



YOU OF LITTLE FAITH, WHY ARE YOU SO AFRAID?

~ MATTHEW 8:23-27 ~

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Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

The year was 483 BC. King Xerxes of the Persians, a world power at the time, prepared his army to take revenge on the Greeks for their victory at Marathon seven years earlier. The historian Herodotus estimates the size of the army at over one million. Even an army the tenth of that size would have vastly outnumbered any opposing forces. In order to allow his vast army to cross the Dardanelle straights, a body of water separating Asia from Europe (now modern day Turkey), he had two bridges made from ships close to a mile long. Before the army could cross, a great storm hit those two bridges and destroyed them. King Xerxes was so upset that he beheaded the bridge builders and had the sea whipped, branded and shackled for its insubordination.

We may laugh and chuckle at that story from ancient history. Why would Xerxes do such a foolish thing as trying to subordinate the waves to his command? No man, not even the great and powerful Xerxes, could have any control over the wind and the seas. Fast forward some 500 years from that time to a similar part of the world. Just a little bit south and a little bit east to the Sea of Galilee. By no means could the storms on this little lake match up to the ones on the mighty ocean, but they did pack quite a punch.



An artist's impression of Xerxes whipping the sea from 1909.

And it was in one of these storms that Jesus' disciples found themselves in on this little lake. They became very afraid, afraid for their very lives. They were so afraid they went to Jesus for rescue. And Jesus did not use whips or brands or shackles to subject the storm around him. He merely spoke the words, **"Peace, be still!"** With his words and actions, Jesus showed that HE IS OUR STORM STILLER

1. He stills the storms in our lives
2. He stills the storms in our soul

The question we consider this morning in our series *Jesus is Asking* is this, “**You of little faith, why are you so afraid?**” Now, the disciples didn’t start out afraid, so what got them into this situation? Jesus had recently finished up another long day of teaching and healing people. In order to get some rest, Jesus crossed from the western edge of the Sea of Galilee to the eastern edge. He traversed by boat. Since it was night, Jesus found rest with a pillow in the bottom of a medium sized fishing boat. I imagine the sea must have been pretty calm at this time, or perhaps the disciples didn’t pay attention to the warning signs.

But as was common on the Sea of Galilee, a strong wind blew down from the hills on either side of the lake and whipped up the waters. The waters roared and foamed. The wind blew, the thunder thundered, and the lightning lightnined. The boat they were on rocked back and forth on the waves much like a toy boat in a kid’s bathtub. Waves crashed over the side of the boat, bailing it out seemed useless. After the disciples had given up all hope they came to Jesus, still sleeping in the bottom of the boat, and cried out to him, “**Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!**”

The disciples were afraid, just like you or I would be. Some of the disciples were fishermen, and they knew the seas, even they were afraid. Jesus rebukes them and asks “**why are you so afraid?**” He got up off his pillow, climbed up onto the rain soaked deck of the boat, and in a commanding voice rebuked the wind and the waves, “**Peace, be still!**” And at that very moment, not a moment before nor a moment later, the sea became as still as glass. You can just see the disciples stare in dumbfounded amazement, with their hair all ruffled and drops of water dripping down from their soaking beards. And they ask themselves a question we too should ask: “**What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!**”

The disciples realized, as well as anyone else around, that Jesus was no ordinary man. Not only did his miracles extend to healing people and creating food and drink out of very little, but over nature itself. It is true, God has given his prophets power over nature – the most obvious example is Moses parting the waters of the Red Sea when he was leading the Israelites out of Egypt, but God had the power. But this was different. Back then, God told Moses what to do. Here, Jesus doesn’t need to ask for permission from anyone, he just does it. There was something different.

Something was different enough for his disciples that they knew to come to him for help. There was a very literal storm in their life. They tried everything they could to battle the storm themselves, but eventually they turned to someone else, Jesus. How often does that happen for us? Not only do we see stories of people getting trapped with some of the monsoon weather and pray for a miracle rescue, but we face our own storms in our lives. We can face storms in our marriage – everything isn’t the way you want it to be, the kids aren’t as well behaved as you want them to be. We face storms in our health – our bodies don’t get up as easily as they did before, we’re fighting a disease or cancer. We face storms financially – it’s no surprise that this country is in a recession, people struggle to make ends meet. We face storms in our lives that lead us to question where is God.

So often our gut response is to try and take care of it ourselves, do whatever we can to make the problem better. But if that doesn’t work, then we ask God to fix the problem for us, and then if that doesn’t work, we blame God for sleeping in the back of the boat. “How can he not care about me when

I'm going through this life changing event in my life!" And we are afraid, very afraid. But even while "sleeping" God has never left us, just like Jesus never left his disciples on the Sea of Galilee. A common misconception about Christianity is if we believe in Jesus and come to church, our life will automatically be great. The disciples probably felt they didn't need to be afraid with Jesus in the boat with them (and they didn't). But as soon as the storm came, they forgot that thought, much like we forget that God is with us always, even when we think he is sleeping.

1 Corinthians says this, **"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."** The storms in our life do not come from God, but they serve God's purpose. The storms in our life come as a result of living in a sinful world; a world in which not only people are affected by sin, but the creation itself. But God knows you, better than you know yourself, and he knows how much you can bear, how much you can take. Just as metal is heated up to remove the impurities, these storms serve to strengthen your relationship to God. And God will still those storms when they have served his purpose.

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While God stilling the storms in our life may make us pretty happy for the time being, it's like putting out all these little fires instead of finding the problem that is causing all the fires. If all God did was still the storms in our life, he wouldn't be all that powerful of a God now would he, because what would happen after this life? That is why it's important to note what Jesus focused on first when his disciples came to him.

The disciples approached Jesus in a panic, they were afraid and they asked Jesus to save them. Instead of focusing on the wind and the waves that were sloshing around in the boat, Jesus addressed the more important concern. **"You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"** Did you catch it? Jesus was first and foremost concerned about the disciples' faith. He was concerned that the disciples didn't trust God's promises and were afraid of drowning. You see, even had the disciples died in that storm at sea, God would have still be watching over them and protecting them. Because their faith was worth much more than gold or life. Because their faith, what little of it there was, was rooted in something much greater. It was the same faith Adam and Eve showed after the fall into sin when they waited patiently for God's promised Savior.

JESUS IS OUR STORM STILLER, he not only stills the storms in our life, but he stilled the storm in our soul. I was reminded of Psalm 46 when I read our gospel. In that particular psalm it is talking about the awesomeness of our God, and in verse 10 it reads, **"Be still, and know that I am God."** This all-encompassing command is the same command that Jesus gave to the wind and the waves, **"Be still!"** **"And know that I – Jesus – am God."** Only God could make nature subject itself to him because he created it. By the same power that the world was created – God's Word, the forces of nature are subject.

And it had to be this way too. Our divine Savior God who had the power to still storms in our lives, had the power to still the storm in our soul. It was a storm created between a just and holy God bearing down on our sinful lives and actions. We are sinful through no fault of God but of our own. The divine power of our Savior God had the might and authority to still the storm in our soul. And his life was a big part of it. His life was lived in perfect accordance with God's will. His death was the payment to satisfy

the wrath of an holy and just God. If Jesus were anything less than God this plan would not have worked, he could not have stilled the storm in our soul.

But JESUS IS OUR STORM STILLER. And because of this we don't need to be afraid. We don't need to be afraid of the storms in our marriage, we don't need to be afraid of the storms with our health, we don't need to be afraid of the great recession. It's not that these problems will just disappear, but they will be more manageable knowing where you stand with God. We can face the storms of life unafraid and confident.

"Don't be afraid!" Jesus says, I have calmed the storms for you. Oh how King Xerxes would have loved to know about JESUS THE STORM STILLER. Xerxes tried showing his command over the sea by having it whipped, but it did him absolutely no good, he still had no control over the forces of nature. But one person did, the God-Man Jesus Christ. He stilled a storm on the Sea of Galilee. But more importantly, he stilled the storm that raged between God and man. Be not afraid, Jesus has stilled the storm. Amen.