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St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Elk Grove (Sacramento)
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Text: Mark 4:35-41

So we're taking my daughter to camp today! Zoey, age 8, is a little younger than I was when I first went to summer camp. And I am hoping that camp is as enriching for her as it was for me. All those songs and stories, the relationships, the activities, the focus on Scripture—all that has meant so much to me in my formation. And I pray that Zoey will have a wonderful time in whatever way that forms her.

And I am truly grateful at this moment that I can send my child to camp and not worry. I am going to get in the car and drive her. There are going to be people to receive her, to care for her, who are going to meet her needs, feed her. They know what to do if she has a medical emergency. They have my phone number if they need to reach me. And I'm going to go back on Friday and pick her up, and then we'll be together again for the summer.

And I'm very conscious, as you may be also, that that is not the case for every family in this world. And I hear the words of the disciples this morning, who say, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" That has stuck with me this week as we have heard of families who are not so lucky, of people who are suffering and dying. "Do you not care that we are perishing?"

Now you and I as disciples, as followers of Jesus, hear a Gospel story like the one we read today, and we think we're like the disciples. The Gospels were written for us. So we see ourselves in the story, see this interaction between Jesus and the disciples as being true for us. There are lessons for us, there truly are in this.

We're all going somewhere. There's the other side for all of us. And storms come up in our lives and we're afraid, and we all can call out to Jesus to save us and know that Jesus's power is mighty to save. To give us peace.

Usually we do read this story about ourselves, as a response to those moments when we cry out, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" so that Jesus will stand and calm the storms of our lives. And sometimes also we hear the lesson in what Jesus says, that faith can make us unafraid, because our trust in God teaches us that Jesus is able to help us. And so when storms well up around us, our faith and trust allow us to rely on him to get us safely to the other side.

Those lessons are truly there in this Gospel for us.

Often the place we're going is sort of metaphorical, and not a physical space so much as a new way of being. We're invited sometimes into relationships that require us to leave what we know and learn something new. Or we're invited into work that stretches us and invites us to take risks. The living out of our faith often involves some kind of boundary crossing to get to some other side. And for those of us in the dominant culture, which usually means some combination of white and straight and middle class, we have to recognize that other people are having experiences that are invisible to us.

And Jesus invites us to follow him and get to know what's happening right next to us and across from us that we might never see unless we take a risk and go there and see how the other side lives. For all of us are called and gifted by God for ministry, and in order to do the work God has given us to do, we must take risks. Cross boundaries.

For some people, and we often think of this when we use the word *minister*, that actually means crossing this boundary from the congregation to the pulpit, to the altar. But in fact everyone is a minister, and this is hardly the only kind of ministry God calls people to. Everyone has gifts that God is calling them to use, but we have to take a risks to use them. Cross metaphorical lakes.

And sometimes—as we leave behind our lives of slavery to sin and follow Jesus into freedom of life, we struggle, mightily. As I am thinking about this crossing to the other side, this week I'm remembering a crossing that I made from one side of this country to the other. Keith and I lived in Maryland when we were in our early twenties, and I liked it

there. And honestly part of that was that it gave me space between me and my mother, which was a relationship that was really difficult for me in those days. And Keith finished his Master's degree and was accepted a the doctoral degree program—which is very exciting—and it was in California. And in my dreams, I was literally being given the death penalty. I felt like I was going to die. And I could have put myself right into today's Gospel story: "Lord, don't you care that I am perishing?"

This is just a human thing, to have to face our fears and go to new places, geographically or mentally or spiritually. And Jesus does care, and Jesus is powerful to calm the storms in our lives, and Jesus does not abandon us.

And—there's an invitation in today's Gospel story to relate to another sort of character—not the disciples, and not Jesus either, the only other *person* involved in the action, but to the storm. What if we are the waves? What if we are the ones threatening to drown those who have been called by Jesus to cross to the other side? What about those times when others are crying out and we are there to witness it? What about those ways in which our choices rock the boats in which other people sail?

As stories of those who are crossing to the other side flood in, and we hear of their trials, I am feeling like we had darned well better pay attention to whether we are bringing them God's peace, or we are adding to their burdens. Making the storms through which they travel more life-threatening than before. People are literally coming to the borders of this nation because their lives are threatened. Families from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala can no longer live in safety, can no longer get what they need to support life. Poverty and scarcity, violence and murder have driven them out. They are already in the midst of a life-threatening storm when they leave. They need to get to the other side to survive. And then they get here, and the storm does not calm, are we the hands and voice of Jesus offering peace to those who suffer? Or are we part of the storm that makes them cry out, "Do you not care that we are perishing? Do you not care that we are perishing?"

Brothers and sisters and siblings, we have power to work in life-giving ways for those who suffer, for those who are perishing. We have the power of prayer. We have the power of political action. We have the power to support those who act directly to ease suffering. And we may even have the power to go and directly serve those people ourselves.

This week the suffering of those Central American refugee families has been front and center in the news. But there are other families. There are other people. And in fact all the time, every week, you and I are surrounded by people who are suffering. People we meet in stores and at our jobs and at schools and on the streets, everywhere we go. People we meet here in this place. People are hurting in ways we can't see. And they're starving spiritually for lack of relationship with God.

Vestry member Hayley Sharpe and I went to a conference last week in Tennessee, called Invite Welcome Connect. This part of our focus on growing our ministry to people in this community, to invite more people into this relationship with God. And we talked at this conference about a kind of ethos that a community can have that does this inviting, that does this healing work. It's a way of being a community and looking at people who are outside it, and making a choice.

Our attitude could be, "Hey, people out there—look at our church!" And in days when we feel like we're under attack or we're shrinking or whatever it may be, we might say, "Do you not care that we are perishing? Come and help us." But of course then no one will hear the invitation of God to come in, in to God's love, to come and be reconciled, to come and know mercy and forgiveness.

No, we must turn our ears, and hear the cry of others who call out, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" Because we are called upon to care that they are perishing. And that's inside and outside the community of the church—each of us called by God to care that others are perishing. Each of us called by God to take the risks and do the work to extend God's invitation to life to all the world.

And to make this a place where every parent and every child can trust that they will be safe, and they will be together.

Amen.