

Surviving the Storms of Life

Category 5

Mark 4:35-41

This morning I want to continue to look at surviving the storms of life. We have been looking at how to survive and thrive in the midst of difficult circumstances in life. As we move through our series, through storms of increasing intensity, we have dealt with basic survival skills, spring showers, and even thunder storms.

Today we continue to escalate in intensity. We are going to talk about the Category 5 hurricanes that blow through our lives. To survive these you need to use everything at your disposal. First lets identify what these storms look like. These storms are usually even more intense than thunderstorms and tend to be of longer duration.

There is a real danger in these storms. These are not the “blown out of proportion problems of life” but are the storms that really have a risk involved. These are the storms that endanger marriages, threaten health, and test our faith. While thunderstorms are full of sound and fury, more bark than bite, but usually little consequence - these storms have the ability to reek havoc in our lives. Even the sturdiest houses are threatened in these storms. Let’s look at a Category 5 in the lives of Jesus Disciples in **Mark 4:35-41**

35 As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s cross to the other side of the lake.” 36 So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). 37 But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. 38 Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re going to drown?” 39 When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the water, “Silence! Be still!” Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. 40 Then he asked them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” 41 The disciples were absolutely terrified. “Who is this man?” they asked each other. “Even the wind and waves obey him!”

A couple weeks ago we found the disciples in the middle of this same Sea of Galilee pulling against the oars because of a contrary wind. Even though the waves were high and the wind blowing there was no fear in them that day because they were experienced fishermen, and they had survived many such storms.

The see of Galilee is actually known for fast moving storms. It sits 600 feet below sea level and is surrounded by hills and mountains. Often storms very suddenly and very violently blow down onto the Sea of Galilee without warning.

Today’s storm is different from the one recorded in Matthew 14 where Jesus walked out on the water to greet the disciples. This time, these experienced watermen are scared -

The water is breaking over the bow and the boat is filling up with water - they're sinking and they know it. They also know that they are too far from shore to survive this storm and they know that this could be it for them.

When you face these types of storms everything we have talked about before is important.

- We need to Remember that God is in the Storm- you are not alone
- Don't blow storms out of proportion. These are not weekly storms.
- Cast out the anchors to hold us. God's unchanging nature and purpose.
- Resist the temptation to give into fear. Fear makes terrible decisions.
- We need to find our refuge strong and mighty. Only God is sufficient.
- Find our strength in the river of God. Strength that comes from God inside.
- Listen to the direction and wisdom of God. Be Still and know that I am God.

But there are a couple more lessons we can learn from this story in Mark 4, that we can apply to the life-threatening storm, or could I say faith-threatening storm. It is important for us to understand that this event in the boat took place after Jesus had just finished talking about faith – he told parables pertaining to faith as a seed. What good is a lesson with practical application? Sometimes to hear it is one thing, but to live it is another.

Three things about the story should have given the disciples confidence in the midst of the storm. First, Jesus promised that they would go over to the other side. Sometimes all we can do is take God at his promises. **Although God gives us his promises, he never promised an easy ride through life.**

Second, Jesus was with them (God in the flesh). They had already seen what he was capable of through his miracles and ministry. But some reason they just could equate his abilities into their circumstances. **Sometimes, we have seen the abilities of God and yet are unable to convert them into our circumstances**

Third, Jesus was perfectly at peace in the midst of the storm. While the storm was raging and waves were crashing, Jesus was asleep on a cushion. And **if Jesus was fine with the situation, then they should have been fine with it.**

All three of these things should have calmed them down and their faith should have remained strong, but it didn't. As any human being, we have to go through tough times in order to find our faith flourish. A strong faith is a tested faith. **James 1:3-4** tells us:

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.

How many of here this morning don't want our faith in Jesus to be just another phase of our life that means nothing? How many of us want to be men and women of faith? If

you do, then watch out, the storms are coming for your good. What do we learn from our story this morning that will help us get through the storms of life?

1) Don't jump to conclusions about God. (v38)

The disciples say those words that we tend to say at times to God, and even many today think this way about our God – “Teacher, don't you even care?”

The disciples walked with Jesus everyday, they saw his power, they heard his teaching. I don't blame them for being scared, neither does Jesus. But look at what they say when they finally wake Jesus up. What's the matter with you - don't you care that we are about to die? Don't you care about us at all? What's wrong with you? Listen to David's words in the book of Psalms. **Psalm 10:1:**

1 O Lord, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I am in trouble?

*1 My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why are you so far away when I groan for help? 2 Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer. Every night you hear my voice, but I find no relief. **Psalm 22:1-2***

Anyone ever felt this way? Any of us ever prayed this kind of prayer? Isn't it interesting that when the storms get strongest we begin to question God? It's a human nature thing. We begin to wonder if God really cares - if He really knows what's going on. If He is really in touch with reality. **Instead of relying on my feelings and emotions we need to go to the truth.** Here are some things that I can assure you of from scripture today. When you face the greatest storms of life:

a. God knows and cares about what is going on in your life.

Matthew 10:29-31 tells us:

29 What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. 30 And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.*

b. God knows how you feel

He knows what you are going through. Remember, he has walked the face of this planet and he has gone through every human emotion, every disappointment, every bit of sadness, and every type of joy that we have faced. **Hebrews 4:15-16** tells us:

15 This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testing's we do, yet he did not sin. 16 So let us come boldly to the throne of

our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

c. God wants to work in your storm

We read Jesus' words in **Matthew 23:37**:

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me."

In the same way that Jerusalem was unwilling to come to Christ for comfort, we often are too suspicious or too hurt to be gathered into His arms for comfort.

For us to jump right to the idea that God doesn't care goes contrary to the truth:

- God does care about what is going on in your life, your pain, your struggles, your insecurities, all that is happening in your life. **1 Peter 5:6-7** tells us:

6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. 7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

- God knows how you feel, he has been tempted, tested, and has experienced every emotion and disappointment, which makes him a good representative for us before God.
- And God wants to work in our storm and it is a matter of whether we are willing to let him or whether we are going to undermine it or sabotage it.

Another lesson we learn from our story this morning is that we need to:

2) Understand the Power of God - v39

The Disciples gave up. Jesus stands in the midst of the floundering boat and simply says to the wind and the waves - hush, be still. There is a force to the words that Jesus uses in the Greek. It means "to put a muzzle on ones mouth." It as if He stands as says - SHUT UP - STOP. The wonder is that the winds and the waves obey.

As easily as we speak to a group of children or people - Jesus speaks into creation itself. God's power to still the storm is manifested in two different ways in life:

a. Sometimes God Stills the Storm

Like this day sometimes God miraculously intervenes in the course of events, suspends the laws of nature and the universe and accomplishes His deliverance. We have seen it biblically in the crossing of the Red Sea, the plaques of Egypt, the crossing of the Jordan,

the defeat of Jericho, the deliverance of Peter from prison and the list goes on and on. We have seen it in our own lives as God has healed the sick, delivered the addicted, and repaired broken homes. (Scott's Testimony)

b. Sometimes God Stills His People in the midst of storm

Peter went through his shipwreck, Paul was beaten and stoned, John was exiled to Patmos, but always God was faithful. Many of you can testify today that God has seen you through storms that could have ended your life or marriage. God has walked with you through winds and waves that threatened to sink your ship. David certainly knew what he was writing when inspired by the Spirit of God he penned the words of the Lord's prayer he wrote in **Psalm 23:4**:

4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley (the shadow of death), I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.*

In the midst of these hurricane storms we have to use all the tools in our arsenal to survive. We need all the skills learned over the last few weeks.

Then add to that list the two we have learned today: Don't jump to conclusions about God – he cares about you, he knows what you are going through, and he wants to help.

There's a story of professor. During her second month of nursing school, the professor gave the students a quiz. The last question stumped most people in the class. It read "What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?" All the students had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired and in her 50s, but how would any of them know her name? Before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward their grade. "Absolutely," said the professor. "In your careers you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello". The students never forgotten that lesson. They also learned her name was Dorothy.

There are no insignificant people in the kingdom of God – he cares and values all of us this morning. Don't buy into the lie that no one cares.

And second, never underestimate the power of God and his faithfulness to you.

A newly converted hippie was very interestedly reading the Bible while waiting for transportation and every now and then would exclaim, "Alleluia, Praise the Lord, Amen" and on and on as he read on. A skeptic heard him and came and asked what he was reading. He answered "I am reading how God parted the Red Sea and let the Israelites go through - that is a miracle!" The skeptic explained "Do not believe everything the Bible tells you. The truth of the matter is that that body of water was only really 6 inches deep - so it was not miracle." The hippie

nodded in disappointment but kept on reading as the skeptic was walking away feeling proud that he had set the hippie straight. All of a sudden the skeptic heard the hippie let out a big "Alleluia, PTL". At this the skeptic came back to him and asked, "What is it this time?" The hippie said excitedly in one breath, "This one is a real miracle, God drowned the whole Egyptian army in 6 inches of water!!!"

God can make a way when there doesn't seem to be a way. There is no greater miracle than to change the hearts of men, and therefore nothing is impossible with God. The truth of the matter is that you and I need to learn to trust him. Just as the disciples failed their life application test of faith, so often we do the same and forget the God we serve and who serves us. In the midst of the storm I will believe truth and not speculation, I will believe God's character and not my own interpretation. I will stand firm in the person of Jesus Christ and trust the resurrection power of God to intervene when God deems necessary. Let's pray!