

ESF Lord's day service message  
1/31/2016

### **Manage Your Storms with Faith**

Matthew 14:22-33

*<sup>22</sup>Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>23</sup>After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup>but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. <sup>25</sup>During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. <sup>26</sup>When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup>But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." <sup>28</sup>"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."*

*<sup>29</sup>"Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup>But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"*

*<sup>31</sup>Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"*

*<sup>32</sup>And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. <sup>33</sup>Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*

A Scotsman, was taking a trip to the Holy Land, and when he got to the Sea of Galilee he was surprised when he found it would cost fifty dollars an hour to rent a boat to go out on the water.

"That's too expensive," he said, "in Scotland I could have got a boat for about \$20."

"That might be true," said the boat man, "but you have to take into account that the Sea of Galilee is water on which our Lord Himself walked."

"Well, at \$50 an hour," said the Scotsman, "it's little wonder He walked."

Here in this text Jesus is teaching us more than just walking upon the water, more than just one miracle.

### **I. Trust that the Lord never allows a storm you can't bear**

The storms in life come to everybody. There are storms of illness, unemployment, financial set back, marital strife or serious accident. There is no one who is exempted from the storms. All people, either the good or the bad, either unbelievers or believers, encounter the storms in life from time to time.

There may be storms caused by our own faults or disobedience to God's will. When Jonah disobeyed God he met a storm (Jonah 1:1-4). But some storms come even if we are in God's will. The disciples in this text faced a storm although they followed the word of the Lord. If we look at verse 22 it says, "*Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.*" Jesus is the one who put them in the boat. He's the one who told them to get out in the middle of the lake. They obeyed God's will but they encountered the storm anyway.

Job is a perfect example of this. We know all about the storm in Job's life. He was covered by boils from head to toe and sat on an ash heap. He lost all his children by a hurricane in a single day. Had he sinned to deserve receiving such a storm? Absolutely not. He was a righteous man in God's sight and yet he was going through the storm of life.

The Apostle Paul is another perfect example of it. Paul was a man of God, one of the greatest men in the history of the church. Although he poured out all his heart to serve the Lord, he still experienced a shipwreck, jails, and beatings. It is possible for you to be obeying God,

to be right in the center of God's will and yet at the same time encounter a furious storm.

We may wonder what God's will is and feel hopeless in the midst of storms. But here in this text, Jesus teaches us that God uses the storms to test our faith and to prove that He always can deliver us from all storms. Jesus came to the disciples who were struggling with the storm at the fourth watch. The fourth watch is just before dawn which is the darkest time in the night. At the worst possible time, when all hope was fading, Jesus came. The fourth watch represents those times of hopelessness and helplessness we all feel from time to time. The disciples on the storm-ravaged sea that night, were exhausted by the fourth watch.

They were physically exhausted. They had fought the storm for, maybe, six hours. Surely, they had fervently prayed throughout their ordeal. Their prayers were exhausted. Their expectations of God's deliverance were exhausted.

We all face our fourth watches. There are times when we are completely exhausted after a long struggle without seeing any help from the Lord. There are times when we are tempted to give up. But that is the time we have to hang on. Because the Lord's help is near to us at the darkest moment.

There may be a fourth watch of illness. There was a man who came to Jesus to ask him to heal his sick daughter. But Jesus delayed on the road and his daughter died. People from his house came to him and said, "Don't bother, your daughter has died." But Jesus came to his house and raised the dead girl from the dead. (Luke 8:43- 56)

God uses the storms in our lives to teach that He is always with us and never forsakes us. God uses the storms to teach us that we should never give up hope even in the darkest moment of our lives. Here are God's promises which give us assurance of the truth. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "*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.*

All of us come eventually to those darkest of hours, to those lowest of moments, and we tend to despair. But let it not be! We must trust Him in the darkest hour.

There is no oil without squeezing the seeds,  
no wine without pressing the grapes,  
no fragrance without crushing the flowers,  
and no real joy without sorrow.

So if you're going through a storm and if you feel hopeless, believe that the storm is in God's good will for you.

### **Take the storms as opportunities to grow in your faith**

While Peter and all the other disciples were struggling to survive in the boat tossed by the stormy waves, Jesus was approaching to the boat by walking on the water.

Then Peter asked Jesus to let him walk on the water as Jesus was doing. As soon as Jesus said to him "come" Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water. By doing so, Peter exercised his faith, and stretched his faith to do something he had never done before. That was a great experience for Peter to grow in his faith.

Video clip: Jesus walks on the water

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdH2TgTJDxE>

In calm days, in the days when there is no storm, we usually don't need faith, we don't think about faith. But when there is a storm and we know that the storm is out of our control, we need faith in God who is the only one who can control the storm.

Psalm 46:1-3 says,

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

*Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.*

God uses the storms in our lives to encourage us to stretch our faith and grow in our faith. A stormy situation gives us a good opportunity to exercise our faith, and stretch our faith to receive God's power and grow in our faith.

So, when we face storms, we have to take the storms as opportunities to get out of the boat. To grow in our faith, we have to get out of the boat.

We may have never faced a storm in an actual boat. But situations that we want to stay in without being disturbed may be our boats. The boat represents the status quo. It is the predictable behavior that we repeat over and over again without making any progress. We keep rowing, but we are not advancing in our old boats. Too often we are trapped by the status quo, or the expectations and fears of others.

Your boat may be your job, your money, your relationship, your tradition, a bad habit, addiction, or anything that makes you feel comfortable. If you don't get out of the boat because of fear, you will miss out on the opportunity to grow in faith.

It is time to get out of the boat and experience something new. If you don't like what is happening, the way things are going get out of the boat. If you don't like the way people treat you, or if you don't like the way things are going in your relationship get out of the boat. Getting out does not mean leaving or abandoning. It means taking a step or several steps to do something different with faith in the Lord who enables you to make a difference. It means taking a risk and attempting something great which you have never done with faith in the Lord before. It means

reaching out to one person with love of Christ if you have never done it before. It means trying to give some of your time to serve the church if you have never done it. It means trying to go to bed a couple of hours earlier on Saturday night to prepare for the Lord's day if you have never done it before. It means trying to forgive a person whom you have never been able to forgive.

### **Focus on the Lord who is in control of all storms**

After walking upon the water for a moment, Peter suddenly turned his eyes from Jesus to the storm. Then he was terrified by the stormy waves and began to sink into the water.

As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he was able to walk on water. But as soon as he turned his eyes from the Lord to the stormy waves, he was terrified and began to sink into the water.

The important lesson here is that to let our faith work in the almighty power of the Lord, we must keep fixing our eyes upon the Lord. Hebrews 12:2 says, "*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.*"

What does it mean to fix our eyes on Jesus?

It means that we have to fix our thoughts on Jesus (Hebrews 3:1). It means that we intentionally turn our thoughts from all kinds of troubles and burdens in our lives to Jesus. It means that we intentionally focus our thoughts on who Jesus is and what Jesus can do as the almighty Son of God. It means that we keep walking and moving forward by faith in spite of impossible situations with faith that with Jesus we can do everything. That is what Paul did in the midst of the storms in his life: "*I can do all things through Christ*".

We are to call unto Him, not in our own strength, not by our own power, but by the strength of God. It is in the name of God that David came against Goliath—not in his own name. When Peter healed the crippled

man he said to the crippled man; “In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”

As long as we fix our eyes on Jesus, all the storms in our lives will be controlled by Him, and He will let us accomplish marvelous things even in the midst of the storms.

Several years ago a submarine was being tested and had to remain submerged for many hours. When it returned to harbor, the captain was asked, “How did the terrible storm last night affect you?” The officer looked at him in surprise and exclaimed, “Storm? We didn’t even know there was one” You see, the sub had been so far beneath the surface that it had reached the area known to sailors as “the cushion of the sea.” The ocean may be whipped into huge waves, but the waters below are never stirred. Have you experienced the “cushion of the Savior”? The waves of worry and fear will not overcome you if we put our faith and trust in Christ.

Is there trouble in your life today? Is there a storm you can’t handle now? Is there any burden you can’t bear? Turn your thoughts from those troubles, storms and burdens to Jesus. Constantly think and trust that Jesus can handle them and enable you to overcome them.