

## **Sermon Notes - July 5, 2020**

**“Going Through the Storm with Jesus”**

**(Mark 4:35-41)**

*Many of us have been caught in rainstorms, but have you ever been on a boat in the ocean when a huge storm came up and scared you? Our Gospel lesson today is about Jesus and his disciples on a boat in the Sea of Galilee.*

It is evening and Jesus has finished teaching and healing for the day. He asked the disciples to take the boat and go across the sea to the other side. In other words - they were going from the west side to the east side of the lake - about 7 to 8 miles. We don't know if Jesus just wanted a break from the crowds or wanted the disciples to take him to the east side to preach there - among the Gentiles. Jesus falls asleep near the stern of the boat. A huge storm arises and big waves of water (8 to 20 feet high) are coming across the boat. The boat is rocking and these disciples are doing all they can to stay in the boat and hope it doesn't turn over. In fear of drowning and utter desperation, they wake Jesus and say, “Teacher, don't you care if we drown?” In other words - ‘How can you sleep? This boat is rocking, the water is about to drown us - don't you care?’ They were cold, wet, terrified, and angry. Jesus immediately gets up and says, “Quiet! Be still!” The wind calmed and it was completely quiet. Then Jesus turned to the disciples and said, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

*Have you ever noticed that when you and I go through major crises or storms, we often say (just like these disciples), “Don't you care? We're about to down - we're overwhelmed, Lord. Where are you? Why are you silent?”*

In his book, A Grief Observed, C.S. Lewis writes of his struggle with God when he went through the loss of his wife from cancer. “Where is God when I'm in trouble?” He spoke of God's silence and how God wanted him to trust Him.

A few years ago, I read a story about a Boy Scout troop that went camping in the mountains one weekend. The Scout leader told the boys to stay close to the campsite and not to wander off in the mountains at night - because it was dangerous. Well, one teenager (about 14 years old), couldn't sleep. So, while everyone else was sleeping, he wandered off with his flashlight. He accidentally slipped on a rock, lost his footing, went off the side of a ledge, and caught himself on a tree limb. He was holding onto that tree limb for dear life. He screamed out, "Help! Help! Is anyone there?" No answer. In a few seconds, he said, "God, if you're up there somewhere, I need some help." Shortly, he heard a voice in the dark say, "Let go. I've got you!" He didn't see anyone and again the voice said, "Let go. I've got you." He paused about a minute and then said, "Is anybody else up there?"

*Isn't that the way we are sometimes when God wants us to trust him?*

A friend of mine, Gwendolyn and her husband and three boys went to Grandfather Mountain one weekend. They went to the Mile High Swinging Bridge and the two oldest sons (age 10 and 12) jumped out of the car and ran onto the swinging bridge. Little Ben (5 years old) looked at the fun his older brothers were having and wanted to go, but he was afraid. He looked at his mom, and then to his brothers - who were halfway across the bridge. The brothers told Ben to come along, but he was scared (and I have to say that swaying bridge is scary to me, too). Ben looked back at his mom as though he wanted her to go with him, and she said, "No, Ben. Mommy is scared. Ask your dad." About that time, his dad caught up with his wife and Ben. Ben continued to look at his brothers and the fun they were having, but he was afraid. Finally, his dad said, "Come on, Ben. Take my hand and we'll go across the bridge." Ben thought about it for a couple of minutes and finally placed his little hand in dad's hand - and across the bridge they went. The wind had picked up and the bridge was really swaying, but Ben seemed to be okay - knowing his dad had his hand and wouldn't let go. He left all the worry and concern with his dad.

I wonder if that's a part of what Jesus was trying to say to us when he said, "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." Jesus wants us to trust Him, like little Ben who placed his hand in his father's hand. God wants us to place our trust in Him - just like a child places that trust in mommy or daddy.

**Jesus wanted the disciples to learn to trust Him - especially when they go through the storms of life.** He knew storms would come into these disciples' lives. They might not all be physical, but could be spiritual, financial, etc. **All of us will go through storms. Sometimes, they come unexpectedly and suddenly - like that storm at sea.** (*Our storm may come in an unexpected doctor's report - cancer, dementia, Parkinson's, etc. It may be the unexpected death of a child or the loss of a job that you love, etc.*) The disciples responded much like us in crisis - when we're desperate, afraid, etc - 'Where are you, God? Don't you care that I'm drowning?'

Notice something else in this story. God never pushes himself onto us. When the storm came, he was asleep and the disciples awakened him. In anger and desperation, they were asking for his help. Jesus always wants us to seek his face, seek his help, and trust him to be there for us - to walk through the storm with us. **He wants us to remember his promise,** "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

The miracle in this Gospel lesson is not just the calming of the storm, but it points to a greater truth about who Jesus is. These disciples knew Jesus had made the blind to see, the lame to walk, cleansed the skin of lepers, and brought sanity to the mentally deranged. They knew Jesus had divine power to heal - but they were awed by his power to control the sea and the wind (the natural elements of the environment). *In ancient times, they believed the bottom of the sea was filled with evil and chaos and only the creator God had control over it.* So, when Jesus calmed the wind and the waves at sea, these disciples got a bigger glimpse of who Jesus really was - divine - the Son of God - with Godly power. He was more than just a carpenter's son, a Rabbi or a teacher - he

was divinity itself. Like all of us when we go through storms with Jesus, we learn more about him and ourselves.

***Jesus wanted these disciples (and us) to know that the storms will come - but we are NOT alone. God is with us in the storm. He wants to hold our hand. He wants us to trust Him and remember His promise - "I am with you always."***

I want to conclude this sermon with a poem called "Footprints in the Sand."

*One night I dreamed a dream as I was walking along the beach with my Lord. Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand - one belonging to me and one to my Lord. After the last scene of my life flashed before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that at many times along the path of my life, especially at the very lowest and saddest times, there was only one set of footprints. This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it. "Lord, you said once I decided to follow you, You'd walk with me all the way. But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints. I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me." He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you - never, ever, during your trials and testings. When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."*

May God help us to trust Him more - even when the big storms come into our lives. Place your hand in the Father's hand - the One who will carry you through the darkest night and the toughest times.