

The Story – Master Of The Storm

We spent the first half of the year looking at the big stories of the Old Testament and we will spend the rest of the year looking at the big stories of the New Testament. Obviously that means we turn our focus to Jesus. Last week we talked briefly about his baptism before we baptized 26 people. This morning and for the next few weeks we are talking about Jesus as the Master of the storm, the Master over demons, disease, death. He is master over all!

Our story today is recorded in both Matthew and Mark's gospel. A sudden storm came up as Jesus and his disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee. All of us can identify with the disciples in this story. We've all encountered storms and this was a storm that came up suddenly, without warning. They tell us storms often come suddenly on the Sea of Galilee. In fact, there is a corridor between two mountains to the west that opens directly onto the Sea. Without warning, a strong wind and storm can come sweeping through that pass and onto the sea and it can go from calm to life-threatening in a moment's time.

We all know about storms in one form or fashion. I've preached this message before, probably more than once, but we forget the truth of the story until a storm comes. We all forget what was said in the sermon and then...the doctor calls and the biopsy came back positive or the ct-scan showed a mass and everything changes. Without warning your spouse announces he or she is leaving. Without warning the boss says we are cutting back and we have to let you go. Everything was fine until the doorbell rang and the police officer tells you your son or daughter has been arrested. A loved one dies, a friend betrays you. You know what I'm talking about. These are the storms that come suddenly, without warning.

For sure life is not just a series of storms, don't misunderstand. The blessings of God far out number the storms, but storms do come in this life. Some of you in recent days have encountered the winds of an unexpected and sudden storm. Overwhelmed, you are wondering, "When the storms come, what do I do?"

Jesus and his disciples had more than one encounter with sudden storms on the Sea of Galilee. Let's see what we can learn from their experience with storms. Turn to **Matthew 8:18-27** and then to **Mark 4:35-41**. I want us to read both accounts so we have a full perspective of the events of the day. (Begin reading at Matthew 8:18-27, then Mark 4).

Matthew's account records a day of miracles at Capernaum. The crowds were pressing in on him and Jesus said, "Let's get out of here and go to the other side of the lake." On Jesus'

instruction - according to his will and his plan, they set sail for the other side. Everything was fine. It had been an amazing day of inspiring teaching and incredible miracles. The disciples are feeling good about being part of Jesus' ministry team when suddenly, without warning - a furious storm came up.

I wonder if their reaction was what mine typically is. "This isn't supposed to happen. I'm on a mission from God, doing exactly what Jesus told me to do. I thought if I obeyed Jesus everything would be fine. I shouldn't be in the middle of a storm." Allow me to share three lessons we learn at the beginning of this story. (This is my bonus sermon!)

1. Between you and your destination there will be storms. Period. I don't care who you are, how much faith you have or don't have. Your life will not be without storms. Sudden, life altering storms. Saint or sinner there will be storms. Knowing Jesus doesn't affect whether storms come or not. Knowing Jesus affects how you come through the storm, but don't be surprised or alarmed when storms come. They come with living. Remember, there is no such thing as an unchallenged life.

2. If you are traveling with Jesus you must take him as he is. I don't want to make a huge deal out of the wording of this passage, but let me just make a comment about this phrase in light of the storms. **"Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat."** **Mark 4:36.** If you are going to follow Jesus, like the two men who spoke to him in Matthew's account, you will have to leave the crowd behind, take him just as he is and get in the boat with him, going wherever and however he wants to take you on the journey. He isn't going to change for you. You take him just as he is. The path he is traveling may lead through storms. You may encounter difficult people and difficult circumstances, but you took him just as he is. When you choose to follow Jesus, your destiny is linked with his. He had a destiny, an appointment on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and that meant everyone with him on board the ship had an appointment there as well. And let me make sure you get this:

It isn't about the storm, it's about the destination. We are troubled by storms, but don't forget how this journey got started. **In the beginning Jesus didn't say, "Let's go get into a storm." He said, "Let us go over to the other side!"** Storms may come on the journey, but Jesus said we were going to the other side and that's exactly what we are going to do. We're going where Jesus says we're going, in spite of the storms that come. It's not about the storm it's about the destination.

3. Sometimes the plan, purpose and power of God are more frightening than the storms.

Notice, at the end of Mark 4:41 - the wind had stopped blowing, the waves had stopped swamping the boat, it was completely calm but look at verse 41 - **“They were terrified and asked each other ‘Who is this?’”** Sometimes the revelation of God’s plan and purpose and power is scarier than the storms. God has a plan for you. He wants to take you to a new place of maturity, to a new level of faith, but the path there may be a little scary. He may use a storm, but it is all part of the plan and purpose of God. Trust him and don’t be afraid of the new things God is about to do in your life. Don’t be surprised if God’s presence and purpose is unsettling. Change and growth can be frightening but there is victory ahead. Besides, traveling with Jesus can be the most exciting ride of your life.

All right. That’s the bonus sermon. Now, with that in mind, what do we do when we are caught in a storm? Three more simple observations.

1. Stay in the boat with Jesus! Don’t abandon ship. Let’s use Jesus’ boat as a metaphor of the church. As crazy as it sounds, when storms come far too many people decide to jump ship. They drop out of church, abandon their faith, walk away from their relationship with Jesus. Like Jonah, they decide to try to find another ship going another direction. They blame the church, blame one of the pastors, blame the people for their troubles.

Listen to me, **It’s not the boat that’s causing the trouble, it’s the storm!** Don’t blame the boat. Don’t blame the church. Don’t blame Jesus. It’s the storm causing the trouble. Don’t curse the boat. It’s the only thing that has kept you thus far. The reason you haven’t drowned yet is because of Jesus and the church. I told you, storms are going to come. Don’t be surprised when they do, but whatever you do, don’t abandon ship. Don’t abandon the church. Don’t forsake Jesus. He’s not causing your trouble. It’s the storm that has brought the trouble.

If you’re thinking of leaving the church and abandoning your faith because you’ve been hurt, let me tell you -- you think it’s rough in the boat (in the church), just try surviving the storm bobbing up and down in the open sea! If you think it’s difficult in the boat with Jesus, wait till you get into the sea or on another boat without him.

Stay on board. Stick with the church, the family of God. I know it’s rough out there, that’s why I’m telling you to stay with Jesus and his church. Don’t leave when trouble comes. You need Jesus and the church more than ever when you’re in a storm!

Let me say it once again. Jesus is still in the boat with us and he is the one who said, **“Let us go over to the other side.” Mark 4:35.** If Jesus said “let’s go to the other side” you’re going to get to the other side sooner or later, one way or another. This boat we are on, the church, is the only vessel going to heaven. No other religion, institution, organization -- the church is the only thing Jesus is coming after to take to heaven. Stay on board with Jesus and you’ll get to the other side.

Listen, nothing of eternal value changes because storms come. Death comes but Jesus is still in the boat and we are still going to the other side. Death hasn’t changed the destination, it just took someone we loved to that destination sooner than expected. Illness comes, but Jesus is still in the boat and we are still going to the other side. Disappointment comes, but Jesus is still in the boat. You are still on course if you stay on board the ship. If sudden storms have come - first thing- stay in the boat! Secondly,

2. Get to where Jesus is. “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?’” Mark 4:38. They moved toward Jesus to wake him up. It is significant to me that Jesus was still asleep in the back of the boat. It indicates to me He knows something about storms we don’t. To prove that, just look at what Jesus said to them after he got up and calmed the storm. “Why were you afraid?”

Jesus said some strange things and asked some pretty strange questions at times. The implication is that Jesus always knew something the rest of the party didn’t know.

For instance, remember when Jesus got to Jairus’s house and found that his little daughter had died? The people were weeping and Jesus asked, “Why is everyone crying?” How could Jesus ask that question? It seems cold and insensitive doesn’t it? Jairus’ daughter was dead. Why would you need to ask why everyone was crying, unless of course Jesus knew something about death and dying they didn’t know. He took her by the hand and raised her from the dead. Now we see why he could ask, “Why is everyone crying?” Even death is powerless before Jesus.

Now here he is sleeping in a storm. The wind and waves are ferocious, the boat is being swamped by the waves, taking on water, yet they have to wake him up! Shouldn’t that be a clue that Jesus knows something they don’t know about the storm and its’ outcome? He is sleeping of all things! If Jesus isn’t alarmed, we shouldn’t be either! He knows something we don’t know about the storm and about our circumstances. Relax and trust him!

The disciples woke him up. “Master- teacher, we are perishing. Don’t you care? You know we are about to drown here.” They forgot where they were and who they were with, but at least they reached out to Jesus in the storm.

I know they were supposed to reach out to him in faith and not doubt. But as I look at this story, I don’t see a lot of faith. I see fear. “We’re going to drown!” I see doubt. “Don’t you care if we all drown?” I know they should have had enough faith to calm the wind and waves themselves but they were in a storm. It was dark (evening) and they were human. So yes, they were afraid. Like we would have been. And so they did the most sensible thing they knew to do. They went to Jesus! They reached out to Jesus in fear, in doubt, in disappointment, in faith, whatever, but nevertheless they reached out to Him and he answered them and met them at the point of their crisis and need.

I’m not telling you that faith doesn’t matter. Of course it does. Without faith it is impossible to please God. We have to believe and have faith. But I am telling you his mercy and grace and compassionate heart will reach back to you even if you are reaching out to him in more fear than faith. The key is – Get to Jesus! Move toward him. Reach out to him. Run to Jesus!

Whatever your circumstances, wherever you are on the boat, wherever you are in the storm, get to Jesus! Reach out to Jesus! Call on Jesus! Let the storm and the circumstances drive you toward Jesus. Let it drive you into His presence. **Be a God seeker in the storm.** Don’t start looking for another ship in a storm, just start looking for Jesus and get as close to him as you can. What do you do in a storm? Stay in the boat, get to where Jesus is and,

3. Let Jesus do what only Jesus can do. I can’t help but wonder how long the storm had been raging before they went to him and woke him up? Some of these guys were experienced fishermen remember. They were used to life on the sea. They had been in storms before. Besides, they were men. Men don’t ask for directions. They don’t ask for help. They don’t read the instructions. I wonder if they tried to sail for a while, tried to row their way out. Refusing to give up until finally, exhausted, the boat swamped by the waves and starting to fill with water, thinking they were going to drown and frightened, they came to Jesus and said “Help!”

Can I tell you, there are some things that only Jesus can do in your life. You might as well give up and let Jesus take over. Like someone said long ago, “Let go and let God.” But that’s hard for us, isn’t it? We are Americans. We are self-sufficient. We don’t need anyone

else. We don't ask for help. We pull ourselves up by our own boot straps. But there comes a time when you can't even find your boots in the storm, let alone pull them on by the straps. I'm telling you, it's time to surrender to Jesus and let him take over in your life. It's time to cast your cares upon Jesus and let him be the Lord of your life, the Lord of your storm.

We used to sing, "Give up and let Jesus take over and He'll make a way for you." It's the truth. Aren't you tired of trying to steer that boat in a storm? Aren't you tired of trying to manage your life without God's help and direction? It's time to let Jesus take over.

Jesus rebuked the winds and the waves. "Quiet!" He literally said 'hush' to the wind. The Greek word for 'be still' means to muzzle. He put a muzzle on the waves. The bible says, **"Then the wind died down and it was completely calm." Mark 4:39**

The men on the boat were terrified and amazed. "Who is this guy? Even the sea obeys him?" They had a healthy respect for the sea but now they saw one who was Master of the wind and waves and the sea. For these men this meant he must be the Messiah, the Son of God.

Jesus then asked that humbling and troubling question. "Why are you so afraid?" Kind of a "What's the big deal? It's just the wind and waves. It's just a storm. We are still going to the other side as I said. I'm still on board with you. What? Still no faith? Haven't you figured it out yet? I'm in control. I can handle any storm in your life." And how we need to hear that today! Why are you afraid? What are you afraid of that Jesus can't handle in your life?

"Afraid of dying?" Jesus says, "I've already conquered death. Don't be afraid. To be absent from the body is to be present with the lord."

Afraid of living? Jesus says, "I'm the way the truth and the life. I've come to give you abundant life and nothing can separate you from my love. I'll see you through every trial and difficulty. Don't worry, I'm with you. It will be all right."

Afraid of the storm? Jesus says, "I am the master of the storm. Even the wind and the waves have to obey me."

Are you here and in a storm in your life? Needing the Lord to calm the wind and waves, to speak peace into your life? He can do it. Get to Jesus, give up and let Jesus take over.

Maybe you're here but you've gotten out of the boat. You decided you were better off on your own so you left the church and took God out of the picture, but today you realize "I can't make it without Jesus. I need him and I need the church to stand with me. I can't make it alone." You've come to the right place. There is still time to get back on board.

Maybe you are here and you've been trying to be captain of your own vessel but the waves have finally beaten you down and you realize, "It's time to surrender. It's time to give up and let Jesus take over the controls of my life." Or maybe you've just come through a storm and you feel devastated. He is the rebuilder of what has been destroyed and torn apart in your life. Let him have access to your life so he can begin to put the pieces back together and rebuild the walls of your life.

Give up and let Jesus take over
Give up and let Jesus take over
Give up and let Jesus take over
And He'll make a way for you.

Well if you've got mountains that you can't climb
And if you got rivers that you can't cross
and if you got valleys that you can't span
Let Jesus take hold of your hand

Well if you've got burdens too hard to bear
and if your load seems more than your share
Kneel down and talk to Jesus because I know he cares
And he'll make a way somehow