

42. Perfecting storm

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The Eden Project is a visitor attraction in Cornwall, England. Inside the buildings are plants that are collected from many diverse climates and environments. The largest of the two domes simulates a Rainforest environment and the second, a Mediterranean environment. It is a human attempt of a perfect environment like the original Garden of Eden.

The original Eden didn't end well purely because of the inhabitants, Adam and Eve, but this Eden Project is not doing well because of the designers. What could possibly go wrong where there is no diseases or pollution?

The smart people who designed and built realized that something was not right with the trees. The leaves on the big trees were beginning to wilt and the branches were drooping. After close examination by the tree expert, he told them, "Your problem is that there is no wind in this environment. It's the wind that pushes and moves the tree fibers forcing the nutrients and moisture to be drawn up from the ground. Trees need the stress of the wind or they won't thrive!"

All of us have gone through, are going through, and will go through our share of life's storms. If you are born-again Christians, you go through them, because the Lord allows them in our lives. The Lord is not allowing it, because He is a sadistic divine; rather He is perfecting us to be more like His Son Jesus Christ, because He is a loving and caring God.

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 and chips.

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 don't even like 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 pop quiz after the lesson. Bummer, huh?

C. PERFECTING 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 here. 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, not in a cozy and perfect condition like the Eden Project. 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 on to 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 with seaweeds wrapped around his head like a California Roll?

But sometimes the storm comes because we have obeyed the Lord. Like what 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. Even if you are a dedicated child of God and doing the will of God every day, that perfecting storm still comes to you 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 has 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.

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, 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 perfecting 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? for the answer, let's go to Matthew 14:

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. 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. And He does the same for all of you. Jesus totally rocks, don't you think?

2) He sees

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

Mark 6:47-48a Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. 48a Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them.

At night, from the mountain, Jesus saw His disciples straining at rowing 4 miles away. As I am getting older, my eyesight is getting worse. Without my glasses, I cannot see what a person looks like if that person is standing further than 100 feet. But Jesus, with His divine omniscient capability, He sees all and knows all. He doesn't need no stinking night vision goggles.

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 6:48b:

Mark 6:48b 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 about 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.

The Lord Jesus could have come over to them at the beginning of the storm, but He waited until there was absolutely no way that anyone could do anything to bail themselves out. This applies in our lives. Yes, God can bail us out of trials and tests of our lives anytime He wants. But He waits until we have absolutely no way to turn to others. Then He steps in. In that way, no one can take credit other than our God.

E. PETER WALKING ON WATER

Matthew 14:25-33 Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. 26 And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." 28 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." 29 So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" 31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

The apostle John skipped this story, but Matthew and Mark didn't. When Jesus was walking on the water, why didn't the disciples recognize Him as their Lord Jesus? Because they were not looking for Jesus. Their thoughts were preoccupied with something other than Jesus. This applies to us as well. Many people tell me that they don't hear from God. What is the reason? Because they are expecting something else that would meet their expectations, such as a booming voice from heaven, an instruction written on the sky, an angel sent by God to tell them what to do, etc. God speaks through the Word of God, the Bible. God speaks to us through godly advices from godly people. We choose not to hear Him, because He doesn't speak to us in the way we expect as the disciples didn't recognize Him as Jesus, because they didn't expect Him.

How could Peter walk on water? He was not walking on the surface of the water, rather he was walking on the Word of Jesus in faith. The one word "Come" that came out of the mouth of Jesus was literally supporting the weight of Peter.

When the difficulties of our lives make such a boisterous storm around us, it is not that difficult to take our eyes off our Master Jesus and look at the situation. The problem with that is the situation goes from bad to worse. Do you know why? Because our faith in God gets pushed out of the equation. Like in Peter's case, as his doubt steps into his mind, the faith steps out. They are mutually exclusive and cannot coexist.

Speaking of coexist, I am going to get off the subject to the sideline for a couple of minutes. Some of you may wonder if we, Calvary Chapel, are going to work with other denominations or other religions for good humanitarian effort. Yes and NO! There are some churches and denominations that we would be happy to work with,

but not everyone of them, certainly not another faith, because we DO NOT serve the same Jesus. If we do it, we would be unequally yoked by mixing our faith in Jesus with the devil. We will work through solid Christian humanitarian organizations, like Samaritan's Purse, etc.

This word translated 'doubt' carries the meaning of "standing uncertainly at two ways." Peter started out with great faith, but ended up with little faith, because he saw two ways instead of the one solid way of Jesus.

What was the motive of Peter walking on the water? Was it to show off to his buddies? Maybe. I'd rather think that Peter wanted to be close to Jesus. That is why he did what no other human could.

Now, the disciples of Jesus have a new point of view regarding Jesus: "*Truly You are the Son of God.*" That is the right point of view, but their thought didn't last long.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Be prepared for God's examination of our faith after a spiritual victory in our life.
- 2) Even if we are dedicated children of God, a perfecting 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.