



Christian Crusaders

7401 University Ave., Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613-5099
(319) 277-0924 – TOLL-FREE 1-888-693-2484

www.christiancrusaders.org

Jesus Is: Mighty

February 16, 2020

Rev. Steve Kramer

TEXT: Matthew 8:23-27 (ESV)

And when He [Jesus] got into the boat, His disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but He was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then He rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey Him?"

Dear friends:

I live in the upper Midwest of the United States and every once in a while during the summer months the sirens will go off outside warning us that there is a severe storm headed our way, and we ought to take cover. It might be a tornado or a serious thunderstorm; it can all be a bit unnerving. Some of you might live in areas where there are other kinds of natural storms, such as hurricanes, and those can be very frightening as well. These storms of nature are just a part of living on planet Earth. We know that storms happen. But there are other kinds of storms we will experience in life as well that sometimes catch us by surprise. There are relational storms, as marriages struggle or we find ourselves in the midst of a divorce. It could be a lack of friendships in your life or feeling cut off from people and all alone. That's stormy weather. Or there are health storms: a cancer that's eating up your body or chronic illness that won't go away. Or financial storms: a loss of employment, unexpected losses in your investments, or healthcare costs. There's the storm of loss, and the storm of transition. And if you're a

follower of Jesus Christ you've learned that following Jesus doesn't exempt you from facing those storms in life.

How do you handle the storms? I mean let's face it, it's so easy for us to get scared, and panic, and doubt. Such is the case with the disciples in today's story. This episode we read follows a conversation the Jesus had with some admirers who said they were interested in following Him. He and the disciples were just about ready to get into a boat to go over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, and these admirers, along with the disciples, had witnessed Jesus doing miraculous healings earlier on, and they wanted in. Well Jesus warns them not to expect easy, smooth sailing if they follow him. It's a high commitment thing. Then Matthew says "when Jesus got into the boat His disciples followed Him. And behold, there arose a great storm." No easy sailing with Jesus. The Sea of Galilee was known for its sudden storms. It would come up out of nowhere, and they could get nasty. And this one must of been a doozy, because even the seasoned fisherman in the boat were among the panicked as the boat was being swamped by water. And as a whole, Jewish folks didn't really like the sea - they were afraid of it, they were landlubbers. They saw the sea as a dark, evil, power of fear. So this storm had to have made the disciples' stress level skyrocket all the more.

Now amazingly, Jesus is sound asleep in the back of the boat as they're trying to keep it afloat. But when things look out of control, they wake Him up. "SAVE US, LORD, WE'RE PERISHING!" There appears to be some faith here on their part, right? But Jesus responds in an interesting way. In the midst of the storm, before He even addresses a storm, He uses it as a teachable moment. He speaks to them. "Why are you afraid, oh you of little faith?" In the midst of the waves filling the boat, the wind whistling around them, Jesus seems to be scolding them for being afraid. He calls them people of little faith. And notice: He gets after them not for "un-faith". He doesn't say "you're all out of faith." He gets after them for their little, wavering faith in the face of a frightening storm. They seem to have forgotten His power and authority that they had witnessed earlier in the chapter. Their faces show sheer panic as they wake Him up, not confident belief they still haven't figured out who He really is. And they don't know the plans that God had for Him: to go to a cross, to pay for the sins of the world, and rise again. They didn't realize He was the Son of God. They don't have the advantage that we have of reading the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They don't have the big picture.

Even though, I have to admit that even in knowing the big picture, I still can sometimes find myself panicking and despairing when storms hit in my life and things are overwhelming. How about you?

Anyway, back to the story. After the rebuke towards the disciples, Jesus stands up in the boat, and he rebukes the wind and the sea. And there is immediately a great calm. With only a word He stills the storm. Can you imagine the feelings of those disciples sitting in that boat, now on that calm, still sea? There had to have been awe and holy fear and wonder. It would take your breath away, wouldn't it? Matthew says "they marveled, saying 'what sort of Man is this, that even the wind and sea obey Him?'" As if they didn't expect Him to be able to stop the storm.

This story is another epiphany of Christ's power and authority. He's much more than He appears on the surface. He's more than a teacher, miracle healer, prophet, or earthly-type of Messiah. He's more than that - only God can do something like this, according to the stories and songs from the Old Testament. I wonder: were the disciples beginning to catch a glimpse of light regarding His identity? Perhaps. Of course, later on it will become very clear as they witness His death and His resurrection from the dead. Then they won't be able to be still about Him, even in facing the worst of storms, like rejection and persecution for their faith and mission.

It does make me wonder, as I read a story like this: was this story saved for us, to reassure us, that even those first disciples struggled with faith and fears? And if it takes time for them to grow in faith, then maybe we shouldn't be so surprised that it takes us time as well. And maybe we shouldn't be so hard on ourselves (and one another) when we're struggling with our fears.

So, let's talk about you. How would you describe your relationship with this Jesus? What do you think of Him, believe about Him, plan to do with Him? Are you trusting Him with everything in your life? I hope so. This story from Matthew, you see, reveals two things we need to seriously consider. First, it tells us who Jesus is. And next, it teaches us what He expects of His followers. First, He's God in the flesh. He's the Lord over all creation, even over storms. He is mighty, He has all power and authority. Ultimately, He defeated the greatest storm that humanity faces: death, when He rose from the dead as the first fruits of the resurrection. Just listen to this description of our mighty Jesus in the book of Colossians. Here's what it says about Him: He is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation, for by Him all things were created in Heaven and on Earth. Visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. In Him, all things hold together. In this story, when they call on Jesus they addressed Him as "Lord", being God. I don't know if they meant that, but... Friend, have you called him "Lord" in your life? Have you entrusted your whole life to His direction and care? Because Jesus is Lord over all creation, even the storms. He is our Savior, our rescuer, our powerful leader worth

following and trusting in all circumstances. He's definitely the One you want in your boat.

A Christian sailor named Gorman Foch once wrote in a letter to his worried parents "If you hear that our ship went down don't worry. The sea is but a puddle in my Savior's hand, and nothing can snatch me from that hand." After his resurrection, Jesus will announce to His disciples that "all authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to Me" by His Heavenly Father. That He is sovereign and holds all of us in the palm of His hand. He has the final word over this world, and we see in the Gospels that He actually cares about us, He loves us. The palm of that hand that holds us is a nail-pierced palm, for our sake. He is mighty.

Next, Jesus says "why are you afraid?" which communicates to us that He wants us to trust Him in every situation of life, even in the storms. Storms will come our way, it's part of living in a broken world. We are not exempt as followers of Christ Jesus, as we see in the story today. But know this: we are not abandoned. He is with us. He's in the boat. Don't panic! He's Lord, and He will deliver us through the storms of life. Trust Him. He's promised that nothing can snatch you from His hand. You are His forever, as you follow Him. As the sometimes beaten up, imprisoned, and tortured, and threatened apostle Paul assures some Roman Christians with these words: "for I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Friends, Paul is not simply waxing eloquent here. These wonderful words of assurance come from years of personal experience with Christ Jesus in his boat. When he says "I am sure", he's sure of it because Jesus has been in his boat. He's "convinced", as some interpretations of that statement put it. And He is with you. If you are His follower, the risen Jesus is in the boat with you. Believe this, rejoice and be glad. The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and sovereign over the universe, Who knows you and loves you and went to the cross to rescue you and rose again for you is with you. When the storms hit, He's whispering in your ear: "be still, and know that I am God." When everything seems to be falling apart, as the winds of adversity blow into your life, you can confidently pray "Jesus help me. I surrender this to you." When your sin and guilt weighs you down because you've messed up again, and you feel far from God, you can confidently confess "for the sake of Jesus forgive me. Cleanse me. Renew me." and forgiveness will come your way. When death, perhaps the greatest storm of all, comes knocking at our door, you can confidently pray with Jesus "into your hands I commit my spirit." For Jesus has conquered the power of death, and has promised his followers, saying

Let not your hearts be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house there are many rooms, if it were not so would I have told you that

I go and prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare that place for you I will come again, and take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.

I would like close with a story I came across about someone facing a storm. Kara Tippetts, an author and mother of four with her husband Jason, went home to Jesus on March 22, 2015 after a long struggle with breast cancer. As the cancer spread, she courageously embraced her situation, trusting God. She believed that cancer was not the point, but Jesus was. Near the end of her life Kara wrote this:

My little body has grown tired of battle, and treatment is no longer helping. But what I see, what I know, what I have is Jesus. He has still given me breath, and with it I pray I would live well and fade well. By degrees doing both, living and dying, as I have moments left to live. I get to draw my people close, kiss them and tenderly speak love over their lives. I get to pray into eternity my hopes and fears for the moments of my loves. I get to laugh and cry and wonder over Heaven. I do not feel like I have the courage for this journey, but I have Jesus — and He will provide. He has given me so much to be grateful for, and that gratitude, that wondering over His love, will cover us all. And it will carry us — carry us in ways we cannot comprehend.

Friend, if you are His follower, aren't you glad that the mighty, powerful, faithful Jesus Christ is in the boat with you? Don't be afraid. Believe me, He cares for you and you can trust Him in all things.

Amen