

June 23, 2024 at St. Matthew, Port Washington, WI

Jesus controls the storms in your life!

It was a long day. Jesus was teaching large crowds on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. As the day was coming to an end, Jesus needed some rest. **“Let us go over to the other side,”** (:35) he said. Without any preparations, he and his disciples just got in the boat and started sailing east. On their way, a (:37) **“furious squall came up,”** like a tornado. Because of the topography, the Sea of Galilee is known for its sudden storms that no one could have predicted. The waves were bigger than the boat and soon the boat was swamped. Veteran fishermen could not save the boat. There was no Coast Guard to rescue them. They did not have life preservers. For sure, the boat was sunk and they were drowned.

Maybe you’ve been on a boat during a storm. I was once on a 16-foot boat that was going through some bigger waves. When a wave splashed over the side, you instantly realize that the situation is serious. Maybe there have been times in your life when you instantly realized that the situation was serious. Maybe the doctor told you that it was cancer. That takes your breath away. Maybe there was some other medical issue. Maybe you were in an accident. Maybe a loved one, even your child, was in an accident. Maybe you lost your job and you had no idea how you were going to pay your bills, let alone go shopping. Maybe you got a text or phone call that a loved one was in the hospital and not doing well. Maybe you realized that your husband or wife was unfaithful. Maybe a dear loved one died way too early. There are all sorts of storms in life that can shake us to the core and make our world stop. There is nothing else we can focus on. We are consumed with the storm and what’s going to happen.

As the disciples were sinking into the Sea, Jesus was in the back of the boat (:38), **“sleeping on a cushion.”** He was at peace and rest, not worried about a thing. He must have been extremely exhausted to keep sleeping while being tossed about by the waves and with water splashing on him. I like to think that he purposefully stayed sleeping because he wanted to teach his disciples another lesson. When they despaired of all their own efforts, the disciples finally woke Jesus up and screamed over the roar of the wind and waves (:38), **“Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”** “Jesus, we are working as hard as we can to stay alive and you aren’t helping at all. You’re not even helping us bail the boat.”

It’s easy to get scared and frustrated when we are going through the storms of life. When the pain won’t stop and the doctors can’t figure things out, it’s easy to cry out, “Why God? Why me? What did I do wrong? Are you punishing me for something? Why aren’t other people suffering and struggling like I am?” Life can seem so unfair. Other people have more money, better looks, a better job. They always seem to be happy and have life under control. They have smooth sailing and we’re struggling to get through each day, each moment. What is it that you wish you could change in your life? I bet you don’t have to think hard to come up with an answer. We all have things in our life that we wish we could change. How often don’t we want to complain to God, “I’m tired of the struggle. The loneliness. The daily grind. The constant expenses. I don’t like my life. Why am I still here, Jesus? Jesus, are you there? Jesus, do you care?” We can get just as frustrated with God as the disciples.

Then Jesus woke up. We would expect that his first words would be something like he said to Job in our First Reading when Job complained that God was unfair and wondered why he was suffering. We could expect Jesus to rebuke his disciples, “You have no idea what you’re talking about. I’m God and you are not. How dare you accuse me of not caring. I’m the one who left heaven behind to save you. I became fully human and exhausted myself helping people and teaching them. I called you to be my disciples giving you blessings you could not have dreamed of. I have performed many miracles proving that I’m in control of nature. I have helped everyone who came to me. And you have the audacity to suggest that I do not care. I ought to let you drown and not just sink to the bottom of this lake, but sink to the depths of hell where there is no rescue.” Jesus had every right to speak that way, but he did not.

Jesus, who is the embodiment of love and concern, did not treat the disciples as they deserved. He did what they needed. Jesus always did what was needed. That’s why he set aside the glory and grandeur of heaven and was born in barn and laid in a borrowed bed. While growing up, he never, ever sinned. He resisted every temptation perfectly just for you. He suffered tremendous hardships and never complained. He lived a perfect life because that’s what the disciples and you needed in order to get into heaven. He spent 33 years earning a perfect score in life and, through faith, he gives you credit for it. Now, it’s as if you never complained about how God is ruling the universe and guiding your life. When God looks at you, he only sees the perfection of Jesus. He sees a saint. Jesus did not even complain when he was unfairly arrested,

accused, abused, condemned and killed. He humbly submitted to his Father's will, knowing that his death on the cross as he endured the storm of hell itself was the only way to save you. Your sins are forgiven. Jesus gave his life for you. Of course, he cares about you. Then he rose again to guarantee you life after death in heaven with a perfectly restored body. Even though it cost him everything he had, including his life, Jesus did what was necessary to save you.

If Jesus was able to destroy the power of sin, death and the devil, then the wind and waves of a storm were no problem for him. He did what was necessary to save the disciples in that boat. He yelled at the wind and waves (:39), "**Quiet! Be still!**" Have you ever been at the shore of Lake Michigan during a storm? The power of the wind and waves is most impressive. Have you ever tried commanding the wind and waves to be quiet and still? Not all the positive thinking in the world can control a storm. But when Jesus spoke, the wind instantly stopped blowing and the waves stopped splashing. The weather changed faster than it does here in Wisconsin. It was completely calm.

Once the danger was passed, Jesus was going to teach his disciples about trust. You see, the Lord sometimes permits storms in our lives that we might exercise our faith and in the end be holding on to him even tighter. We do not enjoy going through hardships, but during them, we pray more and rely on God's promises even more and that's a good thing. Jesus asked his disciples (:40), "**Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?**" Whenever Jesus asks a question, he already knows the answer. He asked his questions because he wanted the disciples to think things through. He wanted them to reflect and ponder how silly, even wrong, it was for them to be afraid. Jesus was not saying that they were complete unbelievers who did not trust in God at all, but they certainly were not trusting him in this particular situation. They could have said, "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief." They had God himself in the boat with them. There was no reason to worry. They realized that their faith was not as strong as it could be and they still had much to learn.

When we are going through storms, we, also, can pray, "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief." We know Jesus as our Savior. We rejoice and give thanks that our guilt is in our past and heaven is in our future. We believe. And yet, when we face the storms of life, we can easily panic. Think of someone who knows how to float on water. He stays calm and lets the water hold his body up. It's one of the first things they teach in swimming lessons. But if that fellow falls into a pond, he can panic and

forget everything he learned. He splashes and thrashes about and can start going under the water. If he would stay calm, he would be just fine. That's a lot like us when we face the storms of life. The Lord says (Ps 46:10), "**Be still and know that I am God.**" The prophet Zephaniah told us (Zeph 3:17), "**He will quiet you with his love.**" St. Peter, who was on that boat with Jesus, learned to encourage us (1 Peter 5:7), "**Cast all your anxiety on him because you know that he cares for you.**"

I do not mean to suggest, however, that if you just let go and let God, then everything in your life will instantly get better. Your pains and problems may continue. In our second reading today, the Apostle Paul was on a ship that was caught in a storm for weeks. It seemed like there was no end in sight. The Lord used the storm, though, to get everyone's attention so they focused on you're your storms may seem like they are never going to end as wave after wave hits you. When every earthly help is gone, Jesus is still there. When you are going through difficult times, Jesus is right by your side holding you close. On the Sea of Galilee, Jesus taught his disciples to trust in him no matter what. He continues to do the same for you today. That's why we sang in our Psalm (42) this morning, "You alone are my strength, my shield."

As the disciples mouths hung open in amazement at how quickly the storm stopped, they asked each other (:41), "**Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!**" They answered their own question. Jesus is the one who has command over the wind and waves. He is in control of all things. He is true God. The Apostle Paul, who was on that ship stuck in a storm for weeks, wrote (Ro 8:31), "**If God is for us, who can be against us?**" And when it is time for you to pass through the storm of death at the end of your life, Jesus will still be there with you, holding you close, and taking you home to heaven where there will never be any more storms or struggles. Again, God says (Is 41:10), "**Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.**" No matter what you are going through, remember that Jesus controls the storms in your life. Hang on to him. You're going to be OK eternally. Amen.