

Seeing God in the Midst of Storms

Please read Mark 6:30-52.

In Mark 6:30-44, Jesus feeds 5,000 men, not including the women and children who were there. To say that a person should be impacted by that event is no doubt an understatement. Jesus is the Lord who can provide for thousands from a couple of fish and five loaves of bread.

This story is immediately followed by one of the most famous accounts of Jesus in the Bible. It's the story of Jesus walking on water in 6:45-52. It's also one of the few places in the Bible that contains a "ghost story".

As the story opens, Scripture says Jesus "presses" His disciples to get into a boat right away and leave. He takes care of what is left to do and now has no way of getting across the sea.

Obviously, Jesus knew what was coming. He knew the disciples were about to encounter a very strong storm. He knew He was going to spend time in prayer before He left. He did what He did on purpose. And is there any question, knowing that He was sending the men into the storm and then spending time in prayer, that He spent time prayer for those men? That's very much like our lives.

Jesus knows when He sends us into storms. And each time He does, He prays for us. He did for Peter when Satan desired to "sift him as wheat" (Lk. 22:31-32). Romans 8 tells us that in, the midst of trials, Jesus is right next to God, at His right hand, making intercession for us. We're told that Jesus "always lives to make intercession" for us as we seek to stay faithful (Heb. 7:25). Amazing! While we struggle, He is not only by God's side, He stands by our side in prayer! But there is more.

Sometime between 3 and 6 am, as the storm raged, Jesus walked out to where the men were. When He did, they thought they saw a ghost walking on the water. No doubt, imaginative stories of the sea existed then as they do today. Faith would have told them they knew Someone who could do that. But in the middle of trial, we often don't think about what's true. We allow our emotions and imagination to get the best of us and control our thoughts. We think the worst, even to the point of believing superstitions. "Man, I hope nothing happens to my family...knock on wood". Seriously?

You may know that superstition came from Indo-Europeans who believed that spirits live in trees. To them, touching a tree would bring protection or a blessing from the spirit they thought lived in the tree. But it's only one of the many ways many of us superstitiously act. Anything to help, right?

Like us when we let our reactions rule, they reacted with emotion and “cried out”. Jesus responded with a word from God and did it “immediately”; He spoke to them and encouraged them with His presence. “Be of good cheer. It is I; do not be afraid”. Isn’t that great? No scolding, only encouragement. When we are most in need, He is there and gives us His word for encouragement.

The final event is that Jesus got into the boat and stopped the storm. Their reaction was “they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled”. Then Scripture adds, “For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened”.

That’s a lot like us. We say we believe He is Lord with unlimited power. Then storms come and we allow our emotions to take over. When He solves the problem, we’re amazed. When another storm comes, we’re amazed again. We don’t learn our lessons well. We don’t get it. Yet He keeps showing up in our storms. He knows what’s coming. He prays for us. He comes to us in our need. He gives us God’s Word. And He calms the storm. He gets us to our destination safely.

We’re going through quite a storm together. God knew it was coming. Jesus is praying for us. Just as He is by the Father’s side, He will stand by our side. He will keep showing up, even when our emotions get the better of us. We have His word to encourage us. He will calm the storm. No matter what happens, He will get us safely to our destination.

Be of good cheer! Or, as another translation says, “Take courage”!

Pastor Dan

