

March 17, 2019

One Day: The Storms Of Life

Luke 8:22-25

One of the more fearful moments in my life happened on a back country canoe trip with my brother and some buddies in Algonquin Provincial Park in Canada. It was a stormy day and the wind had picked up and we found ourselves in the middle of one of the larger lakes in our featherlight canoe being bombarded by 3-5 foot waves coming from all directions.

We had to make sure we kept paddling into the waves so as to not get stuck parallel to the waves which would've capsized us. I never paddled so hard in my life. In the end we somehow managed to not sink and we made it to the safety of shore.

Storms, can be a terrifying, troubling, and a not so fun experience. Just this past week many on the front range experienced this as they got slammed by the bomb cyclone. People found themselves stranded in their cars, roads shut down, flights cancelled, loss of power, roofs torn off and trees falling over.

Storms aren't fun, either in a boat on a lake, on the I-70, or in real life. And yet a reality that many of us know too well is that storms are a part of life. Those life storms can be anything from a crisis, intense hardship, or an unexpected tragedy we go through. It is not a matter of if we will go through a storm but when.

Right? Pretty much everyone here this morning is in one of three places. You are in a storm, coming out of a storm, or you are heading into a storm. Kind of a downer? Don't worry it's not all bad news and we will get to the hope and encouragement we have as children of God.

This morning as we continue our teaching series looking at different days of Jesus' life we find on this One day his disciples, end up in a great storm of their own.

The thing about this passage as compared to some of the other moments in the disciples life, is I find it is one we can relate to and easily find ourselves in the story, on that boat with the disciples overwhelmed by a storm, wondering "God where are you? Wondering... are we going to make it through?

While I find our passage this morning provides some insight into answering those questions along with encouraging us through the storms of life we face and at the heart of it all is really about following Jesus

Asking ourselves the very question Jesus asks of His disciples... Where is your faith? Especially when we find ourselves in the storms of life. Where is your faith? Let's keep that in mind as we follow Jesus onto the boat, and into the storm.

Pray

One day, Jesus says to his disciples "let us go to the other side of the lake? So they set out in the boat and Jesus falls asleep.

Why is Jesus asleep? Because he is tired. Sometimes we picture and imagine Jesus as a superman, able to go go go. After all He is the Son of God, and fully God. But we have to remember he was also fully human too.

And I don't totally understand it but it is clear just like us, Jesus got tired, exhausted, and needed to rest. Up until this point Jesus has been healing and teaching and casting out demons. Doing a lot of ministry and he is exhausted. On a Sunday afternoon after preaching all morning I am pretty tired. Jesus is so tired, that as soon as he gets on that cramped boat he is out.

I remember growing up my dad would come home after a long day at the mission. We would have dinner, talk about our days, but as soon as he got into the recliner he would be out. Full on snore sleep. I never understood how he could just fall into deep sleep like that, most often in the middle of a tv show, until... I became a parent and then I could fall asleep anywhere.

And so Jesus was asleep.

And then boom. Bomb cyclone, A sudden, violent storm erupts. The sea of Galilee sits 680 feet below sea level is in a unique geographical setting in which severe storms can quickly form

When Cold air from the surrounding mountains mixes with the warm air over the sea it can quickly form these nasty storms.

But this one had to be a doozy as the disciples, some who were fisherman and had probably been through many storms, are fearing for their lives, convinced they weren't going to make it through this one.

It says:

"A wind/ fierce storm came down on the lake" Matthew's gospel says, "a sudden storm". It appears this fierce great storm hits suddenly, with no indication, and the disciples find themselves in the middle of it. Overwhelmed, begin bashed around by the waves, fearing for their lives

Isn't that how it is though? Many of life's storms are sudden, unexpected. If we knew what was coming we would avoid it, or do what we could to prevent it.

Hearing a doctor say, "it's terminal" is a sudden storm. Sorry you are being laid off is a sudden storm. There has been an accident. Your child is really sick. "We regret to inform you". And on... Sudden storms.

Have you been there? Are you there now? Life is going and then all of a sudden you find yourself in the midst of a great storm, blindsided, wind knocked out, overwhelmed, and afraid. You feel yourself drowning as the waves of doubt and fear come crashing over you, the winds of worry knocking you down unsure of how you are gonna make it through this one.

As I look around and see your faces I know of some of the storms you have been through recently, that some of you are in now. In my own life and in our family this past year, many sudden storms.

It's been a tough season, or maybe I am just more aware of it but it feels at times we are in the brunt of hurricane season or sitting dead square in the path of tornado alley being bombarded by one storm after another.

We find ourselves like the disciples in that boat. Everything feels out of control, we feel overwhelmed, afraid, not sure if we are going to pull through this storm. We feel helpless and full of fear and panic.

And yet These are the moments, in the storm where we need to ask ourselves where is our faith? Is it in ourselves? Our strength? Our ability? Or is in the One who is Lord of the storm, who can carry us through the storm? Who loves us and can uphold us? Is our faith in the One who is our salvation, Jesus... The One who will never leave us, never forsake us.

An important insight we are reminded of in this passage is just because we follow Jesus, we are not exempt from storms. The disciples followed Jesus into that boat, and a storm came.

One of the most destructive teaching that some claim and put out there is that if you follow Jesus, if you just have enough faith in him you will surely be healthy, wealthy, and wise. This is a lie and is just not true. Jesus didn't teach this nor did he live this.

John 16:33-

I have said these things to you, that in me (in Jesus) you may have peace. In the world you will have trouble (storms, trials) . But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Storms are not what God intended for us but are the result of our sin, of turning from God and living in a fallen world. We will have trouble. We will have storms, but take heart... as followers of Jesus there is good news. We have the hope and promise that God is with us through the storms. That we can have faith in Jesus, the One who overcame it all.

Even as we wonder "God where are you?", we can be confident and trust God's promises which the bible are full of. God is with us. And we have a hope and a promise that there will be One day when Jesus returns, one day there will be no more storms.

The good news is when the storms come and they will, Jesus is in your boat! It may get shaken, and tossed around but when Jesus is in your boat it will not sink!

Another insight we discover is storms can expose or reveal our fears and misplaced faith.

We find the disciples in this boat totally overwhelmed by the storm. They are afraid and fearing for their lives. And Jesus is sleeping.

They do everything they can on their own and realizing that's it, they have done all they can they wake Jesus up in fear. Master we are going to drown. Jesus gets up, calms the storm and asks them a very direct question . "Where is your faith?" Mark's gospel includes , "Why are you afraid?"

What do you fear? Where is your faith?

We all have fears. And when the things we place our faith in fail, fear easily overtakes us. Paralyzes and enslaves us. The enemy/satan often uses storms to make us anxious, bind us to

the chains of fear, keep us discouraged and unable to experience the peace and freedom Jesus has for us through faith in Him.

Years ago two of my daughters had a big fear of lizards. It was cute though, as they couldn't pronounce lizards and so one of them referred to them as "wizards" and the other "scizords".

It was summertime and "wizards" and "scizards" were everywhere. I would be doing something and then hear screaming and yelling. Thinking someone is extremely hurt, I ran to where the noise came from only to find my daughters having barricaded themselves in the garage crying and screaming, paralyzed and overcome with fear and panic because a lizard ran in front of them.

I pick them up, I hold them close and listen as they frantically proclaim their fear and hatred of lizards. "I hate wizards" . O those ferocious wizards. I try not to laugh and do my best to calm them, let them know I have them, remind them that a lizard has never hurt them, that they are more afraid of you, that you are huge and they are small, and on and on.

But in that moment their fear overwhelms them and they are paralyzed. They know daddy is strong and will protect them. They know I'm not lying to them but they are stuck in fear and have no faith in the truths I'm trying to tell them. Their fear and panic overwhelms them.

And ya know it reminds me of how I often respond to God when I'm in a storm being hit with waves of fear and doubt.

As a husband, as a parent as a Father I fear something happening to my girls. I fear not being able to provide for my family. I fear being alone. I'm fear not having control. I fear letting someone down.

And so there are times when I'm in a storm I end up focusing on the things I fear, rather than placing faith in God and receiving His waves of grace and mercy. I focus on the things I can't control, rather than focusing on the power of Christ who is present in my life, who is in control, and is with me through the storm every step of the way.

Like the disciples I often come to Jesus in fear and not in faith.

The issue in our passage wasn't that the disciples came to Jesus, the issue was their misplaced faith even though they had been with Jesus, they have seen him heal, cast out demons. Everything Jesus had said and did came to be. He said "let's go to the other side of the lake". They were going to get there. Jesus knew this, the disciples forgot this.

The disciples who saw Jesus do all these miracles, had enough faith to take the step and follow him count the cost of following him, had enough insight to go to Jesus to save them during the storm.

But we see that as the storm come, they panic and are overwhelmed, fear overtakes them, and their faith is no longer placed in Jesus but on their own strength and power to get them through the storm, in which case they know they will surely perish. They wake him in fear, not in faith.

So storms can reveal our fears and our misplaced faith at times. But even in that we have good news. The hope we have is that we can still and always come to Jesus even in our little faith,

even in our misplaced faith. God doesn't turn us away, He doesn't say "come back when your faith in me is stronger.

We can come to God when our faith is not there, or when we feel overwhelmed by our fears, and God listens, God hears our prayers and cares, God is still in control. We don't have to figure out the how or the why of storms come but we can be still and trust. Know with confidence that God is with us and is working all things... the good, the bad, the storms for our good.

Jesus stood up and rebuked the wave and the wind, and there was a great calm.

That won't always be our immediate outcome, but what we have is the promise found over and over in His Word that He will never leave us or forsakes us. Even in our fears and little faith we can always come to God. His love never fails and He never gives up on us.

We can experience the great calm when we place our faith in Jesus. The great calm is the peace we receive that is beyond all understanding. A great calm in the midst of a great storm.

Finally, we discover here that what surprises us, what causes us panic doesn't surprise or panic God. In our passage we find a stark comparison of the disciples panicking and fighting for their lives and Jesus sleeping. Our sudden storms that catch us off guard, surprise us, and cause us to panic does not cause God to panic.

When I was young and getting ready to ride my first airplane, I had my fears and anxieties. Turbulence, crashing, etc, a lot can go wrong at 35000 feet. I shouldn't have watched that twilight zone with that little critter on the wings.

My dad told me to just keep my eye on the flight attendants. If they are calm than everything is ok. If they start buckling up and freaking out then we have to worry.

In our passage Jesus is asleep, He is calm, He is not panicking, He is not worried. If Jesus isn't worried, if it feels as if he is asleep it's not because he doesn't love you; it's not because he isn't concerned. But he knows the big picture. He loves you so much and he knows we can't do it on our own

Jesus on earth had to sleep, but God in heaven never sleeps. God is never caught by surprise, that what causes us to panic doesn't panic God. In faith God takes our panic and gives us peace.

In John 14:27 we read:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

This passage ends with the great storm, becoming a great calm and the disciples marveling and amazed as they are transformed a bit more and their faith increases and they begin to realize more and more who Jesus is.

When I look back and reflect on the storms I have been through I discover and realize in all of those situations that God was with me, and God was moving in and working in my life for good. And I recount over and over how Jesus pulled me through those storms and it leaves me marveling at who Jesus is and what he came to do.

Where is your faith?

With Jesus in the boat it won't sink and as we are in the season of lent approaching good Friday and easter we are reminded:

We can have faith in the One who overcomes the world. Faith in the One who went through the ultimate storm of death and sin, the only storm that can actually sink us. He didn't jump ship then and he will never abandon us in the storms we go through now.

God is at work, God is with us , God hears us, and God is greater than any storm that comes our way.

Im going to close with a song. Don't worry I'm not going to sing, as that would be a sudden storm for you all.

A Christian band that I have really enjoyed over the years, Casting Crowns came out with a song some years back called "I will praise you in the storm". This song captures that tension we experience in our storms, wondering "God where are you?", and yet we can cling to His promises, that even in the storms of life He is at work.

*I was sure by now, God You would have reached down, And wiped our tears away
Stepped in and saved the day, But once again, I say "Amen", and it's still raining*

*As the thunder rolls, I barely hear Your whisper through the rain, "I'm with you"
And as Your mercy falls, I raise my hands and praise the God who gives
And takes away*

*And I'll praise You in this storm, And I will lift my hands, For You are who You are
No matter where I am, And every tear I've cried, You hold in Your hand
You never left my side, And though my heart is torn, I will praise You in this storm*

*I remember when, I stumbled in the wind, You heard my cry to you
And you raised me up again, My strength is almost gone
How can I carry on, If I can't find You*

*But as the thunder rolls
I barely hear You whisper through the rain
"I'm with you", And as Your mercy falls
I raise my hands and praise the God who gives
And takes away*

*I lift my eyes unto the hills
Where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord
The Maker of Heaven and Earth*