

In The Storm

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Preacher: Dr. Daniel Heeringa

[0 : 0 0] In that. People are often marked by storms. When I was in college, I preached at churches primarily around the Charlotte area, but all over North Carolina.

! And one weekend, I stayed with a family overnight. And I had arrived to their home in the dark. And the next morning, when I looked out the window in the bathroom, I looked out in the backyard.

I was stunned by the damage that was in their backyard. And they shared with me how Hurricane Hugo had devastated them. And over breakfast that morning, they told me about that story.

I went on to New Orleans Seminary. And while I was in seminary, shortly after I got there, Hurricane Andrew hit South Louisiana. That's how they say it. We say Louisiana.

But anyway, if you live there, you'll understand why they call it Louisiana. But anyway. But Hurricane Andrew had done a tremendous damage to them. And I went down and helped clean up and helped tear down houses so they could rebuild them.

[1 : 0 5] And I saw that devastation up close for, I guess, the first time. I pastored in South Mississippi. And I always heard people talk about Camille. And I didn't know who she was at first.

And then I quickly learned she was not a person. It was a storm. A catastrophic storm. A catastrophic storm that hit in 1969. But at that time, more than two decades later, it had left its mark still.

And people talked about, well, that was either before Camille or after Camille. I pastored in South Carolina. I moved back to North Mississippi.

And I heard story after story about Hurricane Katrina. Yeah. The news covered New Orleans and the mess of New Orleans at Katrina. But it went way beyond that as well.

And the Mississippi coast was hit hard. And the church that I pastored had teamed up with several other churches in that area and had traveled tirelessly in the aftermath to walk through that.

[2 : 0 5] One of the greatest ministry efforts that that church had ever produced in missions was through Katrina. And they've been marked by it. In September 2024, our whole region was rocked by Helene.

North Carolina still is hurting from it in some parts. Many of you were marked by that. Storms mark our lives. But it's not just natural storms that do it, that leave scars.

There are health storms that do it. There are relational hurricanes that happen in our life. There are career tsunamis that hit. And the kind of earthquakes that come when someone we love, life unravels before us and falls apart.

And we strive to help them put it back together. I don't need to give you a lot of examples because you already know that. Because storms mark us.

In our passage today, the disciples are in a storm. And they had Jesus with them. But even with his presence, they were still in a storm.

[3 : 18] It's found in Mark chapter 4, beginning in verse 35. And it says, And they woke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace be still. And the wind ceased and there was great calm. And he said to them, Why are you so afraid?

Have you still no faith? And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, Who then is this?

That even the wind and the sea obey him. When you look at the previous chapters that we've covered, you find out that Jesus and his disciples had been crowded by people.

And although there would be ministry on the other side of the water, all indications were that Jesus was looking to get them away from that crowd as urgently as possible.

[4 : 49] Jesus was warned. They placed him in the stern on a cushion. That was the seat of honor of sorts. It was as if they said, Listen, you rest.

We got this. They were fishermen. They felt like they were on their turf. However, violent storms on the Sea of Galilee are not unusual.

It's not a large body of water. It's 13 miles long and it's 7 1/2 miles wide. However, its natural setting makes it dangerous. It sits nearly 700 feet below sea level at the bottom of a rift between the Arabian Desert and the Mediterranean Sea.

And it is surrounded by sheer cliffs on the east. When cool air rushes down from Mount Hermon, which stands 9,200 feet tall, and it funnels through the narrow passes around those cliffs, it collides with the warm tropical air over that lake and it leads to sudden and violent storms.

That is apparently what happened to them. After I preached the morning of the early worship, somebody came to me afterwards and said, When I was taking a tour in Israel and I got out on that boat and went out on the Sea of Galilee, just a little water hit the side of the boat and the guy turned the boat around and started coming back shore.

[6 : 19] And he said, Now, you wonder why I'm doing that, but if we don't respond quickly, we may not make it back. And he said, By the time we got back, he said it was worse than anything I've ever experienced on Joe Cassie.

Just that quickly it happens. So it's a setup for that, and apparently that's what happened to them that day. The waves overwhelmed the boat and water began to fill in it and they were terrified, and they were terrified for good reason.

We're not talking about an overreaction here. These are fishermen, seasoned fishermen. They're used to such storms. They're accustomed to the violent temper of this sea. In reality, even modern-day captains on powered vessels watch the weather patterns closely on this sea to avoid the very thing that we read about in this passage.

But what they didn't realize at that time was this. They had sailed into that storm for a reason. It was going to be a lesson for them. And it was not only a lesson for them, but I believe it's also for us.

And by the way, I've heard this before, and I've said this before, and I'll probably say it again, and it's still true. So I want you to let your guard down and hear it, okay? All of us are either coming out of a storm, going into a storm, or right now in the middle of a storm.

[7 : 53] This is common ground. And we do a lot from Sunday to dress up and look pretty and look like we got all right together. All right. But the reality is, I learned a long time ago, there's a pain on every pew.

A storm is common ground. You don't have to act like you don't know what we're talking about today because you do. Or you will because it's common ground.

So the lessons that they learned that day, I hope we can learn as well. When in the storm, remember some things. One, remember this.

When we don't think that he cares, he does. These were fishermen. They had been in storms before.

This storm was different. It was at night, which makes it worse. But this storm was extremely violent. Mark calls it a great windstorm. Matthew calls it a great shaking.

[9 : 03] Even literally a sea quake. And this matters. It wasn't like they had caused the storm. They had not disobeyed.

They had left when Jesus told them to leave. They went where Jesus told them to go. Listen to me. Storms even come when we are obedient.

When they looked to Jesus, he was asleep. And they misunderstood that. They assumed that he was indifferent to the matter. And they asked him, Teacher, don't you care that we're perishing?

Now we know that now he never sleeps and he never slumbers, but sometimes his silence feels like he's sleeping. Have you ever felt like you were trying to wake God up asking him, don't you care?

I mean, it could be when we feel friendless. Or it could be when our car breaks down. It could be when a loved one's sick.

[10 : 10] Or when a family's crumbling. Or when a job's played out. Or our bank account's drying up. Or our test result is pending.

And maybe it's not even a prayer. Maybe it's just a thought. Does God really care about my circumstances? And he quickly answered the question in his action.

By the way, in their world and in their culture, a sleeping deity was not a sign of weakness. It was a sign of control. It was not that Jesus was unaware of the storm.

He was at rest in the midst of the storm. Listen. He is at rest in our storms. He's not panicked by the things that panic us.

The storm did not expose his indifference. The storm showed their spiritual immaturity. We're not alone when God is silent in our storms.

[11 : 18] Actually, he's in the boat through every wave that we face along the way. And of course he cares. And never think that you're alone. God may be quiet, but he is in your boat through every wave that you face.

When you don't think he cares, he does. Second thing to remember in a storm is this. When we don't think he's in control, he is.

Now, can you imagine this is a sturdy fishing vessel able to hold several men, but it was actually no match for a 10-foot wave. And the boat plunges, nose first, into a wall of water.

The force of the waves tip it dangerously until the bow feels like it's pointing straight up. And just when you think that you're about to be thrown backwards, it pitches you forward into a valley of another wave.

And hands are everywhere, gripping the mast, grabbing the rails, desperately trying to pull everything together, all but one set of hands. And he's asleep. He's sawing logs in the stern of the boat.

[12 : 35] They're amazed, maybe a little angry, and they wake him and they ask him if he cares. And with his voice, the storm is gone. He simply stands up and says, peace, be still.

Literally, he's saying, be silent. Even stronger than that, the text tells us, literally, it'd be, be muzzled.

It is the same command that he used for the demoniac in Mark chapter 1 that we looked at a few weeks ago. God's in control. And the disciples would have known Psalm 107 a whole lot better than we would, where it says, they reeled and staggered like drunken men as were at their wit's end.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man. Only the Lord does that.

[13 : 52] When he speaks, things change. And I'll tell you another story that must have echoed in their mind, and it's echoed in mine, it may echo in yours, and that's Jonah, who was running from God.

He got in a boat that went the opposite direction that God told him to go. A mighty storm came. All the men called upon their gods, but Jonah was asleep.

They wanted to do everything they possibly could, so they woke him up and said, why don't you call on your God? And when they realized that he worshiped the real God, they panicked.

They didn't know what to do with him, and Jonah invited him to throw him overboard. They were afraid to do that because the God who had caused the storm was the same God they wanted to appease, and so they didn't quite know what to do.

He had convinced them to do that. They threw him over, and there was a great calm. I want you to notice in verse 41, it says that they were filled with great fear.

[14 : 50] They were terrified, terrified, and that's after the storm's gone. The storm was gone, yet they were terrified. Terrified of what? Of Jesus? Of his power?

They were no longer concerned about the weather. They were now focused on Jesus. They were now beginning to see who he really was. Only God himself can calm the storms, and the rain, and the sea, and suddenly as they're in that boat, it dawns on them maybe like it never had before.

He is here, right here with us, and he's in control. Even though we may not feel like it, he's in control.

And when we don't feel like he's in control, he is. The other thing I think we need to remember is this. When we don't know if we can trust him, we can.

These men had reasons to not be overwhelmed by the storm, yet they were. Storms are a part of life.

[16 : 05] They're going to come, and when they do, the question is, are we going to trust God enough to not lose our faith through those storms? I think some things that we need to do, they need to do as well.

One is remember his promise. He told them in verse 35 that they were going to the other side. He didn't say, we're going to try to get to the other side.

That's not what he said. He said, we're going to the other side. Isaiah 43 verse 2, the prophet said, when you pass through the waters, I'll be with you.

That's what God says to us. It don't say around the waters, it says through the waters. The psalmist says in Psalm 56, three and four, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust, I shall not be afraid. When you do not think you can trust him, I want you to remember his promise to you.

[17 : 12] But also, I want you to recognize his presence. He was with them. He might have been silent.

It might have felt like he wasn't interested, but however, their impression of him did not change the reality of him. Did you get that? Our impression of him does not change the reality of him.

He was on it. When I read this, it reminds me of the upper room. Christ is in the upper room with his disciples.

He has ministered to them for three and a half years, ministered with them for three and a half years. In the latter part of those days with them, he began to prepare them for a day when he would no longer be with them.

And he told them that they were going to come after him and that he was going to die, but he'd rise again. And he began to tell them those things and they didn't really want to hear it. They couldn't imagine a change like that. And so that night before he goes to the Garden of Gethsemane and is arrested, he takes them into the upper room and he tells them about how he will soon no longer be physically with them, but that does not mean he would leave them.

[18 : 33] He says in that longest discourse we have of Jesus at one time anywhere, it's in John 13 through 17, most of which at least was in the upper room. And he says there, I will not leave you comfort lest I'll come to you.

He promises them that. They may feel like they're alone, but he's not going to leave them like that. F.B. Meyer was a great theologian, contemporary in London with Spurgeon, good friends with D.L. Moody.

And he said this, he said, they that bear Christ's company must prepare for squalls. Yet why should we fear when the master is on board? When we don't think we can trust him, we can.

We just kind of need to remember his promise. He didn't bring us this far to let us fail and just recognize his presence. He will never leave us nor forsake us. And when you don't think we can trust him, we need to be able to rest in his peace.

By the time the storm stops, something else has started. The wind is quiet, the waves have laid down, the danger has passed, but the disciples are not relieved.

[19 : 47] They are unsettled. And Mark tells us that they are filled with great fear. They're not fearing the storm anymore, but they fear the one who's standing in the boat with them.

Storms are terrifying. But a Savior who speaks to storms and stops them, that's something else altogether. Isn't it interesting that the very storm that made veteran fishermen panic made the Lord Jesus drowsy?

That what put fear in their eyes put him to sleep? That the boat that felt like a certain tomb to his disciples was a steady cradle to Christ?

It's wasn't that Jesus was unaware of the storm. Jesus was at peace in the midst of the storm. He also tells them in the upper room in John 14, 27, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give unto you.

Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let it be afraid. The peace he gives, and I want you to get this, is not an absence of storms or trouble. The thunder is going to roll in our lives.

[21 : 04] It's not the absence of tough times. It is the presence of Christ through all of us and Jesus could have rebuked them harshly. He could have pointed out their immaturity, but instead he patiently asked them two questions, not to shame them, but to invite them to see what this moment had revealed.

He said, why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? The storm did not create their fear.

It exposed it. The storm did not reveal who Jesus was. It confirmed it. And the greatest storms that we face are not wind and they're not waves.

They're not even the losses. They're not even the disappointments. They're not even the diagnoses. The greatest storm that we face is the unbelief that reveals itself in our hearts in the midst of our hardship.

And the question of whether we can really trust the Lord. And that is the question that the storms bring to light. Isn't it interesting?

[22 : 29] Isn't it interesting? Did Jesus know this storm was coming? Before they ever stepped in the boat?

If you go back and look, he had been sharing with them how faith works. He had been telling them how the kingdom grows. He had been telling them, talking to them about trusting God with things that we cannot control.

And now on the water is a great object lesson for the disciples. This storm is not punishment. I want you to understand something today.

If you've given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you're a Christian that's dedicated to following him, God does not punish you. Your punishment has already been taken.

Do you know who took on your punishment? Christ Jesus took on your punishment on the cross. God's not mad at you. God's not punishing you.

[23 : 37] This is not a rebuke. It is a living illustration. This is the curriculum of God. Not because we deserve storms. Not because every storm is caused by sin.

Don't misunderstand me. Sin causes huge storms. But not every storm is caused by sin. This storm was not caused by their sin.

It was not. But because storms are often where our faith is clarified and our trust is formed, he teaches us in that.

He teaches us that we can trust Jesus in the storm. That when we think he don't care, he does. And when we think he's not in control, he is.

And so Mark ends this account the way life often happens. Not with an explanation, but with a question. He says, they ask, who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?

[24 : 48] and no answer was given. Their eyes are fixed upon him as they marvel at who they look to.

Their eyes are fixed on him and that is exactly where they needed to be. And it's exactly where we need to be.

Fixed on him. Because folks, once you know who's in the boat with you, the storm is not the focus.

The focus is upon the Lord who's right there with you in the midst of your storm. there's some storms here today.

I know of some. I know of few. I don't know of most. But I know the storms.

[26 : 14] Been doing this long enough and praying for people long enough, praying with people long enough, talking to people long enough to know there's some storms. And I want you to know that if there's never been a time in your life when you surrender your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, I don't know how else to help you except to bring you to the one who can calm your storm.

If you've never asked the Lord Jesus to forgive you of your sins, to come into your life and to change you, I want you to know that is the next step that you need to do in your life, period.

That's where a relationship starts. And if you feel alienated from God as if you're separated from God, do you know why you feel that? Because you are if you don't have a relationship with it.

So it starts there. and then if you do know that you have a relationship with him, if you've surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, you need to remember some things for the storms.

You might be in the middle of one. Some of you are, I know. Some of you are coming out of it and you're walking with a limp. And then who knows what tomorrow holds except the one who holds tomorrow.

[27 : 43] You might just need to lay your storm down before the Lord today. You've been trying to control it yourself. And you need to surrender to him.

I'm here to pray for you if you'd like for me to. You can lay your storm down at this altar. You can do it where you stand.

But let's don't go through these things alone. It always amazes me that oftentimes when people go through difficulties and storms, they'll tell me when we get through this we'll be back to church.

Now I'm not talking about something that's a health crisis that won't allow you to be in public. I'm just talking about somebody who's going through something. We feel like everybody can see straight through us and they know everything that's going on in our lives and we just can't face anybody.

And I'm just telling you, there's a Greek word for that, baloney. There's so much going on in people's lives today, they don't know what's happening with you. And they got so much stuff going on.

[28 : 54] They ain't got time to worry about you. I mean, they may pray for you, don't misunderstand me about that, but I'm just telling you, people aren't sitting back drinking a checklist, are they going to show up or not because I know what's going on in their life.

It's just not true. That's the evil one. God's going to show up. And I'll tell you what he does, he loves to polarize us, he loves to isolate us, he loves to get us alone in the hardest of times so he can beat us down.

And the reality is, what we need to acknowledge more than anything else is the one that is the master of the storm is right there with me. And he's got a whole crew of people that love me dearly, that will love me through what's going on in my life.

Just drop a facade. Be honest with God. Be honest with ourself. And look to him.

Heavenly Father, I love you. I thank you Lord for your love for us and I ask today that we'll lay our storm down before you, oh God. That we'll trust you.

[30 : 10] Whether it appears you're asleep, whether we're waiting for you to say peace be still. God, I pray that we'll trust you today with all of our lives.

Lead us, Lord, to follow your lead. In Jesus' name, amen.