

We continue our look at storms this Sunday morning. Over the last 2 weeks we've looked at a couple of specific storm stories – Jesus in the boat with the disciples where he wakes up and commands the storm to be still and then last week about how Jesus walked on water and for a split second Peter did too. This morning I want to talk about some of the things that storms can change. Literal storms change the landscape of whole coasts or entire islands or cities. Things look different after a storm. You may have heard mention if you've attended Carbondale longer than 2 weeks that in May of 1999 we had a tornado that forever changed the way the church looked. Fun fact, I wasn't here for that storm. I was already in college and on tour with a group I sang with – it would be 3 ½ weeks before I arrived home to see the damage. This was pre-cell phones, pre-social media so I tried to think, but I don't believe I saw pictures before I got home. I arrive home to the church offices having moved into my childhood home and a large tent in the parking lot behind our house with a fence no longer separating the two. Everything looked different in the aftermath of that storm – a lot had changed. Physically there were differences to the property. But, there were also differences in the way that people closest to me viewed storms. Because I wasn't here I still don't take cover during a tornado warning – my fear and awe of the storm comes from a different perspective than those who heard it pass over. That storm caused other changes for my family – we moved to a different house – it would be years before I ever located some of my childhood and high school items. Nothing was ever quite the same after the storm came through and brought permanent changes.

The storms that happen in our lives – those trials and difficulties, those things that we just don't understand, times that threaten to overwhelm us and drown us or plunge us in to seemingly never ending darkness – they change us forever as well. But, some of those changes aren't always bad. Sometimes storms can result in positive changes too. This morning I want to look at some of those changes.

1. Storms change our perspective.

The story of Job is one full of storms. We as the reader are given the behind stage look as Satan has a conversation with God. Have you considered my servant Job? God asked. There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man

who fears God and shuns evil. Of course he does, the accuser replies, you bless him like crazy and protect him. Take away everything good in his life and he'll curse you in a second. So, God let's Satan, the accuser, do just that with one stipulation – that Job must remain alive. Suddenly, without warning messengers begin to arrive – your oxen and donkeys are dead. The sheep and your servants with them are dead. The camels are gone. Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking when a mighty wind swept in and struck the corners of the house. It collapsed and all are dead. In a matter of minutes everything changed. Nothing looked quite the same for Job. How do you move forward when nothing looks familiar? I've never been here at this crossroads in my life; I have no idea what to do. Storms have a way of doing that – coming up suddenly, without a lot of warning, leaving us to scratch our heads and ask that horrible question of “why”. They leave us standing alone and wondering and realizing that nothing looks quite the same.

Job had always looked at life through rose-colored glasses. He'd served God all his life. In fact, in chapter 31, he'll list out all the ways he's been obedient and how he's lived a life of integrity and helped the poor and the needy. He's a godly man who took care of his family. Job believed that God should be praised and honored and he continues to do that in the midst of the storm that was raging against him. Finally though it begins to get to him and he loses sight of where God is in this storm. **“But if I go to the east, he is not there, if I go to the west, I do not find him. When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him. But he knows the way that I take...” Job 23:8-9** Job's reminding himself – I know that you see me. I have to believe that you're still watching me, but where are you, God? Where are you when everything is falling apart? This storm is changing everything. And then Job tells his friends, **“I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God.” Job 13:3** More than anything Job just wants to be reminded that God is still there. That God still cares. Everything else has changed and Job begins to wonder if that has changed as well. Where are you God? I want to speak to you! I have some questions I'd like to ask you, I need a few answers here, and I'd to get a few things off my chest. I think we can all relate to Job in these moments.

But then, everything changes once more when in chapter 38 we read, **“Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm.” Job 38:1** The storms of life have been raging against Job – he’s lost everything – his children, his wealth, his health, his position – people are now laughing at him, and he’s wondering where is God. And, now, in what appears to be a literal storm God shows up and speaks to Job. His very presence answers the question Job has had – where are you God – I’ve looked everywhere. Here I am, God says, I’m in the storm. And then God begins to ask Job some questions – where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Who marked off its dimensions? Who shut up the sea behind doors? Do you know where I store up the rain? Or how to disperse the lightning? God says, I mean stop me if you know. Interrupt me if you have an answer. Job remains silent. God begins to explain just how big, how incomparable, how great, how awesome He is. He gets Job to see his human limitations – you can only know so much, Job, but the Lord Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth knows things that you cannot possibly understand. He knows things about the storm because He’s in the storm. Finally, when Job can speak he says, **“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.”** And then Job makes this statement, **“My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you.” Job 42:2-3, 5**

Job’s perspective changed in the storm. God comes to Him with his presence – He was present in the storm and that was enough for Job. I’d heard some things about you, God. I thought I knew who you were – something about how you created the heavens and the earth and you sent your one and only Son. I heard something about how you loved people, but it wasn’t until the storm that I truly saw you. It was in the storm that I knew your voice. It was in the storm that you revealed yourself to me. God never told Job why it had all happened – only we know that part of the story. **God never told Job why because the why wasn’t nearly as important as the Who.** Job sees just who was in the storm with him – God himself – and as a result he never gets around to asking why the storm happened in the first place. You need to know this morning that though you may never have the “why’s” of your storm

answered here – you can rest assured that the God who is in the storm with you also knows you. He knows where you are. He sees you, and He’s in the storm with you! We see God in new ways in the storm and that change in perspective is a good thing.

2. Storms change our personal connection to Jesus.

I want to look again at the storm found in Matthew 8. Jesus and his disciples get into a boat when “without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake.” Jesus was in the boat sleeping and the disciples wake him up screaming. “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” Jesus says, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” He rebukes the wind and the waves, and it was completely calm. **“The men were amazed and asked, ‘What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!’”**

Matthew 8:27

Once again we have a sudden, without warning storm experience where they lose sight of Jesus. Where are you? We’re drowning! And, once again, we see that Jesus was found in the storm having never left them for a second to face it on their own. But, this storm changed their perspective on just who this person was they had given their lives to follow. It changed their connection to Him in a far more personal way. In the middle of this storm Jesus stands up and calms the winds and the waves and the disciples were “amazed.” They’ve been following Jesus for a while now and have seen some amazing things. So for them to say they were amazed is quite the statement until you realize that they’ve never seen this. They had been with Jesus when he healed the sick so they knew him to be a healer. They had seen him do miracles so they knew him to be a miracle worker. They were with him when he cast out demons so they knew him to be a deliverer. And they just had heard him speak on the mountain to multitudes so they knew him to be an incredible teacher. But they had never experienced his power in this manner and they had never known him to be their peace because they’d never had need of peace before. Always before it was someone else’s disease, someone else’s problem, someone else’s storm but that day in the boat they had a personal revelation of Jesus Christ’s power in their own lives. See it’s one thing to hear a story about someone being healed but it’s another thing to be the one who is healed. Hearing and experiencing are two different things – Job learned that thousands of years before. But, now the disciples are learning it –

our ears have heard you, - our ears have you speak and with a word bring healing, but now our eyes are seeing you in a different way! The disciples learned things that day that they couldn't have learned any other way but to go through the storm with Jesus. To have a personal encounter with the power of Jesus. They learned more about Jesus in the storm than they would have learned had it been a smooth course. It's easier for us sometimes to believe for someone else than it is to ask for a miracle for ourselves. Just before they got in this boat they'd gone to Peter's mother-in-law's home where Jesus had healed her. My guess is that Peter had seen Jesus healing others and wondered if He could do the same for his family. Jesus brings healing to her, and yet the very next day when confronted with a different storm Peter panics. I wonder if Jesus was saying to Peter - where's your faith today? You had faith to believe I'd heal your mother-in-law yesterday, but you thought I'd let you drown today? You can believe me for healing and help for others but not for yourself? See, the same Jesus that brought healing yesterday can deliver you from a storm today. He didn't change - just the weather did. The same Jesus that performs miracles on dry ground can work a miracle on stormy seas. If you can trust Him in the sunshine then don't doubt him in the rain.

The disciples asked in verse 27 "what kind of man is this?" At first glance this seems like a strange question for them to ask. After all they were the people who walked with Jesus and who knew him better than anyone else. But they were seeing him in ways they had never seen Him before. What kind of man is he?

A man of compassion, mercy, grace, peace, love, forgiveness. He offers strength, healing, safety, security, refuge, acceptance. He is our deliverer, our provider, our strong tower, our Redeemer to name just a few. Who is Jesus to you - what kind of man have you found him to be in your own life? How has He revealed himself to you in the midst of your storm, your pain, your hurt? **The storm revealed that the disciples had a narrow definition of who Jesus was - He can only do this, in these ways, in these instances, but the storm also revealed Jesus as the master of so much more.** The storm changed their understanding of who Jesus was and what He could do for them individually.

Maybe you've been scared in the storm you're facing because you've never seen Jesus like this before. You've prayed for others – you've told others what Jesus can do – He can heal you, He can save you – but now it's your storm, now it's your diagnosis, now it's your son, now it's your bill – now it's something you've never before needed to trust God for. You didn't know He could do THAT because you'd never had need of it before. The storm changes things and makes them personal, and that change can be a good thing.

3. Storms change our course.

The last story I want to draw your attention to is found at the end of the book of Acts. The Apostle Paul was called by God earlier in Acts 9 to preach to the Gentiles. This calling constantly set him at odds with the religious Jews and finally led to him being arrested in Jerusalem. They people were yelling that he wasn't fit to live and they should rid the earth of him. Paul tells them he's a Roman citizen, his sister hears of yet another plot to kill him, they transfer him to Caesarea where he stands trial and remains in prison for a couple of years. Finally, he stands trial again and this time appeals to Caesar and it's agreed he'll be taken to Rome. While Paul is in prison – one could call this a storm he's facing – God speaks to him and assures him that this is all part of the plan and that he'll have opportunity to speak about the Lord to many leaders. Then in Acts 27 we read, "When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over...and we boarded a ship...and we put out to sea." It wasn't great weather and against better judgment they carried on. I believe this falls into the category of "ill fated." Sure enough they get themselves into a horrific storm – hurrican force winds are battering this boat – they begin throwing supplies overboard – doing whatever it took to stay alive.

"When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved." Acts 27:20

Storms in our lives sometimes look like this. God, I was doing what you said to do. In fact, as the storm started brewing you assured me I was still in your will. But, it's darker now than it's ever been. I'm not sure I can even hold on any longer. I've given up hope because it's just too dark. Even if you showed up and spoke to me like you

did to Job or you revealed yourself like you did to the disciples I don't think my eyes could see it – it's so dark.

But, once again, in the storm, the Holy Spirit comes with a word to Paul in the dark of the night. Paul tells the rest of the men what he'd heard, **“I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.” Acts 27:22-26** When we belong to God we won't be lost in the dark of the storm. He's got us. He sees us. It isn't too dark that God can't still find us and come with a word of encouragement to our heart. Don't be afraid.

The ship falls apart. There's a shipwreck and they end up on the island of Malta. I don't have time for this story, but suffice it to say Paul and I have a few things in common – namely that we've both have had some wrecks on the island of Malta – he in a boat, me in the only automatic rental van on the island – over the course of 2 separate trips I literally destroyed that van. Paul and I also both had amazing doors of ministry open for us though. On Malta – a place that was never on the list of stops for this journey they have opportunity to preach Jesus and they lay hands on the sick and see them healed. God does amazing things when the storm brought them off course.

Paul was in God's will when he got on the boat, in the storm, and in the shipwreck. God was with Him through it all, and His Holy Spirit was there to speak words of hope in the dark. **What we read as detours were merely the pre-planned ports on the path of obedience.** Just because a storm has come up in your life doesn't mean that God is trying to hurt you or push you around. It doesn't mean that He's left you or that you're out of His will. It might just be that this is part of His plan for you. When you obey the Lord it won't all be calm waters, but the storm may be needed to get you where He wants you to be. The storm can change the course our lives take, but sometimes that change can be good.

In all 3 of these storms God has been present. In the Old Testament it's God himself who speaks in the storm, in the New Testament it's Jesus himself in the boat, and in the days of the early church it's the Holy Spirit at work in God's people never leaving them for a second to fend for themselves. This gives me reason to believe that God is present in our storms as well. Because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The writer of Hebrews in chapter 6 tells us that we can trust God when he makes a promise. His nature is unchanging and it is impossible for God to lie. When He says don't be afraid in the storm he means it. And, because he doesn't change, **"We who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."**

Hebrews 6:18-19

Storms change a lot of things – some of them good – our perspective, our relationship, even the course that we're on – but storms can't change Jesus! He's the same faithful one in the storm and in the sun. He's firm and secure and He's got us in His grip. We can trust Him in the dark and in the light of day. We can hope for a better tomorrow because He's already there making a way for us.

WORSHIP TEAM

If you're in the storm today don't lose heart – God's in the storm with you. You may feel like you're drowning and wondering where He is, but just as Job and the disciples and Paul found out so you will as well – He's right there. Where are you God – and God answers from the storm. Jesus, save me! and from the boat in the storm He answers. God I thought this was your plan? And in the darkness comes the whisper of the Holy Spirit. God is present. Anchor yourself to Him. He's stronger than the storm. He's a firm foundation on which you can stand when the waves are threatening to overtake you. You're secure in His embrace. He's not going to let you go. He's holding you through this storm!

This morning maybe you need to have a fresh revelation of who God is or maybe you need to hear God speak – reminding you of His presence or maybe you just need to worship in the storm. I want us all to stand and if you'd like someone to pray with you someone will meet you here.

Pray