

September 21, 2003  
AM Service  
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“Faith In The Storm”

Luke 8:22-25

22 One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. 23 As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

24 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!"

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. 25 "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

Jesus had a busy day of teaching and doing other ministry. There was such a large crowd as He taught along the lakeshore that He got into a boat and speaks from there. After being in that boat all day teaching He was exhausted. So as evening came He told His disciple, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." When they got into the boat with Him that day and as they pushed off from shore the weather was calm. It had been a great day for the disciples as they spent time with Jesus listening to Him.

As they set out Jesus was so tired that He fell asleep. Suddenly, as is common on the water, a fierce storm of hurricane proportions came down on the lake. (I've been on the water on a beautiful sunny day. Just having a great time. All is quite and serene. Not a cloud in the sky, barely a ripple of waves on the water. Someone may even comment that it is like a lake – as smooth as glass. When suddenly, it seems, the sky turns dark, the sound of thunder can be heard and it starts pouring rain. Sometimes all you can do is lower your anchor and hold on for dear life waiting for the storm to pass). The Sea of Galilee, which is a fresh water lake, has mountains surrounding much of it and it was subject to violent storms because of downdrafts of cold air coming from the higher elevations onto the lake.

The little boat Jesus and His disciples are in starts to fill up with water and there is great danger of the boat sinking and the disciples drowning. And Jesus is asleep. The storm doesn't affect Him. He has peace in the midst of the storm. It seems He doesn't know there is a storm or that His followers are in danger. It seems that Jesus is sleeping through it all. And it seems that the disciples did not call on Jesus immediately when the storm began. But as they found themselves in grave danger they call out to Him, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" Or as recorded in Mark's account (Mark 4:38), "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

A Christian is seldom long at ease. They start off with Jesus and all is great. But just as suddenly, it seems, “storms” can come upon us - difficult and dangerous situations in which we find ourselves. The “weather” of this world – situations that can come upon us - are unpredictable. We should be ready in case of an emergency (like many people did this week in anticipation of being hit by hurricane Isabel). Many times we do not call on Jesus right away. In many cases He is our last resort. Things go from bad to worse and we wonder, “Is Jesus sleeping? Does Jesus care? Is He aware of our grave situation? Doesn’t He care that we’re going to drown? And how can He allow us to do so?” We know He loves us and yet we are tempted to think He is cruel. We say we trust Him, yet have severe doubts in times of trouble. We call Him Master; yet easily rebel when things are not going as we would want them to. Friends, we must keep ourselves strong in faith so we may be better prepared and less afraid at the evil that can come upon us – less afraid because we trust in the Lord.

Sometimes God allows natural laws to proceed even though it will affect His children. Hurricanes and other natural disasters kill Christians as well as non-Christians. The tragedy of 9/11 affected Christians and non-Christians. A boat filled with disciples is in a storm and though they are men of prayer the storm gets worse and they are in danger of drowning. Gee, you’d think our struggle is against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:12). Eccl 9:2 “All share a common destiny-the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad...” (NKJV – “All things come alike to all: One event happens to the righteous and the wicked...”).

We find this hard to accept and we cry out, “Master don't you care if we drown?" We pray and loved ones don't get better. We love God and still are stricken with tragedy. "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" God is still allowing destructive forces to be at work. Yet, He is able to make good come out of even the darkest storm. Believe that! He will use the tragedies of your life for His good purposes, which is ultimately for you to be more like Jesus. The afflictions He allows will have a purpose. So instead of crying out, “Master don't you care if we drown?" Say what Eli said to Samuel (1 Sam 3:18), “He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes.” What ever comes our way in life – both large and small- has eternal purposes. God has His purpose, His design, His will and His purpose is both *for His glory and the good of His People*. I know this is easier said than done, I know this is a hard teaching but when afflictions come our way may we not rebel against God. Rather may we accept that God is using it for a wise, holy, good purpose for His glory and our good. May we understand that we look at things in a temporal sense but God sees from an eternal perspective, which is far more important to Him and ought to be to us. So do not say, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" But believe instead that your complete salvation is being promoted by what He allows to come upon us. Jesus did not say, “Everyone I *hate* I correct and discipline.” Jesus said (Rev 3:19 NLT), “I ... (correct) and (discipline) everyone I love.” Jesus did not say, “God prunes every branch that *doesn't* produce fruit.” He said (John 15:2 NLT) He *cuts off every branch that doesn't produce fruit*, and he prunes the branches that *do* bear fruit so they will produce even more.” And the writer of Hebrews says this (Heb 12:7-13 NLT) “...remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard

of a child who was never disciplined? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children after all. Since we respect our earthly fathers who disciplined us, should we not all the more cheerfully submit to the discipline of our heavenly Father and live forever?

For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always right and good for us because it means we will share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening--it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

So take a new grip with your tired hands and stand firm on your shaky legs. Mark out a straight path for your feet. Then those who follow you, though they are weak and lame, will not stumble and fall but will become strong."

Sometimes we wonder why God doesn't do a miracle, or why didn't God do a miracle. This is hard to say but it is true: Sometimes God does a greater wonder by sustaining His people through trouble than if He would have done a miracle. One time I was with a man at the hospital where his wife was dying of cancer. And he said to me, "I know God is going to do a miracle." I said, "What if He doesn't?" And he said, "I am not going to hear that, God is going to do a miracle and we are going to go all around encouraging people as we share the great miracle of God." And I said, "Can I just tell you my friend, if, God forbid, I ever have to go through what you are going through I will be much more encouraged hearing how God sustained you in the midst of this horrible time in your life, than by hearing about a miracle which I may not experience."

The statement by the disciples as they come to wake up the sleeping Jesus, "Master, don't you care?" sounds like they thought Jesus was indifferent to their situation. Sometimes we are tempted to believe that Jesus is indifferent to our situation. But consider what you know about Jesus and the character of Jesus. Do you really believe He is indifferent to your troubles? The Bible says His love and mercy endures forever. The Bible says cast all your cares upon Him for He cares for you. The Bible calls Him the God of all compassion. Do you really think He is unkind? If we, as imperfect parents as we are, know how to give good gifts to our children how much more does God care for you?

And that brings me to the final point of this message, which is: In due time all those who trust will see that God *does* care for them. When Jesus was awakened He was not angry. He could have said, "Is that what you think of me? Is that how you talk to me?" He didn't rebuke them; He rebuked the wind. He simply said to them, "Where is your faith?" He didn't scold them; He did not speak in anger. He was gently reminding them. He was very lovingly causing them to check themselves. And when Jesus was awakened, what an awakening it was: "He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm." Friends, don't give up the faith, the calming of your storm is coming. The boat was filling with water but Jesus did not allow them to drown. Calm will come yet when you put your faith in Him, trust in Him, complete dependence on Him and are willing to accept His will. "He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him." Suddenly a glorious victory will be realized.