

**June 21, 2015 – Mark 4:35-41 (OT: Job 38:1-11 Epistle: 2 Corinthians 5-14-21)**

*Jesus Calms the Storms in Your Life*

Have you ever been afraid of a storm? Perhaps when you were young you would hid under a blanket from all the thunder and lightening and heavy rain. Severe weather can cause problems. It is no fun to drive in a downpour. Flooding can destroy homes and communities.

Most of us, however, have probably never been in any real danger from a storm. But we have all faced metaphorical storms in our lives – problems that have seemed overwhelming. Unlike a physical storm, it isn't as easy to take shelter from such difficulties in life.

Our Gospel reading, however, shows you where you can find shelter. It shows you that Jesus calms the storms in your life. He has taken care of the largest storm you face: God's wrath. And He is with you in the smaller storms as well.

In our reading, the disciples were crossing the sea of Galilee. A great windstorm arose. The waves were crashing over the side of the boat so that it was filling with water and starting to sink. Where was Jesus? He was asleep in the back of the boat!

Has it ever seemed like Jesus was asleep in your life? When you have run into problems, has God seemed absent? I think we have all gone through tough times where it felt like God was not there – that God didn't really care. If He did care, we wouldn't be facing these problems, right?

The disciples woke Jesus up and said, "*Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?*" (v. 38). Remember that many of these disciples were experienced fishermen. They knew their way around a boat. They weren't simply frightened by the waves and wind. They realized that the storm really was that bad and that their lives were in danger.

You may not have ever been in such a life-threatening situation, but we are all perishing. We all face physical death. By nature we face spiritual and eternal death because of our sin. We have failed to do what God wants us to do and we have though, said and done things that God doesn't want to do, think, or say. We have all sinned against God and He tells us that the wages of sin is death.

The disciples asked, "*Do You not care that we are perishing?*" But God does care. He does care that we are perishing. That is why He sent Jesus! We read in our Epistle lesson "*that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them*" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Because Jesus died in our place on the cross, God no longer counts our sins against us. "*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was sinless, but He became a sin offering for us. We are given His perfect righteousness so that we can stand before God and be declared innocent. While the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord! (Romans 6:23).

Jesus has taken the wrath that we deserve from God upon Himself. He has calmed the biggest storm we face. "*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1). The Apostle Paul asked, "*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*" (Romans 8:31-32)

This does not mean, however, that it will be smooth sailing from here on out. Remember that it was Jesus' idea to cross the sea of Galilee. Did He not know that the storm was coming? And He was with them in the boat when the storm came, and yet the storm still came and threatened to sink the boat, even with Jesus in it.

In our lives, too, storms still come. Jesus said *“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33b). Jesus tells us these storms will come, but we are to be worried because He is with us and has overcome these storms.

God allows storms to come into our lives to strengthen our faith. The Apostle Peter wrote in his first letter that we rejoice in the salvation we have through Jesus *“though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1:6-7). The trials that we face test the genuineness of our faith.

It is difficult to translate well what God is saying here through Peter. I had always thought it was our faith that was more precious than gold, but God says that it is the *genuineness* of our faith that is more precious gold. It seems that people often say to someone going through a hard time: “You have to have faith!” But it isn’t the faith itself that helps or is important, but in what or in whom that faith is placed. It is the genuineness of the faith that matters.

The storms of life do test our faith. They test what our faith is in. If our faith is in ourselves – in our own “goodness” – it is in the wrong place. We have all sinned and fall short. If our faith is in our own strength and ability, when a storm comes we have no place to turn and we are often overwhelmed.

But God allows storms to come into our lives to lead us to turn from ourselves to the only one who can calm the storms: our Lord Jesus Christ! These storms lead us to a genuine faith, one that is placed in God, not in ourselves.

The Apostle Paul received great revelations from God, but he writes in his second letter to the Corinthians: *“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure”* (2 Corinthians 12:7). He goes on to say: *“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me”* (2 Corinthians 12:8-9).

Is God’s grace sufficient for you? It’s easy to say “yes” when you are standing on dry ground, but more difficult when your boat seems to be sinking. But it is exactly then that it is so important to realize that God’s grace is sufficient. Jesus promised to be with you, even to the end of the age – even in the midst of life’s storms – even when it may seem that He is asleep.

The disciples’ faith proved not to be very genuine. Jesus *“said to them, ‘Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?’ And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, ‘Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!’”* They turned to Jesus, but they turned to Him out of fear, not out of faith.

We can always come to God, even in the midst of loud thunder and bright lightening. In Psalm 61 King David wrote, *“From the end of the earth I will cry to You, When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been a shelter for me, A strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings.”* (Psalm 61:2-4). David called to the Lord because he trusted that He would deliver him and shelter him.

When the disciples woke Jesus with their question, *“He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still!’ And the wind ceased and there was a great calm”* (v. 39). Notice how Jesus calmed the storm: with His word! Last week we considered how God’s kingdom comes

and grows through God's word. Here we have a graphic illustration of the power of His word! It is this word that we have in the Bible and that we have been studying this morning. We can turn to God's word and find calm in any storm.

The disciples saw what Jesus did and they were filled with great fear. They asked, "*Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!*" We know who it is: Jesus Christ, the Lord God Almighty, through Whom all things were created. It is He who came to seek and to save us. It is He who has all power in heaven and on earth. It is He who can stop the winds and the waves with a word. It is He who speaks peace to our hearts.

So you do not need to fear the storms of life, for Jesus has taken care of the greatest storm you have faced, God's wrath. He has reconciled you to God and declared you righteous. Your sins are forgiven and you have eternal life.

And Jesus is with you in all the smaller storms as well, to give you genuine faith that trusts only in Him, and to give you peace even in the midst of the storm.

May you always turn to Him in genuine faith and receive the peace that He gives you through His word. Amen

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