

Navigating the Storms of Life

2018-06-24 - Year B - Pentecost 6-19 - The Rev. Christopher Klukas

Job 38:1–11, 16–18; Psalm 107:1–3, 23–32; 2 Corinthians 5:14–21; Mark 4:35–41

The Storms of Life

- Story about getting stuck in a storm during a lunchtime walk in Ambridge. The storm came up suddenly, I had no umbrella and I was thoroughly soaked!
- In the Gospel this morning, a storm suddenly comes up while Jesus is crossing the sea of Galilee with his disciples. This was not uncommon on the Sea of Galilee and it still happens today as a result of the geography of that area, surrounded by mountains.
 - The storm was so bad that water was coming in the boat and they thought they might sink and drown.
- We experience storms in our life all the time. Sometimes literal storms, like hurricanes, tornadoes, and blizzards, and others are metaphorical like job loss, conflict, health issues, and other stressful situations.
 - How are we to deal with these storms when they arise? How should we respond?

Peace in the Midst of Storms

- As the disciples are panicking, Jesus is sleeping.
 - How could he have possibly slept through a storm like that?
 - When we experienced our first hurricane, I got very little sleep!
- When they wake him up, he calms the storm, and then he asks the disciples why they are afraid (v. 40). He contrasts this fear with faith, “Have you still no faith?”
 - The greek word for "faith" is "pistis" which means "to believe to the extent of complete trust and reliance—‘to believe in, to have confidence in, to have faith in, to trust...’"¹
 - Where should we put this faith/trust? In God!
 - Jesus’ sleep in this story is a demonstration of his unwavering faith in God to protect him and watch over him.
 - Children have this kind of trust in their parents. Our children slept right through Hurricane Irma. Maybe this is part of what Jesus means when he tells his disciples that they must receive the Kingdom of God like a child (Mark 10:15).
 - When we trust in God it helps to put our fears to rest. Just like Jesus was able to sleep through the storm.
- Philippians 4:6 “Do not be anxious about anything”
- Jesus also tells his disciples not to be anxious about their physical needs or about how to respond to persecutions. Matthew 6:31, 34; Mark 13:11.
 - These are some of my favorite passages, because I do tend to get anxious about things, and these verses bring me comfort and remind me who is in control.

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 375.

Why are there Storms if we Have Faith?

- Does faith in Jesus mean that there won't be anymore storms? Unfortunately no.
 - John 16:33 "In the world you will have tribulation."
 - Bad things happen to Christians all the time. We live in a broken world, and there is plenty of tribulation to go around.
 - Faith helps us to deal with tribulation when it happens.
 - Sometimes God changes our circumstances. Other times God gives us strength to endure. But he is walking with us either way. We are never alone or abandoned.
- Good can come out of suffering
 - Romans 8:28. God doesn't create negative situations and circumstances, those are a result of the sin and brokenness in the world. But God works good out of the bad. He brings beauty out of ashes (Isaiah 61:3).
 - God can use suffering to transform and shape us. Romans 5:3-5.
 - Suffering builds character, builds trust in God, and gives us an opportunity to witness.
 - I have heard so many stories of opportunities that some of you have had to share your faith in doctor's waiting rooms and from hospital beds because of your faith in God through your medical crises.

Who is This?

- The calming of the storm shows that Jesus himself is one in whom we can put our trust.
- Jesus shows us that his power isn't limited to physical healing and casting out demons. "Even the wind and the sea obey him" (Mark 4:41).
 - All Jesus had to do was rebuke the wind and tell the sea to be still and it did!
- Even though the disciples are out of danger, we see them filled with fear for a different reason. No mere teacher could command nature in the way that Jesus did.
 - Two different words are used for fear in this passage. "The [first] one expressed a lack of faith; the other a sense of awe in the presence of God. This response clearly corresponds to the experience of an epiphany...and points to the presence of God at work in Jesus."²
- How is Jesus able to command peace to the wind and waves? John 1:1-3
- The wind and the seas obey Jesus because he is God and when they respond to him they are responding to the voice that made them.
- The disciples, through this tribulation, are starting to get a sense of Jesus' true identity.
 - Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? It is Jesus, whose very name means "God saves." He is God, and there is no better person to put your faith in than him.

² Robert A. Guelich, Mark 1–8:26 (vol. 34A; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 269.