

Storms

Matthew 8:23-27

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Today we'll talk about the storms in our life. The physical ones will help us exemplify the spiritual ones.

It's interesting to watch the blame game after storms occur, be it in New Orleans, Florida, Baja, the Caribbean, etc. The mayor was to blame. No, it was the governor of the state. No, it was the people who refused to evacuate. No, it was the people who built the levees. No, it was the president. You know what? It was a storm! And when big storms hit, no amount of human intervention can prevent what happens. There will always be enormous loss of property and lives. Storms will come and stuff will happen.

Likewise, storms in life come and stuff happens. We can look for guilty people, circumstances, foods, habits, etc. or we can blame ourselves but usually storms are too overwhelming to blame someone or something.

Let me tell you about a man named Steve. Steve was living what some people might call the American Dream. He had a great wife and two wonderful children. He lived in a beautiful house on a quiet street, and had a job that most people would love to have. However, upon coming into work one day, Steve found out that his job in management had been eliminated. And as the bills grew higher and higher so did the tension between Steve and his family. The things that Steve and his family are going through could be summed up in four words, and they are "The Storms Of Life." And that's precisely what I want to talk about today!

Have you ever experienced storms in your life? Those times where things just don't make sense. Times where your

problems seem so big and your faith seem so small. Times where you feel so swamped and so afraid that you are going to be taken over by the storm. I think we've all had feelings like that!

Jesus' disciples were no different.

Let me read Matthew 8:23-27, please follow me on the slide and let's just see how the disciples dealt with the storm.

Matthew 8:23-27

²³ Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. ²⁴ And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. ²⁵ Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"

²⁶ But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷ So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

After reading this text, there are some major points that we can apply, between our Spiritual Storms and the Disciples Physical storm:

Storms will come! Storms will go! And Jesus always remains

Our text today finds Jesus and His disciples on a literal sea, and we can learn much about our voyage thru life by way of this passage.

All of us at times are storm tossed, and today some of us may feel we are about to go under. Well, there's peace and stillness on the way for us, let us see...

1. The Problem

Actually 2 problems:

A Sinking Ship and a Sleeping Savior.

Let's remember that the disciples were led into this storm by

following their Master, they followed Him right into a storm. Some believe that storms come for the Christian only when they rebel or disobey God, but that's not true. God's will isn't always smooth sailing.

This kind of a storm is not out of the ordinary on the Sea of Galilee which is really more like a big lake —13 miles long and 8 miles wide. It's surrounded by mountains and hills. The cool air comes over the mountains and mixes with the warm sea air and violent storms can erupt without much warning.

And that's just how the storms of life come, isn't it?! One minute the sun is shining, and the next the lightning is flashing, thunder booming, and the winds and the waves go wild. The phone rings and in seconds your life is changed, you're in the midst of a storm. You have a routine Dr. visit that was to be quick and simple, but the look on his face tells the story even before the words are out of his mouth...you're in a terrible storm!

It can happen as you go thru an intersection in a flash, or when your boss calls you into the office, or when you open that hospital bill or a lawyer informs you of a lawsuit. Storms arise suddenly and violently, and without warning.

Storms come due to a variety of causes:

- Sometimes we blow up our own storms. These storms are of our own making, like in Jonah's case. He decided not to do God's will. It's amazing as you read the story how many times it says that Jonah 'went down.' After he decided to go his own way it says he went down to Tarshish, down into the heart of the ship, down into the sea, down into the belly of the whale. And once you decide not to follow God's best there's only 1 way to go and that's 'down!'

This storm was brought on himself by Jonah and his stubborn will, and he holds the distinction of being the first man in history to spend the night on a foam blubber mattress! But in the end you can't keep a good man down and God used even that storm in the life of His child and though he was spiraling down, down, down, he eventually came up!

- Some storms God creates Himself. Such as in John 6, after He fed the 5,000, the people wanted to make Him a king. Oh how tempted the disciples must've been to give in to the pressure of popularity but Jesus said, no, get in the boat and go to Capernaum, and along the way they again ran directly into the middle of another storm. Why? I believe He did it to divert their attention from something that would have created a bigger problem in their lives. Sometimes God sends us a little storm to keep us from heading into a bigger one!

This reminds me of a little boy that was playing with his sailboat at the edge of a lake...it got away from him and he couldn't reach it. He didn't want to lose it, and ingeniously he thought of a plan. He started picking up rocks and tossing them on the other side, past the boat. The waves brought the boat back to him, and his outstretched arms. And when we drift away from the Lord He sometimes does the same, and the storm drives us right back into the arms of Jesus!

- Some storms are Satanic in origin, like Job's in the Old Testament. The devil himself is sometimes the source. Most Bible scholars believe this storm in Matt. 8 was devil driven, because in v. 26 it says Jesus 'rebuked' the storm. Jesus is often said to have 'rebuked' demons. In Luke 8 the same storm is written about and Jesus said to it, "Be still." In the Greek language it's the word for muzzling a dog. It's possible that this storm was another attempt of Satan to destroy Jesus, while He was sleeping no less! But Satan had no power to take

the life of Jesus...only He Himself would be able to give His life, laying it down willingly for us! The soldiers didn't take His life; He 'gave up the ghost.'

Sometimes Satan kicks up a storm in our life to try to get us off track. On one occasion the Apostle Paul said, I would have come to you, but Satan hindered me. [try that on your boss next time you're late for work!]

Another reason I believe the devil was behind this storm is because it was extraordinary in nature. Understand that most of these disciples were raised on this sea and had fished it for years...they no doubt had been thru countless storms, but in this case they all thought they were going to die, it was so severe. They were frantic.

So, we have a problem...a sinking ship, and to make matters worse, we've got a sleeping Savior.

v. 24b 'He was asleep'. This is the only time we find Jesus asleep, and it's in a storm. Several other times we find the disciples sleeping when Jesus has important business, but this time He's asleep and they are biting their nails to the quick!

Ever been in a storm of life and it seemed like God was sleeping? "Where are you, Lord? Don't you know what's going on? Don't you care?"

When I go thru a storm I feel like I have it all figured out. I know what the Lord ought to do, how He ought to do it, and when...now!

2 hard lessons: 1. God doesn't need my advice. 2. God doesn't work on my timetable. He'll do it in His way and His time. He doesn't need a wakeup call, and He never

oversleeps. He's always on the throne and in full control.

Remember Lazarus? They sent word to Jesus that His friend Lazarus was sick. But the Bible says specifically that Jesus stayed where He was for 2 more days. Then when He finally arrived there Lazarus was dead, and I want you to know that Martha was waiting for Him. She said, if you had been here our brother would not have died. Translation: "Well, look who has finally decided to show up! Hope it isn't too much of an inconvenience! It might interest you to know that He's dead now!"

The rest of the story: "Lazarus, come forth!"

It may seem sometimes like He's asleep or is late, but we need to remember

God is never late!

Joke—man asked the Lord, "Is it true that for you 10,000 years is just like a minute?" Yes. "And is it true that a million dollars to us on earth is like a penny in heaven?" Yes. "Lord, could I have a penny?" Sure, just a minute!

We move now from the problem to the prayer...

2. The Prayer

v. 25 Notice what they did and what they said.

What you do during a storm reveals who you are and what you are.

What's your first impulse in a storm? Run to a friend? That's not entirely bad if they will give you Godly counsel, but it's not the first response you should have.

[Run to nearest exit? / Try to make your own way out thru diversion or drug? The storm will still be there when you come back down! And maybe more will await you due to your bad

behavior.]

The disciples went to Jesus first, and so should we. Character is revealed in the storm. The storms of life will either draw you closer to the Lord or further away, but no one will emerge on the other side of the storm the same as they went in! Either you will become bitter or better!

What they did—they went to Jesus.

What they said—Lord, save us: we perish. It's one of the shortest prayers in the Bible. And when we're in trouble, we cut down on the long, fancy prayers and get right down to business. It happened when Peter walked on the water and took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the storm and began to go under, but then he prayed his famous 3 word prayer "Lord, save me!" He didn't have time for "Oh God of Jeroboam and Rehoboam and all the Boam boys" or "Holy Father who are in heaven..."

There's a contradiction in that prayer. "Lord, save us" is the language of faith. "We perish" is the language of fear. Now, isn't that just like us humans? Trying to have faith and fear at the same time?! And yet they are mutually exclusive...spiritual opposites! Faith and fear cannot co-habit the same heart at the same time. When you are looking at the storm you are filled with fear but when looking to Jesus you are filled with faith!

Fear is looking at God thru your circumstances. Faith is looking at your circumstances thru God!

Here's 3 reasons they shouldn't have mingled fear with their faith:

- They had a promise from Jesus that they were going to

make it to the other side. [Parallel passage in Mark 1] And God's commandments are God's enablement. He won't ask us to do something we cannot do with His help...And here I want to confess that I understand this quote by Mother Teresa like never before:

I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish that He didn't trust me so much.

Anyway, He didn't promise a storm free, easy trip, but He did indeed guarantee success! And that's what faith is, really, is just trusting in the promises of God!

- The Lord Himself was in the boat with them! That very day they had seen Him cleanse the leper and heal countless others and cast out demons...by now they should have complete confidence that He can handle their situation. *This is good reason for all of us to keep a prayer journal. Not only a list of requests but of the answers and the dates. They serve us for life as a reminding testimony of God's power!*

- They could see that the Lord Himself was at perfect peace. When you have a situation and you see someone you respect is calm as they view it, it has a calming effect on you. The opposite is true if they react in a fuss.

When little kids get scared in a thunderstorm and they run to our bed and ask if we are scared. Oh no, we say...[even if we are!] and that calms them.

It should calm us to know that whatever we're going thru, our God is not shocked...He's not wringing His hands in despair wondering what's next. He's in full control.

As a kid, I skinned my knee many times and even if it didn't hurt and felt fine, when I went home, if my mom saw the blood with a concerned or painful face, I would definitely cry!

The problem...the prayer...

3. The Power

v. 26b Then He arose...

v. 24 said a storm arose, and now it says in v. 26 that Jesus arose! He calmed that storm. He doesn't always do this...sometimes He calms you, His child! Always, He keeps us safe 'til the storm passes by!

The problem that day was not the storm, the sinking ship, or the sleeping Savior...it was the unbelief in the hearts of the disciples. Jesus asked them, "Why are ye fearful?"

Here's some verses written hundreds of years before this storm, that the disciples should have trusted in, and we should today:

Psalm 107:23-30

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; [24] These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. [25] For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. [26] They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. [27] They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. [28] Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. [29] He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. [30] Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

-- Lets revisit our friend Steve. Since then, everything has changed. He found a new job, and has rediscovered his relationship with Jesus. Steve summed everything up in this way. "When everything was going great, I thought I could do it all on my own. I thought Jesus was only there to help in times

of trouble. However when the storms hit my life, I began to read the Bible and I found out that Jesus always remains He is there in the good times as well as the bad. And all I had to do is remember to put my faith in Him." -- I think Steve is on the right track. When the Storms come we must remember to put our faith in Jesus, because He will help us through tough times. When the storms go we must remember to put our faith in Jesus, because He will help us put our lives back together, strengthening and encouraging us along the way. And finally we must remember to put our faith in Jesus, because Jesus Always Remains! I would challenge you today to always let Jesus remain in your life in the good and the bad times.

So dear brothers and sisters, if you are to take just one idea back home today, let it be this:

If the ship of your spirit is still being hit by the waves and the storm, awake the Lord that dwells within it and He will arise and rebuke the winds and the sea and bring a great calm.

Let's pray: Lord, we thank You for our circumstances and ask for understanding and patience and faith.

Dear Lord, many of us are going through storms right now and we know you are our Lord and we know You are with us, help us recognize You and open our hearts and minds to You, come and wake up inside us and help us see the storms through you, help us learn the lessons You have for us and help us deliver our lives to You and let us see the path You have for each of us and let us walk with You in that precise direction and help us be example and not warning to those around us. And also help those going through calm times to recognize your blessing and your presence in the good times, let us all be with you Lord, awake inside each and every one of us and illuminate our minds, hearts and lives with your wisdom, love

and faith, feel us with your Holy Spirit and let us be light in the world for You and by Your mercy and love.
In Jesus name we pray and praise, Amen

God bless you all!