

## ***Storm Warning***

Welcome back to Walking with Christ.

Bad things happen to all of us. But have you noticed, we all respond differently? How do you typically react when trouble hits your life? Do you panic? Worry? Become unemotional and focus on “fixing things”? Or feel desperate and depressed? Maybe you feel numb in a crisis, become hyperactive, or try to distract yourself with food, alcohol, entertainment, the internet or shopping. Do you talk to friends or tend to isolate yourself? Does prayer suddenly take on new meaning, or do you ask others for help? What do *you* do?



### ***Fellowship***

1. There are as many forms of reaction during stress as there are people! How do you respond to the storms of life?



### ***Discipleship***

If there's one thing we can count on in life, it's that storms will come! A dialogue between a doctor and patient illustrates a form of stress.

Doctor to patient: “I have bad news and worse news.”

Patient: “So let's have it.”

Doctor: “The bad news is that you only have 24 hours to live.”

Patient: “I can't imagine what could be worse than that!”

Doctor: “I forgot to tell you yesterday.”

As funny as that may sound, it's not so funny when a storm enters **our** lives. Jesus was a master at turning every day examples into teaching opportunities...and storms were a common illustration. Turn with me to our text for today found in Mark 4:35-41, and let's read it together.

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Notice in verse 35 that Jesus told the disciples they **would** be going to the other side. He’s given them His word that they would get there! The purpose was clear and Jesus was with them. But even those facts weren’t enough to keep the storms from coming or their faith from deserting them. But before we judge them too harshly, how often have we done the same thing? We’ve been given a clear purpose too! We are traveling through life and **will** reach the other side; Jesus has promised us that we have a destiny and safe harbor awaiting us. But in the meantime, even though He is with us every step of the way, storms will come. By the way, this storm was of hurricane proportions, as ours may be. We, too, fear and wonder if we are in danger of capsizing. So now that we know what’s going on and can relate to the disciples a bit, let’s look with them where Jesus was in verse 38! Calm, cool and collected...sleeping with His head on a pillow in the back of the boat. He hadn’t left them, but the fact that He wasn’t up front, wringing His hands and feeling as desperate as they were, left them wondering if He cared. How often does my panic sound like that of the disciples’: “Lord, don’t you care that I’m about to die?” Maybe your cries of desperation have included: “How could you allow me to get cancer when I have 2 young children who need me?? Can’t you see that I’m about to lose my job and don’t know how I’ll pay the rent? Don’t you care that my marriage is in shambles and I feel so alone?” Yes, storms come unexpectedly and can be deadly, challenging our faith that we thought was so strong. Storms reveal the truth of what we’re really made of. Isn’t it interesting, that the paragraph **before this story** is the parable of the mustard seed!? The disciples had just received the verbal point from Jesus that they needed faith as small as a mustard seed...but Jesus wanted to follow up the talk with a real-life lesson! The disciples may have even convinced themselves that they were **already** full of faith...that the lesson **must** have been for the others. But storms blow off all that covers the truth, and Jesus calls them to account in verse 40. “Why are you frightened? Do you still have no faith?” Faith was the issue. They didn’t believe God’s purpose could prevail through the storm they were facing. They thought the raging waters and heavy winds might overpower Jesus too! But Jesus knows that it’s the storms of life, rather than the peaceful days, that grow the muscles of our faith and spirit.

In 1982, two Soviet cosmonauts returned to the earth after 211 days in space. They suffered from dizziness, high pulse rates, and heart palpitations. They couldn’t walk for a week, and after 30 days, they were still undergoing therapy for atrophied muscles and weakened hearts.

At zero gravity, the muscles of the body begin to waste away because there is no resistance. To counteract this, the Soviets prescribed a vigorous exercise program for the cosmonauts. They invented the “penguin suit,” a running suit laced with elastic bands. It resists every move the cosmonauts make, forcing them to exert their strength. The regimen works! We often long dreamily for days without difficulty, but God knows better. The easier our life, the weaker our spiritual fiber...for strength of any kind grows only by exertion.

Spurgeon said, “Many men owe the grandeur of their lives to their tremendous difficulties.”

What was the reaction of the disciples when faced with the reality of the POWER of God’s ability to control the storm? Verse 41 says that they feared “exceedingly”! **Jesus** instilled more fear and awe than the power of the hurricane winds! He proved more powerful than even the worst of storms, silencing it with two words!

Some time ago I saw a picture of an old burned-out mountain shack. All that remained was the chimney...the charred debris of what had been that family’s sole possession. In front of this destroyed home stood an old grandfather dressed only in his underclothes, with a small boy clutching a pair of patched overalls. It was evident that the child was crying. Beneath the picture were the words which the artist felt the old man was speaking to the boy. They were simple words, yet they presented a profound theology and philosophy of life: “Hush child, God isn’t dead!”

That vivid picture of that burned-out mountain shack, the old man, and the weeping child all combine to paint a picture of seeming tragedy. But during the direst of human circumstances, God is able to show His exceedingly great power! Initially, the disciples wanted to be anywhere but in the middle of the storm. But I think that later as they looked back on the high points of their lives with Jesus, they wouldn’t have traded it for anything.

Pastor Sangster told of an experience in his youth when he went on a vacation with some friends. Within a short time he had spent all the funds given him for the trip, so he wrote home for more. His father, thinking he should teach his son the value of money, did not respond to the request. Sangster’s companions wondered why he had been turned down and suggested several reasons. But young William said to them, “I’ll wait till I get home, and my dad will tell me himself.”

Life holds so many unanswered questions, yet many of the answers will have to wait until we get to heaven. This calls for faith that we are not alone, that God is in control, that He is more powerful than our storm, and when He’s subdued everything under His feet...we will be fully satisfied.

2. Read John 16:33. Why does Jesus say He is telling them these things?
3. What does He promise them?

What is the possible attitude He offers us?

4. Re-read Mark 4:35-41. Why do you think the disciples questioned Christ's care for them (v. 38)? Would you have done the same thing?
5. Do you feel a lack of God's love when you experience life's storms?
6. What did his disciples learn about Jesus?
7. If we know that Jesus has ultimate authority, why is it hard to trust him when painful events occur?



## *Ministry*

8. What current situation is challenging your trust right now?
9. The disciples didn't face this storm alone. They could have been a positive influence on each other to trust God's plan. How can you encourage one another that you are not alone? How can you boost each other's faith?



## *Evangelism*

10. Storms of life are great opportunities to share how to obtain true peace. Who do you know who is going through hardship that you can pray for and encourage? Write down each name mentioned and join forces in praying them towards our true "Refuge".



## *Worship*

11. Choose a verse from one we've read today, or choose another that has encouraged you during a trial. Memorize it for next week and have it ready for the next storm!