

23. Perfect storm

February 27, 2011

At the beginning of our church, several of us joined with other Calvary Chapels to take a cruise to Alaska. It was a great deal of fun. One night we were coming back from Ketchikan through the Inside Passage. Absolutely beautiful creation of our very creative God!

As the ship went through the Passage, it is not unusual for that big ship to tilt side to side because of the waves from both sides of the mountains. That particular evening we were having dinner in a restaurant at the stern of the ship which had a big picture window that stood about two stories tall. It allowed me to see both sides of the mountains of the Inside Passage.

As I was eating, I could see our ship tilting side to side and the whole restaurant was swinging... I didn't feel very good. So I unloaded my dinner on pastor Jack Laverty's plate. No, just kidding. But I must tell you that it was a unique feeling.

During that cruise we didn't experience a storm. But the disciples of Jesus did. Boy, did they. Even though many of them were fishermen all their lives, they had a hard time. We, too, have faced or are facing right now or will face the storms of our lives. As believers of Jesus Christ, we know and can believe that the Lord Jesus would come to our rescue.

To understand the complete picture of this situation, we must refer to the other Gospels, such as Matthew 14:22-33 and Mark 6:45-52. We will go back and forth among these three Books. So mark Mark and Matthew. Get it "Mark Mark?" Never mind, I get entertained easily.

A. FORCEFUL CORONATION

John 6:14-15 Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." 15 Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

Right after Jesus fed 5000 men plus their women and children with five loaves of barley bread and two small sardines, the people were stoked. Jesus' approval ratings were off the chart. Any politician would love to have that. People were so jazzed and thrilled. They wanted Him to be their king for more free fish tacos of Jewish version.

I am sure that the disciples were thinking, "Nice. When Jesus becomes a king of Israel, we will be His cabinet members." Judas probably was thinking about being a treasurer of the kingdom. They all were daydreaming about being rich and famous and powerful very soon.

But Jesus refused to further His kingdom this way. Instead, He departed again to a mountain by Himself alone. Jesus was more interested in being with His Father in heaven than in hearing the applause of the carnal crowd.

B. NOT ACCORDING TO OUR PLAN

John 6:16-17 Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them.

Mark picked up the little details that John didn't include.

Mark 6:45 Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away.

The disciples wanted to hang around with the group of 5000 men plus to bask in the glory as if it was their own, but the Lord Jesus told them, actually made them get into the boat.

Isn't that the life? You set an agenda. You've got it all planned out and then the Lord brings in a totally different circumstance and takes you to a whole new direction. You didn't plan it and you are not even liking it. Have you ever been there? Of course, we all have.

Why did Jesus do this to His disciples? You see, the feeding the 5000 was the lesson, but the boat ride in the storm was the examination after the lesson. Bummer, huh?

C. PERFECT STORM

John 6:18 Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing.

Everybody in this room knows what it's like to have waves of worries rise up, enveloped by the darkness of isolation and fear just like the disciples were experiencing. We all have storms of life. James called them various trials in chapter one. Then he said that we should count it all joy. Uh-huh, yeah, right!

I really hate to admit this: we learn best when we go through difficulties in our lives. When everything is going well, we tend not to rely on our Lord. However, when the things start to fly in every which way but the direction we want, we cry out to the Lord in prayers and cling onto Him for His help. We learn to trust Him and walk close to Him.

Sometimes we are caught in a storm because we have disobeyed the Lord. Jonah is a good example. Remember him, the runaway prophet who ended up in a fish's stomach because of his disobedience to the Lord and made the first amphibious landing on a shore in the Bible with seaweeds wrapped around his head like a California Roll?

But sometimes the storm comes because we have obeyed the Lord. Like it happened to Job and these disciples. Jesus made them to get into the boat and now they were facing the storm.

Did they not do what Jesus told them to do? Yes, they did. Were they not in His will? Yes, they were. Why then, does the Lord give them a storm? A great question, but I cannot answer you why, because I don't know. But I do know one thing clearly. He is not a sadistic God who enjoys watching His followers squirming under the pressure that was given by Him.

Even if you are a dedicated child of God, a perfect storm still comes your way to shape you, to mold you and to transform you into the image of Jesus.

You can make your plans and you should. You can set your agenda and you should. But just understand that if you write the script of your life, God always reserves the editing rights and final say – yes, He is the Final Authority.

D. HE PRAYS, HE SEES, AND HE COMES

John 6:19-21 So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. 20 But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21 Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.

The Sea of Galilee is 7.7 miles wide and 12.9 miles long and it is 715 feet below sea level. It is located in the northern part of Israel. When the cool currents rush down from Mt. Hermon which is 9200 feet collide with the warm air that comes from the Mediterranean Sea right in the middle of this Sea. That produces violent winds without warning that causes high waves on this seemingly peaceful lake.

Since they were three or four miles into the sea, that means that they were right in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, at night. Not a very good situation, I might add.

The majority of people, including many Christians think that each individual is in charge of one's life. I don't have a problem with unbelievers, because until they become born-again Christians, they will continue in their way of thinking even though they are completely wrong. However, for the born-again believers, you must come to the realization that you are NOT in charge of your own lives, rather it is the Lord Jesus. The sooner you realize it and accept the fact, the sooner you get to enjoy His guidance and peace in your life.

There are three things our Lord Jesus does for us during our perfect storm:

1) He prays for us

In v15, it says, "He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone." What did He do up in the mountain throughout the night while His disciples were struggling in the sea against that miserable storm?

Matthew 14:23a And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray.

I wouldn't be one bit surprised if Jesus was praying for His disciples from the mountain top because we find Him praying for His disciples throughout the Gospels. He was interceding for them as He IS interceding for us right now.

Hebrews 7:25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Did you get that? Jesus is praying for you right now. Doesn't that make you feel better? I don't know about you, but when I hear some of you guys come to me and say, "Hey, the Lord laid in my heart that I should pray for you. So I've been praying for you." That just lifts me up and encourages me. Somebody is praying for me to the Lord. That is good. But this is even better. My Savior and Lord Jesus Christ is praying for me and interceding for me from the right hand of the Father in heaven. Jesus totally rocks, don't you think?

2) He sees

Again, Mark fills in more details than John for us.

Mark 6:47-48 Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. 48 Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by.

At night, from the mountain Jesus saw His disciples straining at rowing 4 miles away. As I grow older, my eyesight is getting worse. Without my glasses, I cannot see what

a person looks like if that person is standing further than 500 feet. But Jesus with His divine omniscient capability, He sees all and knows all.

I mentioned Job. I like what Job said in chapter 23:

Job 23:8-10 Look, I go forward, but He is not there, And backward, but I cannot perceive Him; 9 When He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; When He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him. 10 But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.

We may have that Green Valley Moment every 10 minutes, but our Lord God knows all things, and sees all things. Remember a memory verse from the Book of Hebrews?

Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

3) He comes

Please go back to Mark 6:48:

Mark 6:48 Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by.

I am not even going to make a big deal of Jesus walking on water. After all, He is God and nothing is impossible with Him.

The important point is that He came to them at the fourth watch of the night. What time would that be? The Jewish people used to divide a night into four sections: the first watch from 6 pm till 9 pm, the second watch from 9 pm till 12 am, the third watch from 12 am till 3 am, and the fourth watch from 3 am till 6 am.

In other words, if the disciples left the mountain where they witnessed Jesus feeding of the 5000 around the sunset, they have been in the sea straining at rowing for 8-10 hours by now. Why didn't Jesus come earlier? I don't know, but in His infinite wisdom, He chose that time to come to them.

E. GOD IS IN CHARGE

Listen, if God has you in a storm in the middle of the night; you've been straining at rowing and just trying to survive against wave after wave of adversity; you are wondering when the Lord is going to come to rescue, rest assure, HE PRAYS FOR YOU; HE SEES YOU; HE COMES TO YOU.

The storms of trials are different. Some are big; some are small; some are physical; some are emotional or spiritual. Some are brief; or enduring and long. But there is one thing in common. It is not more than we can handle and they are allowed by the Lord.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

F. A VERY SMART THING FROM THE DISCIPLE

Now the disciples did something very smart in v21 of John 6:

John 6:21 Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.

Whenever you face a storm of your life, let Jesus in. No matter how strong that storm might be, it will not sink Jesus as long as you stay with Him. If you choose to do it in your own way, you are on your own.

For those who don't have Jesus as the Savior and Lord in your heart, isn't it about time for you to let Jesus into your life? Haven't you done enough damage in your life without Jesus in charge of your life? If you think, "No, thanks. I am doing just fine. I've got my plans for next thirty years; everything is good; I am fit and well to do, thank you very much." Listen buckaroo, you haven't been in the perfect storm and it is coming. While you are in that storm, you don't want to be in that boat of yours without Jesus.

If you'd like to invite Him into your life, I am going to give you a chance to do it in a few short minutes.

G. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Be prepared for God's examination of our faith after a victory in our life.
- 2) Even if we are dedicated children of God, a perfect storm still comes our way to shape us, to mold us and to transform us into the image of Jesus.
- 3) Just understand that if we write the script of our life, God always reserves the editing rights and final say – yes, He is the Final Authority.
- 4) The sooner we accept and obey the fact that we are not in charge of our lives but the Lord, the sooner we will get His peace in us.
- 5) During the storm of our life, our Lord Jesus prays for us, sees us, and comes to rescue us in His time.