### “He Made the Storm Be Still,” Steve Finlan, First Church, June 23, 2024

**Psalm 107:23–32**

23Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the mighty waters; 24 they saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. 25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. 26 They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their calamity; 27 they reeled and staggered like drunkards, and were at their wits’ end. 28 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out from their distress; 29 he made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. 30 Then they were glad because they had quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. 31 Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. 32 Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

**Mark 4:35–41**

35On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” 36And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. 37A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” 39He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. 40He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” 41And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

We in the 21st century have mostly forgotten how formidable and dangerous ocean voyaging was. Everybody’s ears were full of stories of shipwrecks, sinkings, and disappearances at seas. Many people survived dangers at sea. They could talk about the immense crests and troughs of the sea in stormy weather. The ship could sink so low that you could see nothing but water above and on all sides, or it could rise on a crest so high that it seemed one was in mid-air, and could not see the water at all. I’ve got one of these stories, too. I was in a tremendous storm on the Mediterranean while traveling to the Greek islands. I’m happy to say we all got out alive.

In the psalm the sailors were frightened, “their courage melted away . . . they reeled and staggered like drunkards, and were at their wits’ end. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble”; God rescued them, “and brought them out of their distress” (107:26–28). They gave thanks afterwards, and talked about it in the congregation.

Now the apostles have one of these experiences, too, while on the Sea of Galilee. Their little boat was in the danger of being swamped. They had to wake up Jesus, and he rebuked the wind for them, then wondered why they were afraid. Well, we don’t have your faith and power, Jesus!

At the end, they are starting to get an idea of whom they are dealing with, or at least starting to know what questions to ask, such as “Who then is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?” (Mark 4:41). Is this someone to whom we should turn whenever the storms and dangers of life threaten us? Can we say “Teacher, help me,” whenever we need him?

Yes, we can. It doesn’t mean we give up using common sense or taking the steps that are wise and necessary for beings who live in the material world. It does mean we can start trusting Jesus like we would trust a very loving and wise and powerful father. We read passages on this theme in our latest Bible study. From Isaiah we read “those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isa 40:31). From Revelation we read “[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev 21:4). From the prophet Zephaniah we read “The Lord, your God, is in your midst . . . he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival” (Zeph 3:17–18). God rejoices over me every day.

Always trust God to enter into the deepest parts of your life, into your sorrow, your insecurity, your neediness, your fear. God is actually quite involved in our inner lives, although it may be difficult to immediately figure out what God wants. We have to practice the art of spiritual inquiry, and get better at it, in order to know exactly what God is doing with us. But I ask you to trust God to get involved in your life, and to help you with your thinking. Wake up the teacher sleeping in the stern of your boat, and get his help. He may give you a mild rebuke, like saying “couldn’t you see the obvious truth of the matter?” But don’t take it too personally. He’s trying to surprise you and train you to think spiritually. Sometimes a mild rebuke or surprising remark is just the thing to arouse your attention and make you get the point.

He did this in the Sermon on the Mount, when he said “The one who asks will always receive; the one who is searching will always find . . . If any of you were asked by his son for bread would you be likely to give him a stone, or if he asks for a fish would you give him a snake? If you then, for all your evil, quite naturally give good things to your children, how much more likely is it that your Heavenly Father will give good things to those who ask him?” (Matt 7:8–11 Phillips translation). Of course we wouldn’t give a stone or a snake! We are a little shocked to hear him ask that. But it’s his way of saying: since you fathers know what to give to your children; won’t your perfect heavenly Father know what to give you?

So his telling the sailors “why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” (4:40) might just be his way of telling them, “get used to *not* being afraid. Start thinking differently about life. Live a faith-forward life. Trust your life to God.”

Two Florida teens tell a story about how their faith in God was restored after they were rescued at sea. The two student athletes were swimming near St. Augustine, when currents pulled them out to sea. They were stranded in the water for two hours, two miles from the shore. Tyler Smith said his legs were starting to cramp, and he started to pray, fearing that he might drown. Not long after, they saw a sailboat approach. The boat’s captain heard Tyler and then saw the two teens, and was able to rescue them. “God saves,” Smith said of the experience ([www.foxnews.com/us/two-teens-certain-god-is-real-after-being-rescued-at-sea](http://www.foxnews.com/us/two-teens-certain-god-is-real-after-being-rescued-at-sea)).

I can’t promise that you’ll be rescued from every physical danger into which you may fall, but amazing rescues have occurred, and some stories are astounding and inspirational.

I want to affirm what Zephaniah said, that God rejoices over you. I add: God wants to share your inner life with you, wants to be invited into the deepest part of your inner life. Invite him to guide your ship.