

Jesu Juva

“Always Someplace to Go”

Text: Mark 4:35-41 (Job 38:1-11; 2 Cor 6:1-13)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

When you're on a boat out in the middle of the sea, there's no place to go if something goes wrong. Think of all the cruise ship horror stories that have been in the news the past couple of years. When there's a fire on board, there's no place to go to get away from it. If the engines die or there's a power failure, you can't just call the repairman. When sickness starts to spread and overtake the ship, there's no place to avoid it. All around you is just water, maybe for as far as the eye can see, dividing you from land, separating you from others, and threatening to swallow you up.

On land, it's different. There's usually someplace you can go if something goes wrong. If a tornado threatens, the folks in tornado alley have shelters they can take refuge in and be protected. If a hurricane nears the coast, or flooding threatens, you can evacuate inland and get away from the worst of it. Or if there's fire or power problems, there are people you can call for help and who are ready to come quickly. But when you're out on the water, there's no place to go. When you're out on the water and all you can see is water on all four sides, then what?

Well then you are exactly where Jesus wants you. That when you have no place to go, you go to Him.

And so we heard in the Holy Gospel today of the disciples in a boat, out on the Sea of Galilee. Some of them, at least, were experienced fishermen; experienced on being out on the water and how to handle it. But the storm that arose that day was a doozy! Even more than they could handle. We're not told everything that happened and the exact sequence of things, but undoubtedly they tried their best to handle the situation, doing what they had always done when storms arose, and what they knew needed to be done. But still they found themselves in danger, against a storm - or maybe it was a *superstorm*, like what devastated New Jersey and New York a couple years ago. And it was too much for them. There was nothing they could do and they had no place to go.

So finally they go to Jesus. ***Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?*** they ask. It's a plea for help disguised under an accusation. And so it's a plea for help without having to humble themselves or admit their weakness. 'Cause we don't like to humble ourselves or admit we need help or cannot do something. That's why if you ask a child to help you move something, they will always try to carry the biggest thing. Or why men (usually men) in pre-GPS days would rather drive around lost for half an hour before

stopping and asking directions. It's a pride thing; a self-sufficiency thing; an "I can do it" thing. Which in worldly matters, maybe yes, maybe no. But in spiritual matters, a definite no. And in spiritual matters, a deadly thing.

And so a spiritual stubbornness in us that needs to be killed. So that we have no place to go but to Jesus.

And you don't have to be on a boat - God did it to Job. Job truly had no place to go. All his possessions got wiped out. All his children were killed. His wife turned against him, and his friends were no help. For they got together with Job and their attitude was: *Okay, let's figure this out. Let's get a handle on it, get our minds around it, and fix it.* But they couldn't. Every attempt failed. I've been there. You?

So finally the disciples go to Jesus, who is the anti-disciple. They are in a tizzy, He is sleeping. They are worried, He is calm. So they wake Him up, and you can just imagine the scene . . . Jesus looks at them, shakes His head a little, and calls to the wind and the sea: *Okay, that's enough. Thank you. **Be still.*** And then He asks those disciples: ***Have you still no faith?***

Oh, they had faith, they did - just in the wrong place. They had faith in themselves. They needed to learn there's a better place to put your faith. The only place, really. A better One to rely on instead of yourself. The only One, really. The One who ***even the wind and sea obey.*** The storm humbled them, and Jesus strengthened them.

For the very reason Jesus was in the boat with them was that *He cared that we were perishing.* His very presence was the answer to their question, *Don't you care?* But I don't mean the fact that He was in the boat instead of somewhere on shore - I mean the fact that the very Son of God had become flesh and was dwelling with us, living with us, in our sin and weakness and stubbornness and sinfulness; in our peril and danger. His presence in our world proved that He cared, and that He would do everything necessary to save us who are perishing . . . even be swallowed up for us, by death.

Don't you care that we are perishing? What a question! Jesus does nothing but care. His teaching, His miracles, His compassion, and His rebuking, His discipline, and the troubles and crosses He sends - all are because He cares. To kill our pride so that we repent. To humble us so He may lift us up. To expose how foolish our pride and our ideas of self-sufficiency so that we rely on Him. That when we have no place to go (and when it is God who maybe puts us there), we know we always have someplace to go - **to Him.** For He is the One who *is able* to help, who *wants* to help, who *will* help, and *has come* to help. For ***who is this?*** the disciples asked. The very Son of God, in human flesh, to save you.

For it's easy to go cruising through this life (yes, pun intended!) when the waters are calm and the livin' is easy. It's when trouble hits that faith is revealed . . . and who your faith is in. And that's true for you as an individual Christian, or when we're all together in the boat, as the Church. So when the troubles come, when the storms hit, and they show your weakness or that you've been going along really with faith in yourself, *thanks be to God!* That we turn to Him now and rely on Him now.

Or as St. Paul put it: Folks, ***now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*** And so we humble ourselves *now* and repent of our sin *now*, and receive His forgiveness and life *now*. We remember our baptism *now*, and know that those waters aren't meant to make us good swimmers, but to kill the old sinner in us and give us a new life. We hear the Word of God proclaimed *now*, calling us to faith in Him and not in ourselves. And we feed *now* on the food our Lord gives us, His answer for all time to the question: *Don't you care that we are perishing?* He replies: *This is My Body, This is My Blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins* - that's how much I care. Give and shed for your wrong faith, for your pride, for your vain self-sufficiency. *This is My Body, This is My Blood, given and shed for you* because I do care. So, now, *depart in peace.*

Peace. The same Word spoken to the wind and the sea, now spoken to you and your heart. Whatever troubles you, whatever is frightening you, whatever is threatening you, whatever is haunting you, whatever worries you, your past, your present, or your future . . . *peace.* You have the One who is greater than all. Or perhaps better to say, **He has you.** He has you in His hands, in His eye, in His heart.

Is sin the problem? Jesus died for your sin on the cross. It has been paid for, atoned for. You are forgiven. *Peace.*

Is death the problem? Jesus died your death and then broke it's power in His resurrection. It cannot hold you anymore. When you die your life will continue, new, in Jesus. You will rise with Him. *Peace.*

Or is life the problem? 'Cause no matter how hard you try, you just can't do it? You keep falling into the same traps and temptations? You keep messing up and failing and kicking yourself? *Peace.*

It's not up to you. Jesus has done it. All that is necessary for you and your salvation. And He's in the boat with you. Though ascended into heaven, He has not left, but is here, as He promised. And He sent His Spirit, as He promised. And He is coming again, as He promised. Because He does care. Always. And He's not stopping. Ever.

Sometimes it takes a storm to teach us that again, and to expose us again. If so, how fortunate we are to have a God who sends us not just nice weather, but those storms that

we need. And who even more, is with us Himself in them. To see us through. To give us peace. To save. That we never have no place to go, but at all times and in all places go to Him who came to us and is working all things for your good.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.