

When Stormy Winds Blow

Text: Mark 6:45-56

Introduction:

1. Context: Christ has just performed the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand (Vs. 32-44). The crowd responds enthusiastically and tries to make Christ a king – *“When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.”* (John 6:15) It is likely that the disciples shared the Messianic hopes of the people. Christ responds by sending away the people and the disciples while He goes into a mountain to pray.
2. This is the second storm in which the disciples find themselves in the will of God (See Mk. 4:35-41). In the first storm they struggled even with Christ’s presence in the boat with them. Now they will face this next storm without even Him physically present in the boat.
3. There are both theological and practical lessons we can learn from this account. Theologically we learn much about the Person of Christ through the amazing miracles He performs. Practically we learn much about the principles that will sustain us when going through trials.
4. In this sermon we will note 7 truths that will help us as we go through storms/trials in our lives.

When stormy winds blow, we need to remember...

I. His Providence Placed me in the Storm (Vs. 45, 47-48a)

A. The Constraint of the Command (Vs. 45)

1. They were forcefully compelled: The word ‘constrained’ means “to force, insist, urge, to compel.” Implies there was a measure of reluctance on the part of the Apostles and a measure of urgency on the part of the Lord Jesus.
2. They were purposefully compelled: There was a purpose behind this command. From what John 6:15 reveals, it was likely connected with the Lord stopping the attempt of the crowd to crown Him as a political Messiah. There was also a heart problem developing in His disciples that needed to be addressed.

B. The Consequence of the Command (Vs. 47-48a)

1. The timing of the storm (Vs. 47)
 - a. “when the evening was come” = the “second or late evening, six p.m. at this season or sunset on.” (Robertson) John notes that “it was now dark” (Jn. 6:17). Storms often come in the night seasons of life.

Christ the Servant – Mark Series

- b. “the ship was in the midst of the sea” = they had reached the half way point
2. The toiling in the storm (Vs. 48a)
 - a. The reason – consider the magnitude of the storm
 - i. Wind – this wind was against them (head wind) and is described in John’s account as “a great wind” (Jn. 6:18)
 - ii. Waves – Matthew describes the ship as being “tossed with waves” (Matt. 14:24) and John records “the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew” (Jn. 6:18)
 - b. The rowing – the disciples tried their best in the storm
 - i. ‘toiling’ = literally means “tortured”. The same Greek word is translated ‘torment’ 8 times in the N.T. and ‘pain’ once. “The storm was causing them grievous physical, emotional and mental stress.” (Hiebert)
 - ii. To the disciples’ credit, they didn’t turn back but kept the boat pointed in the direction of God’s will. It would have been easier to turn around and with the wind behind them, run back to shore!

II. His Prayers Sustain me in the Storm (Vs. 46, 48a)

A. The Offering of His Prayers (Vs. 46)

1. “a mountain” = seemingly Christ loved to resort to mountains in which to pray. Christ prayed from the vantage point of the mountain.
2. What a picture of the intercessory ministry of the Lord Jesus.
 - a. *“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, **who also maketh intercession for us.**”* (Rom. 8:34)
 - b. *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, **seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.**”* (Heb. 7:25)
 - c. Dear believer, whatever trial you are going through at this time, be assured that your Great High Priest and Saviour Jesus Christ is interceding for you in accordance with the perfect will of God.

B. The Omniscience of His Prayers (Vs. 48a)

1. “And he saw them” = Christ had perfect, supernatural knowledge of exactly what the disciples were going through. He knew exactly where they were and what was happening. “They were the definite objects of His consideration.” (Hiebert)
2. The delay in Christ’s deliverance of the disciples was in accordance with His perfect wisdom and not because of any lack of power on His part.

III. His Presence Meets me in the Storm (Vs. 48)

A. The Moment of His Coming (Vs. 48b)

1. The time: “the fourth watch of the night” = the Romans divided the night into 4 watches. The first was from 6 to 9pm; the second, from 9 to 12pm; the third from 12pm to 3am; and the fourth, from 3 to 6am. (JM) This means the disciples had been rowing somewhere between 9 to 12 hours!
2. The distance: “So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs” (Jn. 6:21) A ‘furlong’ was about 606 feet (202m) so this means they had travelled between 5 and 6 kms. A long way to row with a stiff head wind!
3. Principle: Christ comes to our aid at just the right time and place. He is never early, never late but always right on time in accordance with His perfect will for our lives.

B. The Miracle of His Coming (Vs. 48c)

1. “he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea” = Christ’s power and Deity demonstrated majestically. Job, referring to God, said, “*Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.*” (Job 9:8) It’s not hard to believe this miracle happened when you realize WHO Christ is! He Created the wind and the waves!
2. “The storm that was over their heads was under His feet!” The situation you face may seem impossible but it is not beyond our Saviour’s control.
3. G. Campbell Morgan: “It is too dark for you to see Him yet, but He is coming. He cannot leave you alone to perish. And mark this, He is coming over the very waves you are most afraid of. The very waves that threaten to buffet and break you to pieces are the pavement for His blessed feet.”

IV. His Precepts Comfort me in the Storm (Vs. 49-50)

A. The Confusion of the Disciples (Vs. 49-50a)

1. They erred mentally – “they supposed”
 - a. ‘supposed’ = means to “imagine as true” (Webster). The same Greek word is translated ‘think’ 33 times in the N.T. There was a problem in the disciples thinking during the storm. Their perceptions were not reality! They made an error in judgment.
 - b. “a spirit” = our word ‘phantom’ comes from the Greek word. They thought they were seeing an apparition. But in reality, it was their blessed Saviour!
 - c. Challenge: How often do we fail to discern the Saviour in our storms? “How often in our troubles we fail to discern the times and situations correctly but see dreadful “phantoms” in our

Christ the Servant – Mark Series

troubles when it is Christ working for us. Like the disciples, there is so much flesh in us compared to our faith.” (Butler)

- d. We need to be aware that often our thoughts are in error when we are in the midst of a grievous storm. Therefore, let us be more careful to listen for His voice speaking above the noise of the wind and the waves than the thrashing of our own minds.
2. They erred emotionally – they “cried out”
 - a. “cried out” = means to scream in terror. These strong, tough men were seriously frightened!
 - b. “were troubled” = to throw into a panic, strike with dread (JM)
 - c. The error in their emotions was a direct product of the error in their thinking.

B. The Consolation of the Lord (Vs. 50b)

1. The Exhortation – “be of good cheer...be not afraid”
 - a. Be Joyful – *“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.”* (Phil. 4:4)
 - b. Don’t Be Fearful – how often in the Bible to we read the phrase “fear not”. Our Heavenly Father tells us again and again “don’t be afraid” because we are so prone to fear. But God wants us to learn to respond to our storms with faith rather than fear.
 - c. Principle: The Word of God brings comfort to us in our storms. “Christ’s words removed fear and revealed God. The Word of God quietens our fears.” (Butler)
2. The Revelation – “it is I”
 - a. The words are literally “I AM” (ego eimi) which is a title of Jehovah God in the O.T. (Ex. 3:14). What a revelation of Christ’s absolute Deity. Jesus Christ is God, the great I am!
 - b. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35, 48, 51); “I am the light of the world” (Jn. 8:12;9:5); “I am the door” (Jn. 10:7,9); “I am the good shepherd” (Jn. 10:11,14); “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn. 11:25); “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6); “I am the true vine” (Jn. 15:1, 5).
 - c. At least 12 times in the Gospels Christ proclaims Himself as the “I am”
 - i. “I am he” – 7 times in John’s Gospel
 - ii. “it is I” – 4 times in the Gospels
 - iii. John 8:58 *“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”*
 - iv. Illustration: The mob that came to arrest Jesus in the garden were knocked to the ground when Jesus spoke those two words, “I am” (John 18:4-6).
 - d. Note: Between the command to “be of good cheer” and “be not afraid” stands Jesus, the great I AM. Without Jesus as our

Christ the Servant – Mark Series

complete sufficiency those commands are completely impossible.

3. John Phillips summarises these three sayings of Christ as follows: “be of good cheer” was a word to their emotions; “it is I” a word to their minds and “be not afraid” a word to their wills.

V. His Power Enables me in the Storm (Matt. 14:28-31)

A. The Faith of Peter (Vs. 28-29)

1. The action of his faith (Vs. 28)
 - a. Peter could be impulsive but on the positive side he was willing to step out of the boat if God was in it!
 - b. Staying within the apparent safety of the boat may seem like the more favourable option but you will miss out on experiencing the power of God.
2. The revelation for his faith (Vs. 29)
 - a. Without that one word ‘come’ it would have been presumption on the part of Peter to step out of the boat. But he could step out with confidence based on that one Word from the lips of Christ.
 - b. Our steps of faith are not to be based on our feelings but on the Revelation of God’s Word.

B. The Failure of Peter (Vs. 30)

1. Something happened to Peter’s focus (Vs. 30a) Peter turned his eyes from the Lord to the circumstances around him. The fact we have passed the first hurdle of stepping out of the boat doesn’t mean that there won’t be further tests along the way.
2. Something happened to Peter’s faith (Vs. 30b) Peter’s faith faltered when he changed his focus.
3. Something happened to footing (Vs. 30c)

C. The Favour of Peter (Vs. 31)

1. Jesus heard Peter – “he cried...And immediately Jesus”
2. Jesus held Peter – “Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him”
3. Jesus helped Peter – “O thou of little faith”
4. Note: Thank God for His grace and patience with us as we falter and fall in our walk of faith.

VI. His Peace Calms me in the Storm (Vs. 51)

A. He Delivers in the Storm (Vs. 51)

1. The storm finishes according to the Lord’s will.
2. Psalm 89:9 *“Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.”*
3. Christ’s Presence brings peace.

B. He Delivers from the Storm (Jn. 6:21)

Christ the Servant – Mark Series

1. “Then they willingly received him into the ship: and **immediately** the ship was at the land wither they went.” (Jn. 6:21)
2. “they were sore amazed...” = the disciples responded with amazement which in turn turned to worship. “Then they that were in the ship came and **worshipped** him, saying, Of a truth **thou art the Son of God.**” (Matt. 14:33)

VII. His Purging Refines me in the Storm (Vs. 52)

Storms have a way of bringing spiritual blind spots in our lives to the surface. This is a part of God’s design in the storms as we are often unaware these blind spots even exist. The disciples had a two-fold problem:

A. A Head Problem (Vs. 52a)

1. “they considered not” = the word is “to set or bring together, in the mind, thus to understand.” The Greek word is translated ‘understand’ (24 times).
 - a. They should have reasoned that if our Lord had the supernatural power to feed five thousand people by multiplying five loaves and two fish, He could also exert that supernatural power to quiet the wind, still the sea, and walk on the surface of the water.” (Wuest)
 - b. They had failed to give proper attention and thought to the previous miracle they had just experienced. “They had not grasped the significance of the miracle that afternoon.” (Hiebert)

B. A Heart Problem (Vs. 52b)

1. Their heart problem was the source of their head problem.
2. ‘hardened’ = calloused. Same word translated ‘blind’ 2 times in the N.T. “They were in a state of being spiritually unperceptive.” (Hiebert) Their hearts had hardened in the face of one of Christ’s most significant miracles! Perhaps this was because Christ’s decision in relation to the Messianic hopes of the multitude was contrary to their thinking? Such is the insidious propensity of our human hearts.
3. “The disciples weren’t gospel hardened; they were glory hardened!” (Phillips)

Conclusion: Are you going through a trial? A storm in the will of God? Are you exercising faith or are you filled with fear? Are you discerning the movements of the Saviour in your trial or are you being deceived in your own thinking that some dreadful phantom is upon you?