

Surviving the Storms of Life

Pt 2 - April Showers Bring May Flowers

Matthew 14:22-33

This I want to continue to look at surviving the storms of life. Life is not a walk in the park, in fact it is the resistance to the storms of life that grow us and mature us and make us enduring survivors. Last week we looked at some basic survival skills – first, to avoid unnecessary storms if we can – listening to the words and advice of godly counsel, wisdom and the healing words of a friend who will tell us like it is.

Second, we saw that we are to remember that God is in the storm with us, whether we feel like it or not, and sometime we just need to hear from each other how God has been with us through storms and how he can be there for us as well. Third, we saw four anchors that should stop us from giving up and come crashing into the shore – the unchangeable nature of God, the unfailing promises of God, the indescribable love of God and the incredible grace of God which remains fully functional during our storms.

Over the next couple of weeks I want to look at different types of storms, beginning with mild April Showers to full blown hurricanes. I think we can all agree that there are different degrees of storms that we face throughout life. I want to look at how we can thrive and survive in each of them. This morning I want to look at April Showers.

I call them spring showers because these are the storms that aren't so life-threatening. These are not the Thunder Storms with torrential rain and lightening - thunder crashing and the potential for hail and dangerous winds. These are the common storms that blow into life - make things difficult – that stress us out - and generally make a nuisance of themselves.

These are the everyday storms that seem to make life a struggle no matter what we do. I want to look at a spring storm in the scripture and what we can learn about surviving in the midst of them. Let's look at **Matthew 14:22-33**.

22 Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home. 23 After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone. 24 Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. 25 About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!" 27 But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!*" 28 Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." 29 "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the strong* wind and the waves, he was*

terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. 31 Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?" 32 When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. 33 Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

First, I want you to notice that this event takes place after a great miraculous event – the feeding of 5000 with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. My point – **sometimes the greatest seasons of storms takes place after great events of life.** It is as if they are sent our way to discredit some of the greatest provisions, workings, or testimonies of our lives. But let me present another idea – **I think sometimes these great events happen to us to prepare us for the storm that are coming our way. James 1:2-4** tells us:

*2 Dear brothers and sisters, * when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*

But after this great miracle the disciples are sent out on a boat into a storm. What are some lessons we can learn from this story.

1) Don't blow things out of proportion (v.24-26)

Every storm is not life threatening. The first thing I want you to understand is that even Spring Showers are storms but there is nothing life threatening about them. In fact the first time we hear about their fear is when they see Jesus walking on the water. The storm is real, the boat they are rowing is being battered by the wind and waves. The disciples have been rowing for a long time. It was daylight when they began their journey it is now between 3 and 6AM.

They have been rowing most of the night and have only crossed to the middle of the Sea of Galilee - the wind is against them - they are tired - they are sore from rowing - but experienced fisherman they have been here before. Although it was difficult to go through, they were men who knew what it meant to fight the waves.

We need to gain perspective in life. Have you ever known someone who just sees every day as a crisis? Every day living seems to put some people into crisis mode. Every day is not a crisis. Every hardship does not have to cause worry or fear. **There is a sense of the dramatic in all of us that seems to want to make every hill a mountain and every puddle an ocean- - we want everyone to see how strong we are or how hard we have it.**

Begin to put storms in perspective. Dealing with a bad report card or a run in with the boss does not have to carry the same emotional weight as dealing with cancer or a potential broken marriage. Not having cable or the comforts of life isn't the same as the

hurt of pain of those around us. Some storms we face are tough, tiring, and stressful - but they don't require crisis management.

Many couples argue over some of the most ridiculous things and they really need to ask themselves - how important is this really? We need to learn to fight for the things worth fighting for – love, respect, acceptance and much more vital things than just the mere picking up of socks, or washing dishes.

Refuse the inclination to blow every problem into a national emergency in your home and in your life. Sometimes we just have to keep rowing till we get to our destination. We might arrive tired and wet but we're going to arrive without the help of the coast guard. The next lesson we learn is found in **verse 30-31**:

30 But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. 31 Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"*

2) Don't give in to fear

Peter gives into his fear and falls. **Fear causes paralysis and fear makes bad decisions.** When you look at our media you find many times that our society operates based on fear. We only hear the bad news, the experts telling us all the possibilities of danger, and the threats to our freedom. We spend money, we invest our time many times because of fear.

When Peter looked around and saw the wind and the waves and forgot about Jesus who was standing right in front of him, his faith gave way to fear. **Fear causes us to do crazy things.** Sometimes we strike out at the people who are trying to help us and we welcome those who tell us what we want to hear.

Here is a truth for you – “Hospital beds and empty checkbooks make bad decisions.” If bad decisions got you to the hospital bed or to an empty checkbook then you need to make radical changes. If you have made sound decisions sometimes you just have to ride out the wind and the waves till you get to your destination. Sometimes you need to stay the course even when the wind is blowing against you.

What I am saying is that you need to make principled decisions about life that are made in the quiet of the spirit not in the fear of the moment. **2 Timothy 1:7** tells us:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

The word for “sound mind” is defined as “to have moderation, self-control, soberness, or to come to one’s senses.” We need to regain control of our thinking instead of giving it up to our circumstances and allow them to determine the outcome. The third lesson we learn is that we need to:

3) Find the Presence of God (v.31)

Jesus stretched out His hand toward Peter and took hold of Him." In the midst of everyday trials and storms - Jesus is there. Don't get lost in the drudgery of the storm. Don't lose hope and think that the sun will not shine again. **Don't Give Up but Reach Up.** Find in the midst of the storm when your faith is wavering and you're up to your neck in it all - that Jesus is there.

His promise is that He will be with us even to the end of the age. **Matthew 11:28-30** tells us:

28 Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

In Spring Showers there is a call (29) Jesus says to Peter "Come". Step out on the water Peter get out of the boat. You want to walk on water "Come on." Jesus looks at Peter in the midst of the storm and calls him to a moment of:

- a. Faith - Peter do you believe? Peter am I big enough? Peter what is your faith made of?
- b. Trust - Peter if you step out I'll take care of you. I've got you Peter if you'll just trust me.

In every storm there is a call for us to have faith to believe in Jesus Christ. To know that He loves us and cares for us. A call to trust that He has our back and won't let us flounder. In the midst of spring showers - **Peter found the strength to get out of the boat - the faith to walk on water - and when he failed he found the strong arms of Jesus to lift him out of his crisis.**

If you want to survive the day to day showers of life - don't make the storms bigger than they are - don't give in to fear but walk in the strength of the arms of Christ. Look at **verse 32-33:**

32 When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. 33 Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

Matthew Henry's Commentary describes this verse this way:

Faith, after a conflict with unbelief, is sometimes the more active, and gets to greater degrees of strength by being exercised.

As we walk with God through the storm, not allowing it to be blown out of proportion, not giving into fear, but finding the presence of God – his intervention, his word, his

truth, his peace, we can come out of the storm proclaiming “truly Jesus you are the Son of God.” That there becomes an experiential confirmation in our soul of the power and validity of our faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

So when the small storm comes – keep perspective, stand strong and courageous in your God, and let the peace that surpasses human logic guard your faith and make you stronger in our relationship with your God. Let’s pray!