

2016-17-40 Matthew 14:28-33 Jesus saves us through the storms! Pentecost 12 August 27, 2017

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God's grace and peace are yours through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Savior. Amen.

God's Word to give us confidence in Him is written in Matthew 14:28-33.

These are Your words heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Friends, in Christ,

Today we're going to talk about storms. We've heard about Hurricane Harvey that struck the Texas coast. With that storm people had warning to avoid the danger. At other times there is little warning of storms and people face it unprepared. That was the situation with Jesus' disciples. They were in a small boat on the Sea of Galilee. They had to battle sudden violent gusts of wind and the waves created by them. I'm sure that they wished Jesus would have been with them in the boat. We can relate to the disciples as we face unexpected challenges or troubles in life that we may call "storms." The good news is:

### **Jesus saves us through the storms!**

**First, why does Jesus permit storms?** Storms are a sign of God's judgment on a sinful world. The first storm is listed in Genesis 6 when God sent the world-wide flood to destroy the wicked unbelievers. But, God promised to never send a world-wide flood again. But, hurricanes, tornadoes, and lighting storms continue. There are several times in the Old Testament where God sent hail storms against Israel's harmful enemies. Another reason for storms is to show the awesome power of God. Every violent storm, earthquake, damaging wind should remind people of the power of God. Even astronomical events like the eclipse can remind people that God is in charge of the universe. And some day when Jesus appears, He will darken the sun forever, moon and stars will disappear, and mountains will fall into the sea as judgment day begins. God uses storms to remind people: Today is the time to prepare for the end by turning to Jesus in repentance!

God uses storms to benefit people, too. Lightning brings nitrogen to the soil. Rain brings moisture for crops. And God can use the "storms" of life to keep or strengthen the faith of those who trust in Him. Jesus had sent the disciples out on the lake knowing that there would be a violent wind and perilous waves. He knew that as much danger as they would face in the storm, there was worse danger on shore. Many of the people Jesus had fed earlier that day wanted to make Him their king. The disciples were hoping for the same thing. So, Jesus sent them rowing to help them avoid the harm this would do to their faith. Yet, at the time the disciples didn't know Jesus' reasons. When they were only about half way across, the wind became so strong and waves so great they were wondering: "Why did Jesus send us out here? We're exhausted!"

It isn't often that we are caught in harsh winds and storms. But, there are other types of "storms" which God allows in our lives. We may be overwhelmed with school assignments or job responsibilities. We may find ourselves in a hospital emergency room with medical concerns. Parents may have a chaotic time at home when the phone rings, children are crying, and dinner needs to be made all at the same time! At other times we may just feel emotionally drained from life. Through these "storms" Jesus reminds us that this world is not heaven, but He has prepared a place for us in heaven where we will find perfect peace. Also, Jesus may use "storms" to keep us from worse spiritual dangers. And, He uses "storms" in our lives to help us better grasp His grace and power to save us, so our trust in Him will grow.

**Second, Jesus will not fail us!** Our verses tell us that Jesus could see the trouble that His disciples were in, even from a distance in the dark. As soon as He sent them to sail on the Sea of Galilee, He was praying for them! He didn't wait to see them on the other side of the lake. He walked to them in the storm! At first the disciples called out in fear when they saw a figure. On a dark stormy night they couldn't tell it was Him. They superstitiously thought that a spirit had been sent and they were doomed. Jesus stopped their fear. He called out to them, just as He calls out to us during our "storms" of life and said *"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."* (v.27)

What a difference a word can make. In our earlier Bible reading, Elijah was fearful, running for his life and wanted to die. Then the Lord spoke and changed his life. Today, if parents have a child on the road and hear of an accident, worry if it is their child. What relief when their child calls to say, "I'm fine. I wasn't in the accident." The disciples heard Jesus' voice telling them that they had nothing to fear. He was with them. Peter was so happy to see Jesus he requested to be with him on the water. Was he asking for too much? It would be like a person getting rescued from a flood by a helicopter, only to ask while he is up in the air if he could try his first attempt at parachuting! Jesus patiently replied, *"Come. Then Peter got down out of the boat and walked on the water... toward Jesus."* (v.29) What held Peter up? Did he have a strong faith? Not necessarily! I might strongly believe I can jump from the pulpit and fly P. 3 around the room. But I don't have God's promised power to do so! In Peter's case, Jesus, the Son of God, told him to come! His powerful word held Peter up. We learn this same truth in the song, *Jesus Loves Me: "We are weak, but He is strong."* God promised us, *"Fear not, for I have redeemed you... You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. For I am the LORD your God"* (Isaiah 43:1-3)

With Jesus so strong to save, why didn't Peter stay up in the storm? When Peter *"saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, He cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' He said, 'why did you doubt?'"* (v.30-31) Doubt, fear, and worry are harmful faith. When we worry or fear it is often not from the past, but from what might happen in the future. Peter took his eyes of faith off Jesus and only thought about what might happen as a large wind-driven wave came at him. We can be like Peter. When Christ offers the greatest help to us, we doubt or get so occupied with problems we forget to seek His help. Peter's faith was weak, but at least he had faith. As soon as he called on Jesus to save him, Jesus was there to take his arm and help him walk to the boat. Remember also the story of Jonah. He was on a sinking boat in a storm. To save the crew, Jonah told them to throw him overboard. They did and were saved from the storm. And a great fish swallowed Jonah to save his life, too.

Jesus is always here for us. We don't see Him, but He promised, *"I am with you always."* (Mark 16:16.) Jesus told His disciples, *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33) He who overcame the world can overcome our problems in life. That doesn't mean storms will all go away, but Jesus will continue to have solutions for us. We know where to find them: In His Word! If we want a stronger faith, then we should do as His Word tells us: to hear His Word often and confess our sins of doubt or worry and receive His forgiveness. Jesus has died to wash away our sins. He rose as our powerful living Savior to help us now!

With His promises in mind, we can have peace because Jesus, our Savior, is the Son of God. He who allows storms in the sky and in life has the power to save us from them. He who walked on the water to rescue His followers went through death to rescue us. He who called Peter to walk on the water has power to help us walk by faith! Let us worship Him today, saying, *"Truly you are the Son of God."* (v.32-33) Amen.