

*That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." <sup>36</sup> Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. <sup>37</sup> A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. <sup>38</sup> 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?"*

*<sup>39</sup> He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.*

*<sup>40</sup> He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"*

*<sup>41</sup> They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (Mark 4:35-41)*

### **What does this Storm Teach Us?**

Have you ever wondered why God tells us about some things but leaves others out? For instance, the book of Acts ends with St. Paul under house arrest in Rome. But it doesn't tell us what happened to him. It's clear from 2 Timothy that Paul eventually was executed, but it looks like Paul was released and then arrested again later. I've always wondered what else happened in his life and ministry. God doesn't tell us much at all about what happened to Thomas or Andrew or Nathaniel after Jesus ascended into heaven. Even when it comes to the life of Jesus himself, the book of John says that if you wrote down everything Jesus did and said, the whole earth couldn't hold the books that would be written. So God carefully chose what to record for us – going all the way back to the Garden of Eden. So when we read about incidents in the life of Christ or in the life of his Old Testament or his New Testament people, there's a basic question that should always be on our minds. Why did God record this incident? The answer is always going to have something to do with what God wants us to learn, so that our faith grows. That is true today. Today, we find Jesus and his disciples in a very stressful situation. They're in an open boat in a storm on the Sea of Galilee. And what happened to them is rich in lessons for us. **What does this storm teach us?**

#### **I.**

Now, when we see believers or even unbelievers from the past, there are two ways to learn from them. We can look at them and see what they teach us about ourselves. And we can look at them and see what they teach us about Jesus. We want to do both this morning. To begin, **what does this storm teach us about ourselves?**

The disciples were in a tight spot. Most of them were experienced, professional fishermen. They knew how to handle boats. They knew the water and the weather of the Sea of Galilee. That should tell us something about this storm that whipped up. These men knew the difference between a dangerous storm and a little rough water. So when they began to panic that means that the danger was real. The wind was howling and the waves were coming over the sides of the boat and they knew – as only professionals can know – how close they were to dying. They were afraid. And they turned to Jesus for help. That wasn't surprising. They were his disciples. They had seen miracle after miracle and heard him preach. They were believers.

And yet, listen to the question they asked him: **"Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"** Now, in their defense, that question may have been influenced by the fact that Jesus was sound asleep while they were desperately rowing and bailing water out of the boat. They probably felt surprised and a little hurt. But still, "don't you care if we drown" was an accusation. They seemed to know Jesus could help him, but they questioned his love for them. And why? Jesus himself makes it clear. He gets up and with a word puts an end to the storm and then he asks them two questions: **"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"** They had seen Jesus' power many times, and yet their faith was totally unprepared to carry them through the storm and the danger. They didn't trust him. They didn't fall at Jesus' feet and say, "Lord, we're scared! Help us!" Sinners don't like to admit that they're weak and afraid. So they lashed out, "Don't you care?"

Does that sound at all familiar? You don't have to be out on the Sea of Galilee to get caught up in a serious storm. Life has all kinds of storms and the danger from those storms is real. When you're in the hospital and the doctors are talking surgery, that's a storm of this life. It may be a few little whitecaps or it may be a full blown gale, depending on what's going on. When you can't come up with the money for your house

payment or your rent, when you hope the kids don't get sick because there's no money for the doctor, when you live paycheck to paycheck, you are in a storm of life. When your marriage is going south and you can't figure out how to fix it, when your relationship with your parents is marred by constant hard feeling and anger, when friends betray you and relatives let you down, you are in a storm of life. And there are so many other storms that we could list this morning. And these storms are real. They make our lives hard. They can ruin the rest of our lives and even kill us.

God's answer to all the storms of this life is faith. He promises that he will hear and answer every one of our prayers. He promises that he will take care of us and get us through the storms of this life and bring us home to heaven. Faith trusts those promises. A strong and healthy faith takes refuge in God's love and finds peace there, even when the storms are raging. That's why Jesus asked, "Do you still have no faith?" If the disciples had had a strong faith, they never would've accused Jesus of not caring. That sin came from unbelief. It came from the sinner in their hearts. And that unbelief bred fear and it bred anger at God himself.

Are we ever guilty of that sin? Do we trust that God is taking care of us? Of course, if I asked you to raise your hands if you trust God, we'd all do that, right? But is that always true? How do we react when the storms blow in? How do we react when the water is coming over the side of the boat and it feels like we're going down? Do we groan and complain? Do we ask, "Why me, God? Why do I have to suffer this? Other people don't." That's really not so different from "Don't you care if we drown?" When we whine and complain and accuse God of not being fair to us because we have to suffer whatever it is, aren't we saying, "God don't you care about me and how hard this is and how unhappy I am?"

My friends, don't get on your high horse and say that this could never be true of you. The disciples were guilty of this lack of trust in their Lord. The men God called to found the New Testament Church, most of whom later died for the faith, failed to trust God when this crisis came. If it could happen to them, it could happen to us, too. Where is our trust when life is hard? Where is the peace that comes from taking refuge in God's promises no matter what happens? How often can we claim that we show that kind of trust? And how often shouldn't Jesus say to us, "Do you still have no faith?"

Lack of faith – even in a real and dangerous crisis – is sin that deserves God's punishment in hell. But Jesus didn't send the disciples to hell. Instead, he calmed the storm and rebuked them. And then he went on teaching them right up until that day when he gave his life for them on the cross. There, Jesus died for everything that was wrong with their faith. The truth is, their faith was weak until three days later when Jesus rose from the dead. It didn't become this great example of faith until forty days after that when he gave them the Holy Spirit. But Jesus continued to minister to them. He died and he paid for their sin. He rose and he forgave them. And he kept reassuring them that they were forgiven because only in our forgiveness does our faith grow and triumph over the unbelief that was born into our hearts.

## II.

In the disciples on the Sea of Galilee we see a mirror image of ourselves, in fear and weakness, accusing God instead of trusting in him. But that's not the end of the lesson. This storm redirects our attention to Jesus, just like it focused their attention on him. Jesus is the lesson. **What does this storm teach us about Jesus?**

Well, where was Jesus when the crisis came? He was there in the boat, but what was he doing? He wasn't rowing or bailing. He wasn't excited about the wind or the waves or the danger. He was fast asleep. How was that even possible? Jesus had a perfect faith. He trusted absolutely in his Father's care for him and for his disciples so even in real danger, he was not afraid. That's important, because Jesus is a real human being. He has a real heart that experienced real emotion. Because his faith was perfect, the human heart of Christ felt no fear and could sleep during this storm. And he did that in his disciples' place. He did that in your place and in my place. Jesus was perfect in his faith because you and I so often fall short. You and I sin by failing to trust God's promises over and over again. But Jesus was absolutely perfect in his trust and that perfect faith counts for you and me.

It counts, because he was a real man and also because he was the true Son of God. Since he was God, he knew what he was going to do next. He let the disciples wake him up and then he stood up and rebuked the wind and the waves and instantly, all was quiet. Only God can control the weather. How many times just in the last week have we wished that the heat would break? How many times have we wished for a little rain on our gardens? But our wishing does nothing. We can't control the weather. But God does. Jesus showed that he is the true Son of God when he stood up and silenced the storm.

That gives us a little different perspective on Jesus sleeping. He could've stood up at any time and stopped the storm, but he didn't. He let it go on. He waited until the disciples begged him and accused him of not caring. Why? He was exercising their faith. Jesus knew when it was right to let the wind howl and when to bring the water over the side of the boat. He knew when to let the crises of their lives come and even when it was time to end their lives on this earth and bring them home. And Jesus knew when it was time to stop the storm and let them see his rescue. And the same is true for us. It's never an accident when the storms of life blow up. God is in control. He knows when to let the water come over the edge of our boat, too. He knows when to exercise our faith and force us to cling to him. He knows when we need a crisis, when the pride in our heart needs to be knocked down and we need to see ourselves as helpless without him. He knows when we need to wrestle with fear and cling to his promises. He knows when to use a crisis to bring us out of this world of pain and sorrow and bring us home to heaven. And he knows when to step in. He knows when to work through the normal things of this life and hide his power behind medicine or new jobs or marriage counseling. And he knows when to do a miracle and rescue us in way that no one would've believed was possible.

And he will always do what is best for us. That includes even rebuking us when we need to hear it. Jesus never shows temper. Temper is selfish. Jesus often said hard things, but always they were things people needed to hear. Jesus rebuked his disciples because they did not trust their Savior. But he did that because he loved them. He kept loving them and showing them his love and repeating his promises to them. At last, he let them see him risen and triumphant. He let them see him ascend into heaven. He prepared them to proclaim the gospel and he gave them a faith that willingly suffered all, even death, for the good of that message. And he will do the same for us.

That's the Savior we see today. What he does in our hearts can only be called a miracle. I've seen this miracle over and over again in my ministry. I go to visit someone in the hospital who's in pain and has terrible health problems, and they smile. They clearly are at peace because they trust in God's promises and I walk away amazed at the miracle God does. Then on the way home, I'll see someone get cut off for a moment and now they're going to reach their destination 30 seconds later. And what they do? Curse and swear and honk their horns. I can't help but see the benefit of the faith God gives us in Christ: peace and trust in the face of real crises while people with little or no faith can't even stand a little inconvenience. Jesus wants to give us that peace. We find it when we learn the lessons he teaches us about ourselves and about him. May God grant you a faith that always finds peace in him. Amen.