

Jesus' disciples thought they were in for a quick boat trip to the ride to introduce new people to Jesus but all of a sudden, they were swamped! Water washed over the sides. The sail threatened to rip off the mast. As the sky darkened and the wind howled, the boat climbed a wave only to drop into a trough. Stomachs were queasy, they were soaked to the bone, and they became more certain that death was near.

When my Dad was in Vietnam, we lived in Kansas City for a year. Because my brother was and sisters were in different schools, and there were no buses, Mom had to pick them up each day and I had to walk about a mile and a half to our rented home. One afternoon, I was about halfway home and the tornado sirens started wailing. I could see about 10 miles to the west a funnel cloud starting to descend for a bank of black clouds. As I watched I heard a horn honk and my mom pulled up with a car full of siblings and said, "Get in quick." We pulled into our garage just as the hail started, and the wind started howling. That was the closest I have ever been to being trapped in a storm with nowhere to hide. Maybe you have had similar moments.

Have you had similar moments? Have you ever been surrounded by a terrible storm and have no place to hide? And what about the many storms of life that have nothing to do with weather? Like an unrewarding vocation, an illness that is more severe than you hoped, a lost marriage, a lost loved one, or the barrage of negative voices and attacks on our culture, community, or faith? Isn't our assumption "If I get in boat with Jesus, there will be no storms?" Doesn't that sound oh so familiar? Bad things aren't supposed to happen to good people, right? And when they do, don't we feel as if Jesus is asleep or has let us down? When the wind howls and storms rage around us we are tempted to feel alone in our fear.

Job is a story of a man who was faithful to God and his family. He was powerful, successful, wealthy, and to all appearances appeared to be a really good man. Suddenly he lost everyone and everything that was a blessing in his life. He lost his wife, his children, his wealth, his flocks, his crops and all his hired hands. The book of Job deals with the question "why did this happen when Job was such a good and righteous man?" That is the ultimate question of life.

The question is debated as Job takes the form of a trial. Job was questioned about his guilt and asked over and over again "What did you do wrong?" It only made sense that if he was punished so severely he must have somehow betrayed God. He was challenged. He was accused. He was asked to defend himself. And then God was put on trial and asked "how could you, a loving God, allow this to happen? Job is so realistic in its wrestling with pain and disaster. We can relate and struggle daily with many of the same questions and fears. Job had faith. He was good. This should not have happened. Finally in exasperation Job cries out to God "what is up? What did I do wrong?" He was confused and assumed God had let him down.

And of the whirlwind of turmoil) came God's voice saying firmly "Who do you think you

are talking to? Were you there when I created a galaxies and planets or mountains and oceans? Do you have a clue how I am able to confine oceans or control the motion of planets? How could you even wonder at my concern or power?" I AM in control!

A similar moment was revisited in our Gospel. Jesus appeared to be asleep in a boat during a raging storm and the disciples fear for their lives. They woke him up and cried out "why is this happening? Are you going to let us die?" But Jesus was resting for a more important storm yet to come, for the waves on Galilee were nothing compared to the crucifixion he would face on Calvary! He was in control more than it appeared, but this turned into a wonderful teaching moment his disciples would never forget.

In the midst of a raging storm Jesus stood and cried to wind and wave, "Enough. Stop. Settle down!" And the winds ceased, and the sea calmed. In midst of a storm God's voice stronger and his presence more powerful than anything that can bring death our way. The same word that authored creation now spoke to the same creation that is under his control. And the word was "Peace!" Jesus acted, not to give in to his disciples but to use that moment to announce who he is! For this was a time when faith would cling to every word – Jesus used it to good advantage and the disciples would never forget that no matter what raged around them, God's loving presence would always be in control and would keep them safe!

As you think about God coming to Job out of a whirlwind and Jesus using a terrible storm on the sea to announce his presence and bring peace, consider Good Friday.

What greater storm has the world ever seen? What darker disappointment has ever been faced when it seemed all was lost? And yet without that storm there could be no Easter, and in that storm God's love was revealed in all of its powerful grace.

There was once a time when science (and the greatest theologians) taught the earth was the center of universe. We think that is so silly, now. Yet we similarly assume that whatever I want, need, or deserve should be given by God, as if the world revolves around me! Be honest. Don't we assume life should be without mountains to climb or valleys to be trapped in! No storms, right! The reality is no one gets through life without storms. It is how we survive the storms that is key. And the key that unlocks the answer is faith.

Remember Genesis? The WORD created out of watery chaos saying, "It is good!" And God rested, just as Jesus rested in the midst of that storm on Galilee. And then Jesus raised his voice, and his WORD stilled a chaotic creation, bringing peace! It was a repeat of those first words in Genesis. That event was powerful all by itself, as God always in control and can take care of anything. But it was also prophetic in anticipation of Jesus' sleep in tomb and Word of victory over darkest storm of all (his battle with Satan and death, followed by the sweet peace of Easter!) And doesn't Easter's dawn open our eyes to a new blessing which comes only after a storm? Jesus took disciples out in the boat, knowing they would grow. He was waiting to teach them what it meant to live by faith.

Everyone wants clear sailing and to bask in the sun, but it is easy to forget God on the beach. Everyone hates storms, and yet that is when we run to God. If we remember God is with us even in storms, why would we forget he is with us in sunny days as well, so that when storms do arise, our first reaction is not one of panic. I remember talking with a mom whose child struggled with an uncertain future. She talked about peace that came upon her when she knew there was nothing she could do and put it in God's hands. With my own surgery I found what I have heard from many others. When we put the storm in God's hands, there always comes peace!

When our boat is swamped and we can't do it alone, it is good to remember God isn't asleep but has been there all along! Surviving storms changes perspective on all life! It is easy to cry out, "God, don't you care that we are dying" □ And YES! That is precise nature of Jesus victory over greatest storm of all called death. Even in the tomb we discover God has been in that boat all along so that with Him, we will live! Because his disciples got in the boat their lives changed – so it is for us!

We assume storms are bad, but they can also be creatively good! For sometimes that is the only time we remember who has been with us in the boat all along! God's love was revealed as Jesus rode out the toughest storm of all --- crucifixion, death, and power of hell! All to bring us to safe harbor and an eternal peace.

In words of Psalm 107, "you stilled the storm to a whisper and silenced the waves of the sea." In other words: *PEACE! BE STILL! HAVE FAITH* TWSeeber