

God With Us? Msg 3
 In The Wilderness
 Sermon preached by Dr. Rick Mandl
 Eagle Rock Baptist Church
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Grab your Bible and open up to our scripture for this morning

Mark 4:35-41

The story we're looking at of Jesus calming the storm is recorded by all three of the gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke.

I'll be drawing from some of the other accounts as we look at the story, but most of our time will be in Mark 4

We begin with Mark chapter 4:35

"As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let's cross to the other side of the lake.' So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed)." Mark 4:35-36

"But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, 'Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?'" Mark 4:37-38

"When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Silence! Be still!' Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm."

Mark 4:39

"Then he asked them, 'Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?' The disciples were absolutely terrified. 'Who is this man?' they asked each other. 'Even the wind and waves obey him!'" Mark 4:40-41

This miracle took place at the end of a busy day.

A day on which Jesus had been preaching and teaching to the multitudes who had gathered there by the shore of the sea of Galilee.

Finally the press of the crowd became so great that Jesus climbed into a boat and pushed out a little way from the shore and continued to speak from there.

As the day drew to a close, Jesus turned to his disciples and said, "Let's go over to the other side."

After a long day of pouring himself out for the multitudes Jesus was drained.

And so it's not surprising that shortly after they cast off from the shore, he was sound asleep.

While he slept a great storm came upon the boat.

His disciples, filled with fear, woke him up and he stilled the storm.

Jesus never wasted a miracle

He didn't do things just to show off.

Every miracle is done to teach a point

And in this one we find some principles on how to deal with a crisis.

But before we look at those principles lets remind ourselves of some things we know to be . . .

True About Storms

Truth # 1

Storms are inevitable

The storms of life are going to happen

If you're not going through a storm right now, just wait . . . you will be!

Someone said it this way

- You're either coming out of a storm or
- You're in the middle of a storm, or
- There's a storm around the corner.

That's not encouraging!

But it's true.

So often it seems like you're either coming out of a difficult time, in the middle of one, or often times around the corner there are just difficult and painful things waiting for you.

Which is why the Apostle Peter wrote . . .

"Dear friends, don't be bewildered or surprised when you go through the fiery trials ahead, for this is no strange, unusual thing that is going to happen to you." 1 Peter 4:12 (LB)

Notice, he doesn't say "**Don't be bewildered or surprised IF you go through the fiery trials ahead..."**

He says . . .

WHEN

Why?

Because storms are INEVITABLE

We live in a **Storm-Infested** world.

A second truth is that . . .

Storms are impartial

What I mean by that is that they happen to good people and to bad, to believers and to unbelievers, they happen to all of us.

When they strike, **no one gets a pass**.

They strike without regard to race, creed, economic status or religion.

That's the way it is with Storms.

Jesus said it bluntly in Matthew 5:45

"God sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." Matthew 5:45

What does that mean?

That means that being a Christian doesn't exempt you from the storms of life.

They happen to all people, good and bad, believer and unbeliever.

Storms are INEVITABLE

Storms are IMPARTIAL

And then a third truth about storms is that . . .

Storms are impossible to predict

When I say that Storms are impossible to predict, I'm not talking about METEOROLOGICAL events, but rather the storms that strike our lives.

Alough when it comes to the storm that Jesus calmed it's interesting that this miracle was recorded by all three gospel writers, and it's worth comparing the accounts of each one, because sometimes one writer will include a detail that the others may not mention

Matthew 8:24 says . . .

"Without warning, a furious storm arose on the lake, so that waves were sweeping over the boat."

Matthew 8:24

Don't miss those two words . . . "Without Warning"

Storms don't typically phone ahead to let you know that they're coming.

They strike without warning, that's why I say that they are . . .

Storms are impossible to predict

You might want to add to that, the word "**USUALLY**"

Storms are USUALLY impossible to predict, because a lot of time, there's nothing that you've done to bring them on.

That's the way it is a lot of the time, but not always.

Can storms enter your life because of disobedience?

Absolutely.

Remember **Jonah**.

God told him to go and preach in the city of Nineveh.

Jonah said "**No Way!**"

He hated the Ninevites and he didn't want to see them experience God's love and forgiveness.

And so he **hopped the first ship that he could find that was headed in a different direction.**

He **got on a boat that was sailing for Tarshish.**

While he was on that ship **God taught him an important lesson.**

He taught him that "**You can run but you can't hide**"

And because of Jonah's disobedience God sent a great storm to strike the ship that he was on.

And that **storm would have destroyed the ship**, had the sailors not thrown Jonah overboard, and so we see that **storms can be the result of disobedience**.

But that **doesn't mean they always are**.

Look at the story we're looking at this morning - - - Jesus Calming The Storm - - and **remember something**.

The **reason that these disciples found themselves in the center of a storm** was that **they were obeying God**.

Jesus had told them, "**Get in the boat, and let's cross over to the other side of the lake.**"

And **they obeyed, they did exactly** as he said.

And yet **in spite of the fact** that they were **in the center of his will, exactly where he wanted them**, they **wound up in the center of a storm, exactly where they didn't want to be**.

The lesson for us is that **storms are impartial**.

They happen to all people, good and bad, believer and unbeliever.

If you are going through a tough time right now, **don't automatically assume** that it must mean that you are **out of the will of God**.

You may be exactly where he wants you to be.

Remember, Jonah had done something to bring that storm on himself . . .

But the other sailors on the ship on which Jonah was riding?

They were innocent.

They were **just collateral damage**.

Again, God has NOT promised us a storm-free life.

This is not heaven.

Now if, **storms are inevitable** . . .

And if **storms are impartial** . . .

And if **storms are usually impossible to predict** then the issue really becomes **what will my response be** to the storms that inevitably are going to happen in my life?

Turn over to page two on your notes and we'll look at . . .

Responding To A Storm

What I've seen is that when it comes to the way in which people respond to storms, most often they will respond in one of two ways . . .

They will either . . .

Blame God For It

Or they will

Learn to Trust God Through It

When it comes to the first of those two - - blaming God - - I can't give you a lot of help, but my guess is you've figured out how to do that all on your own.

But when it comes to the second - - Learning To Trust God through the storm - - I think we can learn some lessons through this story of Jesus calming the storm.

Lesson # 1 - - -

Remember God's Closeness

One of the most difficult parts about going through a storm is that very often we feel all alone.

We feel like God is far away.

That's probably the way that these disciples felt.

And yet they weren't alone, Jesus was with them.

What may look like a seemingly minor detail is an important spiritual truth.

Matthew 8:23 tells us . . .

"[Jesus] got into the boat and his disciples followed him." Matthew 8:23

There is nothing that you and I will face in our lives, that we will **have to face alone** if we have Jesus in our boat.

And he is in your boat if you've invited him in, if you've asked him to be Lord of your life.

What's the lesson from this?

The lesson is . . .

Never let the **Presence** of a **Storm** cause you to doubt the **Presence** of **God**

A second thing to do to make it through a storm is to . . .

Relax In God's Care

Remember in our story, the disciples encountered a storm and they began to freak out. They find Jesus sleeping.

They wake him, and what were the first words out of their mouth?

They were . . .

'Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?'" Mark 4:37-38

The presence of the storm blinded them to the presence of God, who was right there with them, and maybe more importantly.

It caused them to call into question the **CARING of GOD**.

And I think that some of us can relate to that.

We have no problem intellectually affirming the "**PRESENCE OF GOD**"

We believe that He's **OMNI-PRESENT**

He's **everywhere, all the time**.

But, do we believe that he **CARES**, even about the storms that we're going through?

Sometimes that's a different question.

And it becomes an even tougher question, when we know that the storm we're in is our own fault. Whenever we can, we like to blame our storms on others, or even on the devil.

You know, "**The devil made me do it.**"

Sometimes it's not the devil, it's us.

And we know it's us.

Sometimes you're in the middle of a storm because you just spent too much money.

Sometimes you're in the middle of the storm because your emotions got the best of you and you said something you shouldn't say.

Sometimes you're in the middle of a storm because you procrastinated and put off something that you knew you needed to do.

It's not the devil's fault you didn't pass your final exam.

It's your fault for eating Domino's and drinking beer too late at night and waiting 'til the very end, to start studying.

Sometimes you're in a storm because everybody else told you not to date him!

Your mama told you not to date him.

Your daddy told you not to date him.

Your pastor told you not to date him.

Your best friend told you not to date him.

Your fortune cookie told you not to date him.

And you argue back, but he's got so much potential.

He's got so much potential.

He's got potential to ruin your life.

But you dated him anyway.

Sometimes you're in the middle of a storm 'cause it's just your own fault.

But even when that happens . . .

God's still THERE

And God still CARES

And God will help if you'll just call out to him.

I don't know about you, but it's easier for me to believe that God will get me out of a storm when I believe that it was God got me into the storm,

Than it is for me to believe that God will get me out of the storm when I got myself into the storm, right?

When I feel like it's my fault, it's easy to feel like I don't even deserve to be rescued.

That's not true.

There's a great promise in Psalm 50:15

"Call on me when you are in trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory."

Psalm 50:15

The disciples called out to the Lord when they were in trouble and he calmed that storm and rescued them, and that same promise still holds true today for you and me.

A lesson to remember . . .

Peace is not the **Absence** of a **Storm**

Peace is the Presence of God

When Jesus is in your boat, it makes all the difference in the storm.
The best place to be, is the place where Jesus is at
Even if that's in the storm.

A third right response in the midst of the storm is to . . .

Rely on God's Control

Don't just BELIEVE he's in control. . . RELY on it.
Mark 4:39 . . .

"When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Silence! Be still!'

Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm." Mark 4:39

Instantly quiet!!!

And the disciples reaction?

"The disciples were absolutely terrified. 'Who is this man?' they asked each other. 'Even the wind and waves obey him!'" Mark 4:41

Why???

These disciples had already seen Jesus display his power over the **PHYSICAL** world.

They had seen him heal people of all kinds of physical ailments

They'd seen him display his power over the **SPIRITUAL** world as he cast demons out of people and delivered them from all kinds of spiritual oppression,

But now Jesus is displaying his power over the **NATURAL** world

They're beginning to understand that there is nothing more powerful than Jesus in this world.

It doesn't matter what the storm is in our life, Jesus is more powerful.

And you and I can RELY on his control.

Sometimes when we trust God WITH the storm we're going through, he does exactly what we see in this story.

Sometimes he CALMS the storm

But we have to be honest. . .

Sometimes he doesn't

And we don't know why

And it doesn't make sense.

Do I know WHY, sometimes he calms the storm and sometimes he doesn't?

No, but the reality is, sometimes he doesn't

So that leaves us facing the question . . .

How do we trust God WITH the storm, when he chooses NOT to calm the storm?

The ANSWER is. . .

Whether he CALMS the storm or DOESN'T calm the storm, there's a promise that he gives us, and it's contained in the verse that we've chosen as our memory verse for this week - Romans 8:28

And it says this . . .

"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." Romans 8:28

That is the promise that whether God calms the storm or he doesn't calm the storm, in all things if we give that storm to God he can make good come out of it.

God can bring purpose and meaning to the storms we are going through, and the ones we have gone through.

And when God brings purpose and meaning to it, that doesn't necessarily take away the pain, it doesn't necessarily remove the scars, but it does bring meaning to the storm.

Think about it this way . . .

From my understanding, the two most painful physical experiences anyone can go through are a **KIDNEY STONE**, and **CHILD BIRTH**.

By God's grace I've never experienced either one of those.

But I was thinking about those two things this week.

Kidney Stones and Child-birth.

And again, based on my limited repertoire of knowledge, I understand that **the pain is comparable**.

But this week I was thinking about the difference between those two things, and I realized something,

I realized that even though the pain may be comparable, the experiences are very different

And what I mean is, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, and you are the one exception.

But as far as I know nobody goes through the experience of having a KIDNEY STONE, and then finishes that experience by taking a picture of their KIDNEY STONE and carrying it around to show people on their phone.

Nobody sends it out as their Christmas card photo.

Nobody blows it up, frames it and puts it up over the mantle in their house

If they do, it's WEIRD

VERY WEIRD

And the reason they don't do that is that the pain of a KIDNEY STONE, is pain without any kind of positive purpose.

The other pain -- CHILD BIRTH -- from my understanding is just as painful -- - excruciatingly painful -- but there's a purpose to it

There's something good that comes out of it.

It's not that the pain wasn't painful

It's not that there may not be scars from the experience.

But when there's purpose and meaning, it changes everything.

When we trust God with the storm, it doesn't mean the pain goes away.

It doesn't mean that the scars disappear.

But we have a God who can bring about good from any pain . . .

I have a friend who is a pastor in Northern California, and a couple in his church went through an horrific storm -- the kind of storm that every parent prays that they will never face.

In the midst of that storm, they made the choice to find a purpose so that they could **use what they learned in their storm to help others**.

I want to show you a little bit of their story, first about the way that the Today Show covered their story, and then part of the interview that my friend Rene did with them. . .

Connor Eckhart Story Video

Did you catch what she said?

"Knowing you have a purpose makes a difference."

Sometimes the greatest works that God does through any individual are borne out of our pain.

They're borne out of our weakness.

God works powerfully through our weaknesses.

It's not that he can't use our strengths -- he can and does --

But more often he uses our brokenness and our hurts and struggles to make a difference.

Think about it -- -

Who is the best person to help somebody who's struggling through an addiction?

Somebody who has struggled through an addiction and by God's grace has found healing.

They're the best person to speak into that situation.

And walk with someone on the journey that they have walked themselves.

Who's the best person to walk beside someone who has recently been diagnosed with cancer?

It's someone who's been on the receiving end of that same diagnosis.

Who's the best person to walk alongside somebody who has just experienced the loss of a loved one, or a spouse that's walked out?

It's someone who has walked that same path.

God will use what you LEARN in YOUR STORM, to HELP someone through THEIRS.

If we allow him to do that

God can bring meaning and purpose and life change through the storms we've been through, if we'll allow him to do that.

My prayer for all of us is that we will.

Let's pray.