

Sermon for Sunday, May 10, 2026

Romans 8:31-39

Mark 4:35-41

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

During the week after Easter I went up to the lake and spent several days planning worship for the month of May. After spending time in prayer and deliberation, I chose Scripture texts that I felt called to preach on. Today's passage from Mark (Jesus Stills the Storm) was chosen because I sensed that the announcement of my retirement was causing a storm of emotions within you. This passage gave me a chance to address that storm. Little did I know that several other storms would erupt within the families/members of Vasa Congregation in the weeks ahead. The Holy Spirit was certainly at work in these choices in a way that was beyond my limited comprehension.

I need to open by making a very important and clear point: I am not Jesus! I am not the one who died for you and brought you salvation. Jesus did that. But Jesus also sent his followers out into the world to share the good news of salvation with everyone. God called me to bring that good news to you, especially in the midst of your personal and family storms. If you remember nothing else from today's sermon, remember this: Jesus is with you in the boat.

I have done my very best over the last nine years to be present with you through your personal/family storms. In some ways I was like Jesus, asleep on a cushion, at the back of your family boat; available to bring words of comfort to you when a storm arose. In my visits during your family storms I tried to bring words of comfort and reminders that God is present—always and especially in the midst of the storm.

One lesson that comes from this Scripture passage is simply that Jesus was with the disciples in the midst of the storm. Now there's a second lesson: Jesus was also asleep. One might say that in his ability to sleep in the middle of a storm he was demonstrating that he was not afraid of it. He had no reason to believe that the storm was going to bring him harm. AND as long as the disciples were with him in the boat they had nothing to fear. The storm was not going to cause them harm either. Clearly, in the moment that was hard for them to believe. When we are in the midst of our personal

storms it can be very hard for us to believe as well. In those moments it's easy to question if Jesus is even IN our boat, much less in control of the situation.

The message for us today: Jesus is in your family boat. In the midst of the family storms of life, Jesus is with you. He will not allow you to be overcome. Why? because he promised that he would not abandon us. In John 14:18 Jesus says, "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you." We are not alone and Jesus shares this message providing us with the reassurance that we need so that we can carry on in the midst of our storms.

This verse is part of a multi-chapter long section of teaching from Jesus. He is preparing his disciples for a future without his physical presence; a presence they have gotten used to. This circumstance is about to change—and change is scary. Of course the disciples don't want Jesus to leave! They rely on him! (and of course many of you do not want me to leave, because you rely on me.)

But the disciples also have a command from him to go out into the world and share the good news of his life, his death, and most important his resurrection. The kernel of good news is that resurrection is available for all who believe in him. Now the disciples could have stayed huddled in a room with a locked door. But that would have defeated God's purpose to spread this good news around the world. So they needed to recognize and be reassured that they have the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, with them wherever they go. The truth of the resurrection wasn't just for those early followers; it's true for us as well. Jesus is with us wherever we find ourselves. Jesus is with us in the boats of our lives.

The apostle Paul said much the same thing, but from a different perspective in the passage from Romans 8. First in verses 31 and 32, and I quote: "What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?" My friends, *If God is for us, who is against us?* As children of God, as people claimed by God, God is always for us. We have proof of that, if you will, when we recognize that God sent Jesus to earth on our behalf. God gave him up to death for our sakes. And, as Paul says, if God was willing to go to this extreme length for us, then will God not stay with us? Yes, God is with us—even when the storms of life try to swamp our boat. Remember Jesus is with you in the boat.

I have told the following story many times, but I repeat it here because it is one of the most important teachings I can leave with you.

When I was a senior in high school my Sunday School teacher, (yes we had SS even after confirmation) Mrs. Fredrickson entered our classroom and pulled out a piano bench. She told two of the senior guys to catch her if she fell. She climbed onto the bench and proceeded to recite Romans 8:38-39. "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." She made us recite this verse several times until we had it memorized. She ended by saying, "Someday you are going to need these words." As high school seniors, looking forward to graduation, we had no inkling of the storms that might assail us. But rest assured my friends, there were most certainly storms. I can't speak for my classmates, but I can speak for myself...these words have been a source of support through many a storm. Someday you, my friends, are going to need these words.

Nothing on this earth can separate us from the love of God.
Remember, always, that Jesus is with you in the boat. Amen.