

STORM STORIES

“RIDING OUT THE STORM”

Mark 4:35-41

Introduction

In this “Storm Stories” series, we’re “tracking” storms in the Bible. We’re learning from these stories some practical lessons that can help us to weather the storms of life. Today we come to a time when Jesus and His disciples were on the Sea of Galilee and a ferocious storm blew up.

Let’s read this storm story and see how we can ride out the storms of life. Read Mark 4:35-41.

One night during a thunderstorm, a mother was tucking her young son into bed. She was about to turn off the light when he asked in a trembling voice- “Mommy, will you stay with me all night?”

His mother gave her a warm, reassuring hug and said tenderly, “I can’t Dear. I have to sleep in Daddy’s room.” After a brief pause, the boy replied- “The big sissy!”

A lot of people get frightened during a storm. The disciples were caught in a storm on the Sea of Galilee. Even though Jesus was with them, they were scared to death. This had to be a terrible storm to frighten the disciples, because most of them were experienced fishermen. They had seen and endured storms on the water before. Mark describes the storm as a “furious squall”.

Our peaceful lives are often interrupted by storms that threaten our lives. These storms bring unrest to our souls. We become fearful. We feel like life is out of control. How can we survive the storms of life and receive God’s peace to calm our souls?

As we look at the story of Jesus calming the stormy sea, we can learn that Jesus can be trusted to help us survive the storms of life. This

dramatic incident on the Sea of Galilee teaches about God's protection in the midst of life's turbulence.

From this story I see 3 realities as we brave the storms of life. The first reality is this:

1. We Will Experience Difficulties in Life

There are two facts about the storms of life that we need to realize. The first is:

a. the storms of life come to us impartially

Every person, Christian and non-Christian, experiences trouble in their lives. Job testified to this:

“Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.” – Job 14:1

Every believer experiences trouble in life. Being a Christian does not exempt us from having to navigate through the stormy waters of life. I know some Christians believe that since they follow the Lord Jesus Christ that they should never experience any hardships in life.

But we notice in this story that the disciples went through this storm even though they were with Jesus. Jesus was right there with them. They were his companions and His every presence did not keep this storm from coming upon them.

In fact Jesus was the one who suggested that they get into the boat and travel to the other side of the sea. So, when this storm hit, the disciples were in the middle of God's will, they were being obedient to Jesus.

They still got slammed with this storm. Being a companion of Jesus does not guarantee smooth sailing all the time.

The apostle Paul was one of the greatest Christians who ever lived and yet listen to the storms of life that he endured. Paul was in prison several times, being persecuted for his faith.

Five times he received whippings from the Jews. Three times he was beaten with rods. He was stoned and left for dead. He was shipwrecked.

Paul testified to having spent a night and day in the open sea; of being in danger from rivers, bandits and others; knowing what it was like to being hungry and thirsty, going without food, being cold and naked. As a Christian Paul was not exempt from the trials of life.

So, you and I will encounter our share of storms in this life. It may be an unexpected shower like an insensitive remark that wounds our pride. Or it may be a brutal hurricane force attack like the loss of our health, loss of job, a financial crisis, divorce or the loss of a loved one.

Know for sure, that Christians do experience the storms of life, just like everyone else. Being a Christian does not exempt us from car wrecks, hurricanes, malignancies or poverty. The storms of life come impartially.

The second fact about the storms of life is that...

b. the storms of life come upon us unexpectedly

This Galilean storm came upon the disciples without warning.

The Sea of Galilee is notorious for ferocious, unpredictable storms. It is located about 600 feet below sea level and is virtually surrounded by mountains. The topography almost acts like a giant funnel drawing cold air and creating instant storms as the cool air from those mountains comes blasting unexpectedly into the sea.

Life's storms often hit us suddenly, without warning. One morning you get into your car to drive to work as you normally do and someone runs a light and broadsides you and the next thing you know you're in the hospital. A routine examination at the doctor's office detects a tumor.

On September 11th, 2001, the storm of terrorism struck suddenly and unexpectedly. The people who were passengers on the airplanes, those who went to work at the World Trade Center and

the Pentagon, were going about their daily business, not realizing the Coming Storm.

Now, all of this makes some people overly anxious and cautious about life. Their fear of what might happen paralyzes them into doing nothing and going nowhere.

We cannot be apprehensive about life. We can't live life fearing what might happen. The person who won't get into a boat because he is afraid of a possible storm might just get hit by lightning while standing on the shore!

Jesus said this in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” – Matthew 6:34

All we can do is live life one day at a time and live it to the fullest, trusting God as we go. Jesus said:

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” – John 16:33

The second reality when a storm of life hits is this:

2. We May Express Doubts To Our Lord

When the storm hit their boat, Jesus was asleep in the stern. The disciples came to him and woke him up. They cried out- ***“Teacher, don't you care if we drown?”***

Now, if we are honest, many of us, if not most of us, have had such honest emotions of doubt and fear, haven't we?

Yes, we've asked the same question the disciples asked when the storms of life come on us- ***“Lord, don't you care about what is happening to me? God, do you hear my prayers? Where are you?”***

God does care and He is where He's always been, in His heaven, on His throne, watching over our lives and trying to help us navigate through the troubled waters.

The disciples did find out that Jesus cared. He calmed the storm. We will find that the Lord will be there to help us too. In this story I find 3 things about Jesus that will reassure us when we begin to have doubts and fears amid the storms of life:

a. Jesus reassures us with His Promise

Jesus told the disciples that they were going to go to the other side of the lake. That was a promise that their safe arrival on the other shore was guaranteed. They just didn't realize that in the midst of the storm.

God has promised that He will help us get through the storms of life. **When the apostle Paul had a physical ailment, he prayed 3 times to the Lord to take it from him. Each time God said no. But the Lord gave Paul this promise and assurance: *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."***

Paul was a more humble servant with his illness than without it. But the Lord promised Paul that he would care for him and sustain him through his illness.

God has promised to help us in our trouble. He has promised to be with us. He has promised to strengthen us and help us and to uphold us with his righteous right hand!

Sometimes God calms the storm. Other times He cares for us through the storm just like He cared for Paul through his illness.

Ultimately, just like the disciples, we too are on a journey with Jesus. Our destination is the shore of heaven. As Christians who have trusted fully in Christ's death for our salvation, our arrival on the shore of heaven is guaranteed. But the journey here on earth will not always be smooth.

In fact, listen to what Paul wrote in Romans 8:18:

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” – Romans 8:18

The storms of life will cause us to long one day for our safe arrival on the shore of heaven! The second thing that Jesus does to reassure us is this:

b. Jesus reassures us with His Presence

Jesus was with the disciples. They had seen Him perform miracles. His presence should have been reassuring enough. But they forgot that in the midst of the storm.

Sometimes we tend to forget it too, but we need to remember that the Lord is with us when trouble and difficulty strike. **A small child is less frightened by a ferocious thunderstorm when his mom or dad is there for him to cling to.** We might be scared when the fierce storms of life blow up, but when we realize that Jesus is right there with us, that reassuring presence calms our fears. His presence is called the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus said would comfort us.

In the movie, *Panic Room*, actress Jodie Foster plays a woman who is frightened by burglars who have broken into her New York City condo. She retreats with her daughter to a high-tech “panic-room” that is actually a part of her residence.

According to ABC news, panic rooms are not just in the movies. Security companies regularly install what they refer to as “safe rooms.”

“Safe rooms” can be as simple as oversized closets with reinforced doors, a phone and a refrigerator. They can also be extravagant secret rooms with video banks, computers and air systems that protect against biological warfare.

As Christians we have a refuge that we can run to for shelter and reassurance. Psalm 46 declares:

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

“Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,

“though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.” – Psalm 46:1-3

“God is our refuge, He is our strength”. God will always be there for us in times of trouble. He has made us this promise that He would never leave us or forsake us. The God who died for your sins will not desert you during a storm of life. Our theme verse, Isaiah 25:4, declares that the Lord is a shelter in the storm. We need in faith to look up to Him for reassurance.

The third reassuring thing that Jesus does for us is this:

c. Jesus reassures us with His Peace

What was Jesus doing when the storm hit? He was asleep! Asleep during a fierce storm at sea. Jesus certainly was a sound sleeper. How could he manage that?

Some have suggested that Jesus was so physically exhausted from ministering to the crowds that He collapsed and was able to sleep through the storm. I’m sure from a physical standpoint that was true.

But I can’t help but believe that something else was going on from a spiritual standpoint. Jesus is Lord of Creation. He created the wind and the waves.

This storm did not phase Him one bit. He was at peace because He was in complete control of the situation. He simply gave the command- **“Quiet! Be Still!”** At once, the wind died down and it was completely calm.

Jesus’ peace can be our peace in the middle of life’s turbulence. Since the Lord can calm a storm, He certainly can calm our spirits when we are upset over life’s difficulties. Jesus may not always bring peace to our circumstances, but He will certainly bring peace to our troubled spirits.

Dr. Billy Graham tells of a painting that portrays a mama bird with her chicks under her wing in the crevice of a rock during a storm. Dr. Graham said if you look closely enough you will notice that the baby birds are fast asleep. The title of the painting is “Peace in a Storm.”

Jesus will be with us. His arm of assurance will be around us. He will protect us. He will “restore our souls” and we will know peace during the storms of life.

Psalm 4:8 says:

“I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.” – Psalm 4:8

Peace of heart and mind is such a blessing. How can we know this peace? How can we ride out the storms of life? This leads to the third reality:

3. We can Endure the Dilemmas of Life

Jesus brought His disciples safely through this storm. Jesus will get us through our difficulties. In order for this to happen, we need to look in 4 directions. First we need to....

a. Look Out

We need to anticipate trouble. Now, as I said earlier, we must not be apprehensive about life and let the fear of what might happen paralyze us into doing nothing. But we do need to understand and accept the fact that trouble is a part of life and that it will come to us.

We shouldn't be surprised when we encounter storms in our lives. The Bible says that it's going to happen. When we expect it, we won't be as blindsided and as devastated as we might be otherwise.

Ten years ago, I lost one of my very good and closest friends to cancer. Joe Johnson was my minister. He baptized me into Christ. He was my mentor. While in Bible College, I spent two years as his associate minister.

Right around Thanksgiving in 1999, I received an e-mail from Joe in which he told me he had been diagnosed with esophageal cancer and was given 6 months to live by the doctors. Joe didn't make it that long. He died in January of 2000.

Thankfully we had planned a vacation to Florida, where Joe lived. We were down there between Christmas and New Year's Day. I had the chance to visit with him one last time and tell him I was praying for him.

Joe said that he and his family were doing fine. Their faith in the Lord sustained them and as he said, they lived life- "ready for anything."

We too need to look out and be ready for anything. We need to brace ourselves for any possible storms.

The second direction in which we need to look is this....

b. Look Up

We need to trust in God. Jesus first calmed the storm and then he confronted the disciples' lack of faith. He said to them- *"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"*

Someone said- "when the outlook is bad, try the uplook." We need to look up to God when things look bad. The Psalmist wrote:

"I lift up my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." – Psalm 121:1-2

We need to have the faith that trusts God completely, no matter what. We need to look up. The third direction we need to look is to...

d. Look Within

We need to look within. We need to realize that trouble can strengthen us. Maturity comes as we endure the storms of life.

We always think of lightning in a negative sense: being struck by lightning; the electrical power being shut off because a transformer is struck by lightning. But lightning has its positive benefits.

A scientist wrote about the value of lightning- **“Lightning is essential to our survival. It is essential to the nitrogen cycle that provides food for our plant life. Nitrogen is extremely inert. So how does God get the nitrogen out of the air and into the soil? He does so by lightning. 100,000 bolts strike this planet daily, creating a hundred million tons of useable nitrogen plant food in the soil every year.”**

The storms that frighten do provide for us too. And the storms of life can strengthen us as well.

After the storm on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples’ faith did increase. They had a greater sense of who Jesus was and what He could do. When Mark wrote that they were **“terrified”** it meant that they had a reverential, respectful awe for the Lord Jesus whom the wind and the waves obeyed.

We often mature more through stormy experiences than we do when we have 6 months of smooth sailing in life. Listen to Romans 5. Here Paul tells us of the spiritual benefits that come out of our trials:

“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us. They help us learn to be patient.

“And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it until finally our hope and faith are steady and strong.” – Romans 5:3-4

The storms of life can strengthen our faith, deepen our dependence on God, draw us closer to the Lord and mature us as a Christian. When trouble strikes, we need to trust that the Lord will bring some good into our lives out of the difficulty.

Several years ago, the office of gospel singer Sandy Patti was destroyed by fire.

Naturally, Sandy was deeply disappointed. Her awards, including four Grammys, were destroyed. She and many of her co-workers watched and wept as the blaze wiped out many of their prized possessions.

After a while, Sandy gathered her co-workers. She said, “we can choose to be defeated or we can choose to be victorious. Let’s be victorious.” They formed a circle, joined hands, prayed, and then sang the Doxology- “Praise God from whom all blessings flow....”

The police and firemen said they had never seen such peace and unity in the midst of pain and adversity.

We can choose to either be defeated by our problems or we can choose to be victorious in the Lord and grow through our problems. The choice is up to us. But if we will choose to trust in God and lean on Him, we will be stronger for it. He will bring a blessing out of tragedy.

The fourth direction in which to look to survive the storms of life is this:

d. Look Around

Wait the storm out and see what God can do. Jesus calmed the storm and the disciples saw what the Lord could do- ***“even the wind and the waves obey Him!”*** They were amazed at what Jesus did.

If we will wait the storm out, we will be amazed at what the Lord can do in our lives. Sometimes we can only see in retrospect what God has done in our lives, how He has protected us, how He has kept something more devastating from happening, how He carried us through it, the blessing He brought out of it. Isaiah wrote:

“But those who wait upon God get fresh strength. They spread their wings and soar like eagles. They run and don’t get tired, they walk and don’t lag behind.” – Isaiah 40:31

Wait out the storm and see what God can do.

At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told of two men who built houses, one on a solid foundation of rock and the other on the sand. A horrendous storm arose and hit both those houses.

The house that was built on the sand collapsed because it had a shaky foundation. The house that was built on the rock withstood the storm because the house had a solid foundation. Jesus said that the man who builds his life on His words is like the man who built his house on the rock.

We all get hit by the storms of life. Bottom line is this: The only way we will survive the storms of life is because our lives are built on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ. When Jesus is the captain of our ship, we will navigate the rough waters successfully, ultimately to the shore of heaven one day.

If you are not a Christian, your life is teetering on a shaky foundation. It probably won't take much of a storm to devastate you. But if you will accept Christ as your Lord and Savior, you will have a sure foundation for life and you will be given the gift of eternal life.