

## **“God Is with You in the Storm”**

### **John 6:16-21**

We marvel at rainbows for a reason. They are a beautiful sight in the sky, and they represent the calm that follows the storm. But a rainbow is the last thing we are thinking about in the middle of a storm. We’re just trying to get through it, or out of it, or away from it. During difficult storms in life, it is easy to become so focused on the problem – whatever is causing the storm that we miss what is happening in the midst of it.

During this six-week sermon series based on Max Lucado’s Bible Study entitled, “You Are Never Alone”; which is based on six of Jesus’ miracles in the Gospel of John that we studied together for six weeks in January and February. We began with Jesus turning water into wine. Last week, Jesus healed the man who couldn’t walk. This weekend, Jesus stills a storm on the Sea of Galilee.

When Jesus delivers the disciples from a raging storm, it teaches us two things: 1) Jesus is with us in the storm, and 2) he knows how to get us out of it.

Both truths are critical when enduring a storm. Hardship blinds us, making it difficult for us to see a way out or experience the presence of Christ.

Jesus can help us solve our problems. But he also wants us to know he is with us in the midst of them, not only when they are over.

Think about your closest relationship. It might be with a spouse, a parent, or a close friend. What has made you closer over the years? What has made your relationship last this long? Chances are you have both endured a storm together and made it out the other side. Did

the storm weaken or strengthen your relationship? If you didn't abandon each other in the midst of the storm, it probably strengthened your relationship.

It's the same with Christ. He is not just there to be your problem-solver. He does not only show up in the rainbow or the light at the end of the dark valley. He is there to weather the storm with you as you're going through it. Jesus is there to walk with you through the darkest valley. Storms strengthen relationships. Jesus is always with us, especially during storms.

Ask yourself where Jesus might be in your storm. Have sensed his presence lately? Or have you been too focused on the problem? Jesus can help you out of your storm. But he also wants you to know you are never alone in the midst of it.

Some questions to think about. When you're going through a difficult time, are you a glass-half-full or a glass-half-empty kind of person? When you're going through a stormy season in life, where do you tend to turn for comfort?

So that this sermon doesn't get too heavy, I'm sharing with you a light-hearted story of staying ahead of a storm that happened to us last month on our way to Florida. There are lessons to be learned before we return to the text.

Staying ahead of a storm takes a little bit of planning. We had planned on leaving very early on Saturday morning, picking up Rachel's family in New Albany, and then stay overnight in Macon, Georgia. According to the weather maps, the storm was going to hit on Saturday night in the South, making it impossible to stay overnight at Danette's brother's house in North Carolina.

So, we took the western route down 75, avoiding most of the mountains, and made our destination south of Atlanta which was at the southern edge of the storm. On Sunday morning,

we enjoyed sunshine and temperatures rising into the 60's as we continued south. Micah sent us a video of our driveway buried in snow.

When we travel, we have assigned seating in our minivan. Rachel and I are the pilots, switching back and forth in the front seats as we take turns driving. Andy and Danette are the engineers sitting in the two middle seats, providing information to the pilots and supporting the two gunners in the backseat, 8 and 6 years old, playing video games or watching a movie. It is a well-planned and experienced traveling team that kept us ahead of the storm.

So, it was ironic that at Disney Hollywood Studios when the 6 of us boarded the Millennium Falcon Smugglers Run, they asked for 2 pilots, 2 engineers, and 2 gunners. The gunners were very excited. Rachel and I looked at one another and said, "We're the pilots".

The problem with piloting the Falcon is that one pilot controls going left and right, and I controlled going up and down. After several crashes and my 35-year old's continuous high pitch screaming like I hadn't heard in a very long time, we finally completed the smuggler's run.

It was intense. The drive down was easier. I didn't go back to the parks the rest of the week. I read, I wrote, I sat in the jacuzzi, and got sunburned.

Obviously, that's a very light-hearted story of weathering a storm. At that time, Marti Stephan's family was in the middle of a very serious storm. Marti's son, Neil, sick with Covid, had been on a respirator for over a week. I know that the longer a person is on a respirator, the less chance that person has of surviving. Neil, Marti, and their family were in our prayers.

John 6:16-20 . . . <sup>16</sup>When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, <sup>17</sup>got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to

them. <sup>18</sup>The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. <sup>19</sup>When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. <sup>20</sup>But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

We don't always see or feel the presence of Jesus until we are well into the storm. We are afraid, even though he's telling us not to be afraid.

Like the disciples on the Sea of Galilee, there are times when we find ourselves with no choice but to ride out the storm. The money simply doesn't appear. The relationship doesn't get righted. The illness doesn't just go away. At such times, the only way out of the storm is through it.

I think that's why Jesus gives us this miracle on the Sea of Galilee. He shows us that he is with the disciples as they rode out the storm. In the same way, we can know Jesus is with us as we ride out our storms.

How do you typically weather the storms in your life? What are your coping mechanisms for hard times? Are they effective? I've learned over the years that I'm way better at helping others ride out their storms than I am at riding out my own storms. I have much more patience when helping others than I have with my own storms. I think that's true of many of us.

During our storms, it's also tempting to view the Bible as a book that contains magical solutions to problems. But if you look closely, there are fewer solutions than there are suggestions for getting through the hard times. The point of our faith isn't to use it to avoid pain but rather to use it as a help during pain.

We see this clearly in the Book of Psalms, which is a collection of poems that not only praise God but also express the writers' anguish, pain, and confusion. The Psalms beautifully depict what it's like to be in the middle of a storm.

Psalm 42:1-5, 9-11 . . . <sup>1</sup>As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. <sup>2</sup>My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? <sup>3</sup>My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, "Where is your God?" <sup>4</sup>These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. <sup>5</sup>Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help . . . <sup>9</sup>I say to God, my rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I walk about mournfully because the enemy oppresses me?" <sup>10</sup>As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me continually, "Where is your God?" <sup>11</sup>Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

The psalmist asks a lot of questions. Of these questions, which have you asked during a storm?

- When can I go and meet with God?
- Where is your God?
- Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?
- Why have you forgotten me?
- Why must I go about mourning?

The psalmist is able to break through the pain. He is able to have hope and praise God even in the midst of his terrible storm and pain.

“I go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng”.

“Put your hope in God, for I will praise him, my Savior and my God”.

It’s an emotional roller coaster ride when we’re in the midst of a storm. We join with the psalmist in going from asking where God is to “put your hope in God, for I will praise him, my Savior and my God”.

Jesus is with us in the storm, and he knows how to help me get out of it.

It is that faith that gives us the peace of God which passes all our understanding and keeps our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

#755 – Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me