

Where is Jesus when I'm stuck in a boat in the middle of a great, big storm?

Family Sunday, How Great is our God, Sermon

February 2nd, 2020

- I. Invitation
 - a. Curious Questions:
 - a. How many of you have ever been on a boat?
 - b. How many have been in a boat during a storm?
 - c. Story of boat ride with Kim
 - b. Intro today's sermon
 - a. 2 similar stories of disciples in a boat in middle of storm
 - b. Question/title: Where is Jesus when I'm stuck in a boat in the middle of a great, big storm?
- II. Impartation: Story #1: Mark 4:35-41
 - a. Jesus and disciples have been teaching crowd of people outside of city/town of Capernaum near sea of Galilee (aka Lake Tiberias).
 - 1. 13 mi. long, 8 mi. wide
 - a. By comparison distance between Edmonds and Kingston is approx.. 7 mi. (wide)
 - b. Up to this point, disciples have seen Jesus do several healings, casting out demons, and a bunch of teaching.
 - 1. He's just finished up a series of parables: sower/soils, seeds, lamp, mustard seed.
 - c. Having finished up a full day of teaching, sun starts to set and Jesus tells disciples let's go to the other side.
 - 1. Presumably to rest and debrief day's activities/teachings.
 - d. Keep in mind:
 - 1. Large bodies of water (ocean, seas, lakes) were symbolic of chaos.
 - 2. And other side of this lake was gateway to gentile/enemy territory.
 - a. Aka crossing to the other side (at night) = crossing the unknown, going into enemy territory.
 - 3. Having said that, area was fairly well frequented, and many of disciples were experienced fishermen, used to traveling across open waters.
 - a. In fact, Mark goes to trouble of letting us know there were other boats in the water at this time.
 - e. As they get out to middle of lake, "a furious squall came up" (vs 37)
 - 1. What is a squall?
 - a. "sudden, violent storm, bringing strong winds and rain, snow, or sleet."
 - f. Keep in mind, disciples are experienced fishermen, who know what they're doing, have faced storms before.
 - g. But this storm is furious, and Bible says waves are breaking over the boat nearly swamping the entire boat.
 - h. Novices in a boat would probably panic at first sign of strong wind and waves.

- i. Disciples are experts. They don't panic until they know it's time to panic.
- j. And what do they start doing? They start panicking!
- k. Where is Jesus in all of this?
 - 1. Sleeping in stern of the boat, on a pillow.
- l. Why/how is Jesus asleep at a time like this?
 - 1. b/c he's tired—long day of work
 - 2. B/c he trusts God, knows that nothing will happen to Him without God's say so.
 - 3. It's the heavy sleep of faith and contentment.
- m. Disciples are panicking—wake Jesus up and ask, "Jesus don't you care if we die?"
 - 1. Most of us have that same reaction whenever something goes wrong in life—immediate assumption/conclusion is that Jesus doesn't care.
- n. Jesus calmly, quietly gets up and says, "Quiet! Be still!"
 - 1. Right about now you're wondering, 'wait, is Jesus talking to wind and the waves? Is that really something normal people do?'
 - a. Rain, rain go away, but never, "Shut up wind!" or "Hey rain! Knock it off!"
 - 2. But Jesus does.
- o. Even more amazing thing is, nature listens.
 - 1. "The wind died down and it was completely calm" (vs. 39b).
- p. Jesus turns to the disciples and asks, "why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"
- q. After seeing this, disciples are even more afraid, but this time not of the storm, but of Jesus, asking, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!"
 - 1. Disciples haven't truly understood that Jesus is God, that He possesses all the power and authority of God, that He created the wind and the waves, and they must listen to Him and obey Him.

III. Story #2: Mark 6:45-56

- a. Just 2 chapters later
- b. Jesus and disciples perform miracle of feeding 5,000.
- c. Having been ministering all day, Jesus decides to give the disciples a break and tells them to go on ahead of him, sail North up the coast to town of Bethsaida, while he stays behind and dismisses the crowd—like pastor hanging out till everyone is gone after church service—PK's know that can take forever!
- d. After doing this, Jesus takes some extra time of his own, climbs up a small mountain to spend time in prayer.
- e. Sure enough, like the other story, sun begins to set, and a fierce wind begins to blow.
- f. Bible says Jesus can see disciples in boat
 - a. It's unclear if He can physically see them or He can see them with spiritual/supernatural eyes.
- g. Most likely, if there's a storm and wind and rain and clouds, He's seeing them supernaturally.
- h. What He sees is that the disciples aren't going anywhere—the wind is too strong.

- a. In Mark, it's just a strong wind
 - b. In Matthew it's strong wind and waves, possibly another squall.
 - i. Interestingly, Jesus doesn't go out right away. Instead he waits till just before dawn.
 - a. Meaning Jesus leaves the disciples struggling the whole night.
 - j. At dawn, He walks out to them, walking on the water
 - k. And it says His plan/intention was actually to walk right by them (vs. 48b).
 - l. But when the disciples see Him, they can't believe their eyes and think they're seeing a ghost.
 - m. They all begin freaking out, screaming, crying out for help, absolutely scared out of their mind.
 - n. Jesus stops, turns to them and says, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid!"
 - o. Disciples are like, "Aaaaaaah! The ghost is talking to us!"—J/K.
 - p. In Matthew, Peter gets out of the boat and walks on water to Jesus. In Mark, it just says Jesus gets in the boat and immediately the wind dies down and everything is calm again.
 - q. Just like before, the disciples are stunned!
 - r. Mark mentions it's b/c "they had not understood about the loaves" and "their hearts were hardened." (vs. 52).
 - s. From there they land at Gennesaret (town to the south of where they started), Jesus keeps healing people, and it even says people begin begging him just to touch the edge of his cloak, and "all who touched him were healed."
 - t. The End.
- IV. Application: What can we learn from these two stories?
 - a. Lesson #1: Trust in Jesus.
 - a. One of main reasons Mark includes these stories is to teach us who Jesus is.
 - b. Often believed variety of miracles show fullness of Jesus' divinity.
 - 1. Miracles of healing show Jesus has power over sicknesses and diseases.
 - 2. Casting out demons show Jesus has power over evil spirits.
 - 3. Raising people from the dead shows He has power over death.
 - 4. Nature miracles shows Jesus has power over nature/elements.
 - c. Throughout O.T. we see God prove His powers, creating Heavens and earth, defeating enemy nations, opening up Red Sea, providing manna in desert.
 - d. Jesus' miracles are meant to mirror the O.T. miracles, proving that Jesus is God!
 - e. In these stories in particular, however, there's focus on disciples and their reactions.
 - 1. First story, disciples are freaking out, thinking they're going to die, doubting God's love for them, wondering if Jesus even cares!
 - 2. As soon as Jesus calms the storm, they're even more terrified, asking, "Who is this! He can even calm the storm."
 - 3. In that moment, disciples realize Jesus is far greater than any other human being, but they still don't fully grasp His deity/divinity (that He's God), and they still don't get that Jesus loves them.
 - 4. In some ways, they're right to fear Jesus
 - a. He has full, unlimited power—can do whatever He wants.

- i. Snap his fingers (like Thanos) and wipe us out, just like that!
- 5. But they don't yet understand that God is love. In love, there is nothing to fear.
 - a. "There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out all fear!" 1 John 4:18.
- f. Story is about trust and faith.
 - 1. Believing in Jesus is more than just believing Jesus existed.
 - 2. It's more than understanding that when we die we can go to Heaven.
 - 3. It's about trusting Jesus is who He says He is, really did do the things He did, and even more than that, is continuing to work on our behalf, interceding for us and fighting for us.
 - 4. Within the Bible, faith and fear are incompatible—they don't belong together.
 - 5. In this story disciples had to learn this. They had to learn that they can trust in Jesus, that he would be there for them, to help them and save them no matter what they were facing.
- g. In the same way, we need to learn that we can fully trust in Jesus, there is nothing to be afraid of, no matter the storms we face in life, we can believe and bank on the fact that Jesus loves us, He's always with us, He will never leave us or forsake us, He is working on our behalf for our good, and nothing will ever happen to us that He can't fix or redeem and transform into something that is good and glorious. Trust in Jesus!
- b. Lesson #2: Even though it sometimes feels like we're all alone, that God has abandoned us or forgotten us, He hasn't. God is always with us!
 - a. Interesting to me, in first story, Jesus is asleep. In second story, Jesus is up on a mountainside, far away, presumably out of sight.
 - b. For the disciples it felt like Jesus was far away, that He didn't know what was going on or that He simply didn't care what was happening to them.
 - c. Sometimes it can feel like that to us too.
 - 1. When there's sickness or death in our family...
 - 2. When we lose our jobs or are struggling financially...
 - 3. When we're facing pain and suffering and it seems like we're all alone...
 - 4. ...It can feel like God is totally oblivious to what we're going through.
 - d. But Jesus is right there.
 - 1. In the first story, He gets up and asks, "Why were you afraid?"
 - a. Didn't you know, I was right here.
 - b. Didn't you realize that God is still in control!
 - c. There's nothing to be afraid of.
 - 2. And in the second story, He sees the disciples, then says, "It is I! Don't be afraid!"
 - a. Peter, James, John, I see you. I'm here with you. There's nothing to fear.

- b. Nathanael, Scarlet, Will, Veronica, Lizzy,...Jesus says, "I see you. I know what you're going through. I feel your pain. I'm here with you right in the middle of it.
 - e. No matter what you're going through in life, Jesus sees you.
 - 1. He sees what you're going through.
 - 2. He's there with you, going through the pain and difficulty with you.
 - f. Hebrews talks about the fact that in Jesus we have a savior and high priest who identifies with all the sufferings known to man, because He was a man.
 - g. Jesus experienced rejection, sickness, loneliness, persecution, pain, suffering.
 - h. He was abandoned by His closest friends, betrayed, used, ignored, doubted, slandered, abused, made fun of and ridiculed and crucified.
 - i. But before leaving this world, He told His followers, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Hebrews 13:5 "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you."
 - j. He says, "Take courage! It I. Don't be afraid!"
 - 1. Fear not—most repeated command in the Bible.
 - 2. We may feel scared and alone, but we can always trust that God is with us, carries us and will lead us to the other side.
- c. Lesson #3: God often uses storms in our life to draw us closer to Him, help us grow in faith and trust in Him.
 - a. Another interesting thing about both of these stories, is that Jesus is the one who tells the disciples to get in the boat and cross the lake.
 - b. In first story, vs. 35, Jesus says, "Let us go over to the other side."
 - c. In second story, vs. 45 says, "Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him..."
 - 1. He knew there would be a storm.
 - 2. He knew they would experience the fear and terror of this near-death experience.
 - d. Often when we go through times of trouble, we think it's because we're doing something wrong.
 - 1. First we question whether or not Jesus cares about us,
 - 2. Then we question whether we've done something wrong, stepped outside of God's will.
 - e. Yet often in life the storm comes exactly when we're doing everything right.
 - f. The disciples were being obedient to Jesus in both these stories.
 - g. But Jesus uses these events/circumstances, to shape their faith.
 - h. After the first storm, Jesus says "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"
 - i. It's like Jesus is correcting them and teaching them.
 - 1. i.e. disciples should have faith by now, should know to trust and believe in Jesus, should have seen all the miracles He's been doing and realized who He is and learned that there is nothing to fear.
 - j. So then, he hits them with 2nd storm, and this time lets them struggle even longer.

1. He's stretching them, like stretching your muscles.
 - a. More you stretch, the more flexible and durable you are.
 - b. If you never stretch, your muscles are tight and subject to tearing and damage.
2. Jesus uses the storms of our life, to stretch and grow our faith, to teach us that we can depend on Him.
3. We often feel/believe God's greatest concern is our happiness. That's why when troubles hit we doubt God and question Him.
4. God's greatest concern is your character and your faith and love.
5. In order to develop those things, we must be stretched and challenged.
6. If you only ever face good things in life, you begin to take God for granted, act like spoiled brats.
7. People who go through suffering are far more patient and empathetic, caring and compassionate.

1 Peter 1:7 says Trials come so that your faith may be proven genuine, like gold refined in the fire, and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Philippians 4:12 "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

8. Paul learned the secret to contentment and faith, by going through pain and suffering, seeing God deliver Him time and time again.
9. That's why He can say, "I can do all things—suffer all things—through Christ who strengthens me.
10. God's desire is for us to learn this secret as well. But it doesn't just come through reading books, it comes in experiencing those hard times and seeing God enter in and use them for His glory.
11. And sometimes that means going through severe and traumatic experiences. But always, God's plan is to redeem those situations, turn them into something good for you and for His glory.

V. Closing question/application

- a. What do I do, if I know these things and still struggle with fear, anxiety, worry?
 1. Repent of your fears.
 - b. In first story, Jesus rebukes disciples for their small faith.
 - c. In second story, Mark tells us disciples were afraid because they had hard hearts.
 - d. Repent: confess your fear and ask God to deliver you from it.
 - e. Even though it's not something you choose to do, seems out of your control, just like sin nature, it's part of who you are...
 - f. Repentance is admitting that something is there and then turning away from it.
 - g. It's choosing not to listen and give in to that fear and anxiety, and instead put our focus on God.

Philippians 4:6-7 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

j. Repent, confess, admit your fears to God, then turn away from them and refuse to let them govern your life any more.

2. Receive God’s Word/truths.

- a. second step is filling yourself/reminding yourself who God is.
- b. Regularly telling yourself these truths of the Gospel
 - a. That Jesus loves you
 - b. He is with you
 - c. He is all powerful and sovereign and will take care of you.
- c. Anxiety practice. Repeat/meditate on these phrases while doing deep breathing exercises:
 - i. God is good. His plans for me are good.
 - ii. Jesus loves me. He will never leave me or forsake me.
 - iii. His mercies are new every day. His grace is sufficient for me.
- d. Receive/internalize/focus on God’s word/truths.

3. Rely on others

- a. Surround yourself with other believers who can encourage you and support you in your walk with Christ.
- b. Why small groups / home groups are so important.
- c. Find yourself a group of Christians, friend or two and share with them how you feel.
- d. Welcome to talk to me if you need it or with one of our elders
- e. For some it may mean seeing a professional—psychologist or doctor...
- f. Don’t feel like you are meant to do it alone.
- g. We were never meant to do it alone.

Galatians 6:2 “Carry each other’s burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

- h. Rely on your brothers and sisters, share with others what you’re going through, allow the body of Christ to surround you and lift up your prayers.
- i. And for some of us, struggling with severe anxiety or depression, this may mean relying on professional.

VI. Conclusion

- a. So in answer to our question, where is Jesus when I’m stuck in a boat in the middle of a great, big storm?
 - a. He’s right there with you.
 - 1. By His Spirit
 - 2. Through His word spoken and revealed in the Bible
 - 3. Through the family of God, the church.

- b. God is with you, holding you up, supporting you, helping you through whatever that storm may be.
 - c. And in case you were wondering, when my sister and I were capsized from the boat off of Whidbey Island, God was with me there too.
 - d. Finish story.
 - 1. 3 things that saved our life:
 - a. Rembered to wear life jackets
 - b. Water was strangely warm
 - c. Neighbor saw us and drove out in his boat to save us
- b. Close in prayer.