not be born again   
A Presbyterian or Methodist   
And still die in your sins   
You may even be Charismatic   
Shout and dance and jump a pew   
But if you hate your brother   
You're not one of the chosen few   
  
'Cause it won't be a Baptist   
A-that's sittin' on the throne   
A Presbyterian or a Methodist   
That's callin' us home   
It won't be a Charismatic   
That plays that trumpet tune   
Do let's just all live for Jesus   
'Cause he's comin' back real soon   
  
Repeat Chorus   
  
And we're going to see the Son   
Not reverend moon.

I believe it was with an eye to time like this that God caused our text to be recorded.

Mark 4:33-41

33 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. 34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." 36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" NIV

**Jesus and his disciples went out onto a great lake in a boat on a calm day.**

A storm came up and blew so hard that even tough old fishermen were afraid of drowning.

**MAYDAY! MAYDAY! ALL HANDS ON DECK!**

Have you ever been on a little boat during a storm?

And maybe thought, this boat could be going down?

If we were on that boat, that boat with Jesus, what would be asking?

**Top Ten Answers** of real and imaginary friends on that boat and this is what they asked Jesus.

**10.** Peter might ask, “Lord, can I get out and walk?”

**9.**  Thomas might ask, “Lord, can I be sure this a storm—can you produce some incontrovertible evidence?”

**8.**  Matthew the tax collector might say, “This is not what I meant by liquidating your assets.”

**7.**  Rick Warren asked, “God, what is your purpose for my life in this?”

**6.**  Billy Graham asked, “Lord, may I give an invitation right now?”

**5.**  Atheist Bill Mayer said, “Hey you, there's nothing you can do about this so go back to sleep.”

**4.**  A conservative Christian asked, “Lord, what is the spiritual lesson you're trying to teach us in this?”

**3.**  A liberal Christian asked, “Jesus, do you know what effect this boat going down will have on the Galilean eco-system?”

**2.**  A Fundamentalist Christian asked, “Lord, will this count as full immersion?”

**1.**  If Darrell Kirk was there would have asked, “Lord, could you get me to shore—I'll just take a mulligan on this water hole?”

 Now put yourself in that little boat.

Well maybe not that boat.

But it was a little boat in a big storm.

What would you ask Jesus, after you woke him up?

What they, those in that boat with Jesus, ask has a different tone—and no one was laughing.

There are seasoned sailors aboard and they have weathered storms before but this is no ordinary storm.

They cry out, “Teacher, don't you care if we drown?”

That question might be heard in several ways.

I can see Jesus hearing it as pretty insensitive and inattentive to all that he had been teaching them.

I can see Jesus as hearing it as doubt and lack of faith.

Can't you remember any of the stuff you have seen already, how many times must I reveal my power to this unbelieving lot?

And I can see Jesus wincing.

Do they really think I don't care about them?

Mark adds this little detail: “Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion.”  (Mark 4:38a.)

A life threatening storm is raging and Jesus is napping with his head on a pillow!

How dare he?

In pastoral care ministry class they teach:

People don't care how much we know… until they know how much we care.

They didn't ask him to still the storm: they asked if he cared.

Good question.

Give them points for honesty.

The disciples were not above questioning Jesus.

We find other occasions in Mark's Gospel were their tone is, shall we say, impertinent.

In Mark 5 we find a suffering woman pressing through a crowd to touch Jesus.

She does it.

She is healed.

Jesus knows that someone has touched his healing power and asks his disciples who just touched him.

“His disciples said, ‘What are you talking about? With this crowd pushing and jostling you, you're asking, 'Who touched me?'  Dozens have touched you!'”    (Mark 5:31, “The Message.”)

Helpful lot, aren't they?

A chapter later Jesus faces a hungry crowd.

His disciples remind him that it's getting late and crowd is getting hungry.

Though they're often dull, they see the makings of riot.

They suggest that he send the crowd home .

“Jesus said, ‘You do it. Fix supper for them.' They replied, ‘Are you serious? You want us to go spend a fortune on food for their supper?'”  (Mark 6:37, “The Message.”)

Practical, aren't they?

We are sometimes like that when the Lord commands us to do things?

Jesus could send it right back at them.

They were having a discussion about what makes a person unrighteous.

Some thought it was only what people took in; Jesus corrected them rather colorfully.

“Jesus said, ‘Are you being willfully stupid?  Don't you see that what you swallow can't contaminate you?  It doesn't enter your heart but your stomach, works its way through the intestines, and is finally flushed.' (That took care of dietary quibbling; Jesus was saying that all foods are fit to eat.)”   (Mark 7:18-19, “The Message.”)

There was a respectful give-and-take between Jesus and his disciples.

I am concerned today that, in the name of reverence (a good thing), we can be less than honest with God.

The Psalms, the Bible's collected prayers, are remarkably honest with God.

The most asked question is, “How long, O Lord?”

The prayers of the Psalms are sometimes angry, sometimes frustrated, sometimes skeptical, and they are always reverent in this sense: they are always lifted to God.

It is far better to speak our faith struggles to God rather then hide them as if God didn't know about them.

The May 78, 2007 issue of “Newsweek” had a cover story on chaplains serving our armed forces in Iraq.

On a tough day “Army Chaplain Roger Benimoff began to pray in a strong and reassuring voice . . . .  Benimoff's journal . . . is a tale of helicopter crashes, suicides, improvised explosive device blasts—and the professional, spiritual, and marital troubles of soldiers seeking comfort.

A mixture of adrenaline and devotion keeps Benimoff focused in the theater of war.

Yet over time, his spiritual foundation is shaken by the carnage.

The demons surface in full once he finds more time for reflection.

After joining Walter Reed last June, Benimoff was plagued by questions. ‘I am not sleeping well and I am still scared,' he wrote. ‘I was reading my Bible and I found myself getting violently mad at God.

For a brief period early this year, he came to "hate" God, and wanted nothing to do with religion.'

God can be found or lost in a foxhole, but rarely does war leave someone's faith untouched.

In some ways, Benimoff's story is common to people of all walks of life and all beliefs.

It is the story of spiritual struggle—and of trying to accept a world of both good and evil, where pain and loss seem unconnected to faith and justice.

Countless soldiers—not just chaplains—have struggled with how to reconcile a God of love with a God who allows the terror of conflict.”

So have countless disciples in every age and in every walk of life.

The disciples in the boat saw that storm as a kind of warfare.

They knew that lake like the back of their hands and they knew that storm could easily upturn the boat and drown them in seconds.

When your life is on the line, it matter not too much what kind of warfare you're in.

For the disciples that day it was a treacherous storm on a sea they knew well.

They wondered if Jesus cared.

Have you had occasion to wonder if he cares?

If so, you're in good company.

There are times when we need someone to care, to hold our hand and care, even if they can't stop the storm from raging.

A Marine in uniform entered a hospital wing for a visit.

A nurse took him right to a bedside.

“Your son is here,” she said to the old man.  She repeated the words several times before the patient's eyes opened.

Heavily sedated, he dimly saw the young uniformed Marine standing outside the oxygen tent.  He reached out his hand.

The Marine wrapped his toughened fingers around the old man's limp ones, squeezing a message of love and encouragement.

All through the night the young Marine sat holding the old man's hand and offering him words of love and strength.

Whenever the nurse came into the ward, the Marine was oblivious of her and of the night noises of the hospital.

Now and then she heard him say a few gentle words.

The dying man said nothing, holding tightly to that hand all through the night.

Towards dawn, the old man died.

The Marine released the now lifeless hand he had been holding and told the nurse.

While she attended to the dead man, he waited.

She returned and started to offer words of sympathy, but the Marine interrupted her.

“Who was that man?” he asked.

The nurse was startled, “He was your father,” she answered.

“No, he wasn't.  I never saw him before.”

“Then why didn't you say something when I took you to him?”

“I knew right away there had been a mistake, but I also knew he needed his son, and his son just wasn't here. When I realized that he was too sick to tell whether or not I was his son, knowing how much he needed me, I stayed.”

There is a ministry of presence we need in storms.

Jesus knows that.

Even if he is asleep in the boat, he is always in the boat with us.

There is one curious note at the end.

He speaks and the storm is stilled.

Their lives are spared.

Then he speaks to them: “‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'   They were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'”   (Mark 4:40-41.)

When the storm was raging they feared for their lives.

When Jesus stilled the storm, they were terrified.

I wonder why?

There are storms raging in the lives of those listening to me now.

Some I may know; others are unknown to me.

But they are raging.

Some of us may think the boat is about to go down and wondering if Jesus cares.

Each of us here today will face great dangers which often produce great doubts but we must always remember the great discovery that day.

That Jesus is not only the Master of the wind and the seas but also the Master of the storms all about us.

**Another Old Southern Gospel Song says it best….**

(I'VE GOT CONFIDENCE)

When trouble is in my way   
I can't tell my night from day   
When I'm tossed from side to side   
Like a ship on a raging tide   
I don't worry I don't fret   
My God has never failed me yet   
Troubles come from time to time   
But that's all right,   
I'm not the worrying kind because

I've got confidence,   
My God is gonna see me through   
No matter what the case may be   
I know He's gonna fix it for me

I can't promise you that he'll command every storm to be still as he did that day.

But I can promise this, to myself and to you:

He is always there, He is in the storm right by our side.

I have confidence because our God is alive and is coming again to take us home.

I have confidence because saved us by grace and not works.

I have confidence because He is in the boat with us.

You can have confidence this morning because Jesus is in the boat with you.

Rom 10:13

13 for, "Everyone who **calls** on the name of the Lord will be saved." NIV

Acts 2:37b-38

"Brothers, what shall we do?"

38 Peter replied, " **Repent and be baptized** , every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. NIV

1 Peter 3:18-21

18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison 20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes **baptism** that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

NIV