

AFTER THE STORM PASSES

TEXT: Psalm 30:5: *“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”*

We gathered here today to worship God and to remember there is hope after the storm. Life often brings us through turbulent times such as we just had with Hurricanes Milton and Helene a few weeks ago. It's in these moments that we can find hope and renewal of our faith. Our scripture lesson today is from Mark 4:35-41. But I want us to have as our text this morning Psalm 30 verse 5. *“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”* What we just experienced was a nightmare! But storms in life are to be expected. They come in various forms. Personal loss. A health crisis. Financial struggles. Emotional unrest. Hurricanes. They can leave us feeling overwhelmed and hopeless.

In Mark 4:35-41, Jesus calmed a storm. The disciples were in a boat with Jesus and were terrified. *“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, “Peace! 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!”*

This story of Jesus calming the storm applies to what just happened in our lives. Just as Jesus was with His disciples in the boat during the storm, Jesus was with us in our storm. And this story should reassure us that we are never alone in our struggles. Jesus is always present. Even when it feels like He is asleep. The disciples' fear, and how Jesus responded shows the importance of faith in moments of crisis. It's natural to feel afraid. But this story should encourage you to trust in Jesus' power and presence. He asks you to have faith, even when circumstances seem overwhelming. Jesus' ability to calm the storm shows His authority over all creation. It reminds us that no matter how chaotic or uncontrollable our situations may seem, Jesus has the power to bring peace and order. The command *“Peace! Be still!”* is a powerful reminder that Jesus can bring peace to our hearts and minds during turmoil. And after it's all over, you can find calm and reassurance in His words and presence.

Storms in life can be opportunities. They can test and strengthen your faith. They can help you to rely more deeply on God. The disciples' experience with Jesus during that storm deepened their understanding of who He was and their trust in Him. The disciples faced the storm together, just as we did with Milton and Helene. Their shared experience brought them closer together. Likewise, our communities—whether family, friends, or church—can provide support and encouragement during challenging times.

What this story teaches is for us to trust in Jesus, seek His peace, and grow in faith, knowing He is with us through every storm we face. He brings peace and calm. Even in the darkest times, we can find hope in the midst of the storm. Romans 5:3-5 tells us that *“we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”* During the storm, we must anchor ourselves in God's promises.

Look at that stained glass window in the left rear corner of the Sanctuary donated by Bub and Jeffie McDonald. It says, “In every high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil” from the hymn, The Solid Rock: *In every high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil. On Christ the solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand.* Hebrews 6:19 says, *“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.”* God's promises are unshakable. He provides us with strength and assurance. Then, after the storm passes, there's time for renewal and growth. That's where we are now! Just as nature renews after a storm, our lives can experience new beginnings and fresh perspectives. Isaiah 40:31 says, *“those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.”* Our strength is renewed as we place our hope in God.

The Bible often uses the image of storms to describe trials and tribulations. Proverbs 10:25 says, *“When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever”*. This verse reassures us that believers will endure and find stability after the storm. *“After the storm passes”* is a reminder that challenges are temporary. That there is always hope for a brighter future. Whether you're facing real or imagined storms, the promise of a calm renewal can provide you comfort and strength. So, as we come out of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, we have a unique opportunity to share our hope with others. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 reminds us that God comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. *“³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”* Our experiences in these hurricanes can be a testimony to others, showing them that hope is possible even after the most challenging of times.

Once upon a time, in a small village nestled by the sea, the villagers lived a peaceful and happy life. Kind of like where we are. They thrived on fishing, farming, and the powerful sense of community that bound them together. However, one fateful day, dark clouds gathered on the horizon. A fierce storm approached. The storm was unlike any they had ever seen. The winds howled. The rain poured. And the sea roared with fury. The villagers huddled in their homes. While praying for safety as the storm raged on, trees were uprooted. Homes were damaged. And the once calm sea turned into a tempest. After what felt like an eternity, the storm finally passed. The villagers emerged from their shelters to find their beloved village in ruins. The devastation was overwhelming. Many felt a deep sense of despair. But among the wreckage, a glimmer of hope began to shine. The village elder, a wise and kind-hearted woman named Lara, gathered everyone in the village square. She spoke with a voice filled with compassion and strength, *"My dear friends. We have faced a great storm. But we are still here. Our village may be damaged. But our spirit remains unbroken. Together, we will rebuild and find hope after the storm."* Inspired by Lara's words, the villagers began to work together. They cleared debris, repaired homes, and helped one another with untiring determination. The fishermen mended their nets. The farmers replanted their crops. The children, with their boundless energy, assisted wherever they could. And as the days turned into weeks, the village slowly began to change. New homes were built stronger than before. The fields started to yield fresh new crops. The sea, once a source of fear, returned to providing bountiful catches for the fishermen. Then, one evening as the sun set over the horizon casting a golden glow over the village, Lara gathered everyone once more. *"Look around you," she said. "We have faced the storm and emerged stronger. Our village is not just rebuilt. It is renewed. We have learned the power of unity, strength, and hope."* The villagers looked at their restored village with pride and gratitude. They realized the storm, though devastating, had brought them closer together and revealed their true strength. They had discovered that hope shines brightest after the darkest storms.

And even after the most challenging of times. There is always the possibility of renewal and growth. Storms are a part of life. But they are not the end of the story. With Jesus, we can find peace during the storm and hope for a brighter future. Hold on to the promise that joy comes in the morning. And trust in God's unfailing love and faithfulness to strengthen you. Be renewed by this hope. Now, look at the front of your Order of Worship. It is a lighthouse. Become a beacon of hope for those around you. And you will find comfort and strength from God during challenging times.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank You for Your faithfulness. Even in the darkest of times, You are our light. Help us to hold on to the hope that joy comes in the morning. And that Your mercies are new every day. Heavenly Father, thank You for Your protection and guidance through the storm. We are grateful for Your strength that carried us through the difficult times. As the skies clear and peace returns, we are reminded of Your unwavering love and mercy. May we continue to trust in You and find comfort in Your presence. Bless those who are still facing challenges and grant them the same strength and hope. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.