

Swamped By A Storm

We've spent the past few weeks focusing on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. We finished that series and I felt with all of the destruction that has come from the hurricanes we should talk about storms. We know about tornados in this part of the world, but not much about hurricanes. However, we all know something about storms that come in our life. Although the weather may be fine outside, some of you are going through the worst storm you've ever encountered. Jesus knew about storms as well and there are lessons we can learn from him as he encounters a storm. Let's look at Mark 4. **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, 'Quiet! 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!'"** **Mark 4:35-41**

Church tradition says Mark wrote his gospel based on the preaching and recollection of Peter. By Mark's account it was a busy day of teaching. By evening Jesus sent the people away and told the disciples "Let's go over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee." It's important that you remember this verse. The disciples apparently forgot it and we tend to forget it as well. Keep that in mind. Jesus said "let's go over to the other side." We will come back to that later.

Suddenly a storm came up. A "furious squall" Mark says. Storms come suddenly on the Sea of Galilee. There is a mountain pass on the West side of the Sea and the winds come from the Mediterranean and can suddenly turn the calm sea into a dangerous one. Matthew's account says the storm came "without warning."

It sounds like life, doesn't it? Without warning things change. Unexpectedly storms arise. You go to bed and all is well and wake up in the morning and life has changed forever. Unexpectedly. You leave for work on top of the world and before your coffee break the boss calls you in and tells you they are having to make some changes and you're out of a job. Or the doctor's office calls and the report came back and there is no cure and without warning, a storm

that threatens everything! Some of you know what I'm talking about. A phone call, a knock at the door in the early morning hours, without warning, a storm comes.

In verse 37 Mark says waves broke over the boat and it was nearly swamped. Swamped means to flood with water or to overwhelm or overcome. I've been swamped before.

Overwhelmed by life, overwhelmed by fear. This storm was alarming, frightening, and in spite of the fact the majority of the people on that boat were experienced fishermen that made their livelihood fishing on boats on that sea, they were helpless to do anything in that kind of storm.

I'm not a fan of large bodies of water. I've never been on a cruise. You know why? Because you are helpless, out of control. Storms can come and there is nowhere to run. You are trapped. A sitting duck. All you can do is wait and hope. I want options. I remember getting into a dug-out canoe in Africa and they paddled us out to a little island to have lunch. I didn't need lunch that bad. This is the kind of trip journalists eventually refer to as "ill-fated." They told us to look for hippos. We wanted to see them but they warned us to watch out because they could surprise you and turn the canoe over. Keep me on land, thank you, where you can run!

I understand, they could row, but oars aren't going to do you any good in a furious storm when waves are swamping the boat. They were stuck, trapped, powerless against the storm. Peter probably had said, "we're in a tight spot boys." Do you know the feeling? Do you know what it's like to be swamped, overwhelmed, desperate, in a storm that seems to be relentless?

Peter recalled this detail to Mark, that there was a cushion in the stern, under the seats and Jesus was so exhausted from the ministry that he was sleeping through the storm! Peter remembered "we woke him up! How could anyone sleep through that kind of storm?" We see the humanity of Jesus in this episode, that he is so exhausted that he sleeps through a storm but then we see his divinity as he calms the wind and waves.

Peter woke Jesus. "Don't you care if we drown?" I don't know that the disciples were asking Jesus to perform a miracle. They may have just been saying, "All hands on deck. We need everyone bailing water or we are going down. Come on Teacher, don't you care what's happening? If you don't want to drown then help us bail water!"

Jesus got up and instead of asking for something to bail with, he spoke to the storm. "Quiet. Be still." And it became completely calm. What amazing authority. Authority and power over the forces of nature itself! And look at verse 41. It was when the storm ended at his command that Mark said, "they were terrified." "Who is this that even the wind and waves obey

him?” They had never seen anything like that and they were terrified. Sometimes God acts and speaks into our life and we discover the power of God and his purposes, even his will and direction for our life seems more frightening than the storm we were in! That’s the story, but now let’s walk back through and make a few more observations.

Storms are part of life. They were in the will of God, doing exactly what Jesus told them to do when they encountered a life threatening storm. Being a Christian doesn’t exempt you from storms, regardless of what you’ve been told. Peter wrote, **“Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you.” 1 Peter 4:12** Don’t panic and don’t be surprised if storms come. Part of the journey will be quiet and calm and part of it will include storms but regardless, we will get to the other side!

We have to take Jesus as he is. I think I’ve made this point every time I preach from this passage of Scripture. What does this mean and why did Mark include it? They took him as he was, exhausted. They took him as he was, needing a shower? Needing a nap? I don’t know, but I know what I always hear when I read it. We have to take Jesus as he is. We don’t get to remake him or try to change him into what we want him to be. We can’t make him more A/G, more Baptist, more Catholic, more conservative or liberal, more American or more global, more inclusive or exclusive. He is who he is, who the Word of God reveals him to be and we have to take him as he is. Jesus will upset you, comfort you, inspire you, frustrate you. He wants to save you and change you from a sinner to a saint. He didn’t come to make you comfortable but to make you conformable to his image. He hasn’t come to make you feel better about yourself and your choices, he has come to redeem you from sin and selfishness. He has come to lead you as you take up a cross and follow him to that eternal life and eternal home he has prepared for us, but you have to take him as he is and part of that journey, part of taking him as he is includes storms.

In spite of sudden storms and helpless conditions, never forget Jesus is in the boat! Remember his promise that he would never leave us nor forsake us. He hasn’t left you alone in the storm. We shout, “Jesus where are you? I’m being swamped by the waves and the water. I’m perishing in this storm and you don’t care.” But the reality is He is with you. He is on board with you. You’ve got no reason to panic. This is when you need to remember what he said to the disciples at the beginning of our story. “Let us go over to the other side.” If he said it, you can believe it! You can count on it! We aren’t going down, we are going to the other side.

Listen to what I'm telling you. Sometimes in the middle of the storm, in our fear, in our panic, we forget what Jesus said. We forget what he told us when we started out. We forget his promise. The storms, the wind and the waves distract us and frighten us. We are cold and wet and feeling hopeless and helpless and we forget what Jesus said. Have you forgotten his word to you? Have you forgotten his promise, his faithfulness? Have you forgotten his instruction, his commands? Have you forgotten his call upon you and your life and your family? Remember what he said! Stay close to Jesus because he is going to the other side! There were other boats with "him" Mark says. Not with "them", not with the disciples who took Jesus on the boat, but Mark says they were with "him"! They were with Jesus because if there is a storm the place they wanted to be, the place I want to be, is as close to Jesus as I can get. It doesn't matter that he's asleep in the boat. He was asleep because he was tired, but I don't think that's the only reason. I think the reason he was asleep in the storm was because he knew there was no reason for fear. "Sleep. We're fine. We aren't going to drown – I said we're going to the other side. Trust me!"

It may not look like it to others around you. The waves may be enormous and the winds may be hurricane force. The boat may be swamped. You may be wet and cold but don't despair, Jesus is on board and we are going to make it to the other side!

Don't doubt his concern in the midst of the storm. The disciples woke him up, questioning his concern for them. "Don't you care if we drown?" Of course he cares about you. Storms don't mean Jesus has stopped caring about us. The point is not about his concern, the point is about our doubt and fear. Just because you are frightened doesn't mean Jesus should be. Just because you are disillusioned by life doesn't mean Jesus has stopped caring. It means you aren't seeing things from heaven's perspective, but it doesn't mean truth has stopped being truth. It doesn't mean God doesn't honor his word. It means we can't see what we need to see because of the wind and the waves. You know what they needed to see? You know what they needed to know? They didn't need better weather forecasts or better instruments to measure wind velocity. They didn't need a better boat or better sails or better sailors. They were looking for the shoreline but all they needed was right there in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. All they needed to know and to see was that Jesus was with them in the storm.

I don't know what the outcome of the storm is going to be for you but I know who is with you in the storm. In this setting he calmed the wind and the waves. For Paul in Acts 27-28 there

was a shipwreck in the storm but everyone was saved and the gospel was preached on the island of Malta. I don't know what the outcome will be, but I know who will be with us at the end!

Let me share one more thought. I believe in the storm **You can expect Jesus to exceed expectations!** What were the expectations of the disciples when they awakened Jesus? I referenced this earlier. The fact the disciples were terrified and shocked that the wind and waves obeyed Jesus makes me think that was not what they were expecting him to do when they awakened him. As I mentioned before maybe they just thought he would help bail water but instead he calmed the wind and the waves. He did more than they could have dared to expect. They had grown up on that body of water and they had seen a little bit of everything, but they had never seen anything like this! Jesus talked to the storm and it obeyed him. Talking about exceeding expectations.

He did it for the disciples, but can we expect him to help us like that? Can we expect him to calm the storms in our life? The apostle Paul wrote, **“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” Ephesians 3:20**

Immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine or think or dream by his power, the power of the Holy Spirit that is at work in us. It doesn't matter how fierce the storm is, Jesus can do immeasurably more than all you can ask. He does the impossible. He'll take us through the storm and get us safely to the other side. And He has a purpose in it all. They reached the eastern side of the sea of Galilee in the region of the Gerasenes and a demon possessed man known as Legion met them there and Jesus delivered this man and set him free. There was a reason and a purpose behind it all. He'll take you where he needs you to be. Trust him! Don't forget his promise. Don't forget his presence. He is with you, even in the storm. He will be with you and I believe he will exceed your expectation. He isn't just going to help you bail water, he is going to calm the wind and waves and get you to the other side!

The greatest mistake you can make is to underestimate Jesus. The disciples were terrified because the wind and waves obeyed him. They had underestimated him. He is the master of the storm. If you'll surrender your life to him, I believe he will exceed the expectations of your life. Ask him to be the master of the storm in your life and see what happens!