

Jesus and Life's Storms

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[0:00] I would like you to take your Bibles this morning and turn in them to John chapter 6.

! Yesterday as I finished the sermon that I preached for my mother's memorial, I summarized! I summarized a pastor's responsibility in the pulpit.

It's not a very complicated job in that a pastor really has the responsibility of making much of Jesus and putting people on the spot of saying yes or no to God.

I trust that as you take your Word in hand and follow, as we study in John chapter 6, that you will also multitask in praying that the Word of God would have free course and that it would make an impact on your life and that you would leave here this morning if you don't know Christ, that you would leave here knowing Him and believing in Him for eternal life. That's one.

Another thing is this, is if you are here and you know Christ, I trust that you leave here this morning with a greater affection and a delight in Him and thinking to yourself, the day is coming that I'm going to see Him face to face. That's going to be good.

[1:31] I want you to turn in your body. You're in John. Can you multitask? Put a finger in John chapter 6 and go to a verse that kind of is a driving thought behind what we're going to study.

Turn to 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 8. If I were to...well, there are a number of verses that are important to me, so I'll get in trouble with that one. But it's probably a verse that in the last 10 years has been one of the things that has driven me forward in my growth with loving Christ. It's this passage. 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 8, it says, though you have not seen Him...stop just for a moment. Hey, look at me. Can you love somebody you don't know? Come on. Can you really love somebody you don't know? Let me just throw out a couple names and just see if they really resonate with your soul. Genghis Khan. Oh, yeah. Warm fuzzies for him. You know, it's like, Julius Caesar, huh? No, no. Face it, we can't love somebody we don't know.

And here is Peter saying, though you have not seen Him, you love Him. What that undeniably points to is that Peter recognized that believers, you and me today, can know Him. And how do we end up knowing Jesus? How do we end up genuinely, truly loving Him? It is by discovering the beauty and the glory of Christ in the Scriptures with the enabling of the Holy Spirit. Can you kind of track that in your mind? How is it that we grow in loving Christ? It is by discovering the beauty and the glory of Christ in the Scriptures with the enabling of the Holy Spirit. Hey, listen. If the Holy Spirit is not helping you to grow in your affection for the Lord Jesus Christ, it's not going to take place. More information apart from the enabling of the Spirit of God is just more information.

And so if you're sitting here this morning and you do not have a love for the Lord Jesus Christ, there is something deeply wrong. And I pray that the preaching of the Word of God this morning brings you to the point of saying, I desperately need God to do a work in my heart.

And I trust that this morning that our study, go back now if you would to John chapter 6, ends up really giving to you just a welling sense of, man, I can't believe the Jesus that loves me and that is my Savior and that someday I am going to see face to face. You know, it's like, wow.

[4:43] I hate it. I have to talk about my mom. She's with the Lord. But I remember about two weeks ago, mom had about three or four dips where we thought she was going to die and she didn't and then she did. But I remember about two weeks ago, maybe three weeks ago, she had a picture of dad hanging there where she was and she said, you know what, I want to cross up there right next to dad.

So that the first thing I see is Jesus and the second thing I see is dad, okay? I want it to be that way in my life, right? The first thing I think about is Jesus. Everything else is second.

And I trust that part of our study this morning will give to you a growing affection for the Lord Jesus that you will have a longing to see Him face to face, right? Let me have you look now with me to the passage beginning there in verse 16.

When evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, got into the boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark and Jesus had not yet come to them.

The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. [6:02] But He said to them, it is I. Do not be afraid. Then they were glad to take Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. One of the things that I have worked at in our studies in the book of John is that for the most part, I have kept the cross-references primarily within the book itself.

And I don't think that is a necessary discipline for every time a pastor preaches. But in my work in the book of John, I've wanted to stay kind of focused in that and limit it.

But we're going to step beyond that this morning in particular, and we're going to rely upon the synoptics because there are details that I think really help us appreciate what was going on in this seemingly kind of minor little picture in the ministry that Christ had to His disciples.

So as we take up this passage, let's recognize, first of all, supreme protection. Not immediately on the face of it. And you might be thinking that the protection that I am referencing really is what happened in the storm, and that's not the case.

Our text, beginning there in verse 16, is rather innocent on the face of it. And if we're not paying attention to the context, and we don't kind of begin to think outside of this passage itself and recognize both the hearts of the disciples and things we find elsewhere, we probably just gloss over and move on.

[7:34] And it tells us there on the passage that when evening came, the disciples got in the sea in the boat, and they launched out across the Sea of Galilee, actually a large lake.

But we need to ask ourselves a question, why? Why did they do that? We do get some idea from John chapter 6, verse 14 and 15, so let's kind of go back a little bit and see where that takes us.

When the people saw the sign that He had done, they said, this is indeed the prophet who has come into the world. Perceiving then that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by Himself.

You see, what had happened, and it's important for us to recognize, is that after Jesus had performed the miracle in turning five loaves and two little fishes into a meal for probably 20,000 people, the people were very impressed with this.

This was a significant miracle, and it's one that they could kind of relate to personally. And it, whoa, I mean, how many of you like to have free food for the rest of your life, never worry about dinner, or how many of you have ever called up your wife at lunchtime and said, hey, what's for supper?

[8:54] Jesus is taking care of it. It's all right. You know what I mean? Hey, they liked the idea of having everything cared for, and they were pressing, and they were really kind of fired up to get Jesus to be their king.

Now, finger in John, turn back to Matthew chapter 14. Matthew chapter 14 gives us a little further information that colors our understanding of what we see there in John chapter 6, verse 16.

In verse 22 and 23, let me read it to you. Immediately, he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side while he dismissed the crowd.

And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. I want you to recognize that, for one, Jesus actually forced his disciples to leave the environment in which everything was just completely enthusiastic in its endorsement and approval of Jesus, and at least what he had done on the surface.

He sent the disciples away. He made them go. Not only did he make the disciples go, but he dismissed himself from the crowd, and he removed himself to a distant place and stepped away from them and departed from the environment where the temptation and the enthusiasm of the moment, everybody, we want you to be our king.

[10:29] He got out of that situation. I want you to recognize that in dismissing the crowd, Jesus protected his mission and his own heart from being sidetracked by his temporary approval rating from the ministry and the mission that his father had sent him to accomplish.

How many of you like when people like you? Huh? Huh? On the very face of it, we like compliments, but even more than that, we take great comfort when people appreciate what we're doing and let us know how important we are.

And, you know, you have to stop and realize that it wasn't just Jesus that was affected by the attitudes of the crowd, and Jesus had the wisdom and heart of his father to know what he was there doing.

I want you to recognize that the disciples, without question, must have been carried away a little bit by kingdom-itis. What do I mean by kingdom-itis? Think with me.

The disciples, if you kind of would track a little later in the book of John and actually in the synoptic gospels, do you remember what their standard arguments and disputes were about?

[11:45] It was about who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom. Hey, the day is coming when Jesus is going to be on the throne, and I'm going to be his right-hand man, and when I walk in the room, everybody's going to stand up and say, yeah, Tim, what does Jesus want?

You know, it's like, huh, really important person. I'm close to Jesus, you know. And the disciples were all about this, and here, the moment was in front of them, 20,000 people saying, we want Jesus, we want Jesus.

And how were the disciples getting into this? Whew, this is the moment. Guys, it's going to happen. It had been a little rocky here, you know, cleansing the temple and having a little spitting matches with the Pharisees.

Those haven't gone over very well, but now where are we? Jesus has fed the 20,000, and everybody's with him. It's time to step up and take control.

And Jesus grabs his low-life disciples. He says, listen, I love you. Get in the boat. No, no, no, Jesus. Do you understand?

[12:53] The moment it could pass, they may not like you so much tomorrow. By the way, you move a little bit ahead in John chapter 6, and you find that Jesus preached his, what is known as disciple elimination sermon, right?

But here is Jesus at the moment of opportunity, and everybody is saying, we want you to be our king. And he grabs his disciples, and he says, hey, out of here.

I want you to understand that in doing so, Jesus, for one thing, protected himself. He stayed focused on the mission of our salvation, not in being a secular king and making a momentary difference in minor issues of politics there in Judea and Jerusalem.

Jesus also protected his disciples. I want you to recognize that their desire for Jesus to be elevated really had its roots not in their affection for him principally as the Lord of glory and the Savior who came into the world to save sinners.

We know from repeated illustrations in the Gospels that their interest was in their own position. They were interested in themselves.

[14:15] And Jesus, knowing the frailty of their hearts, he said, hey, listen, we're not going to be riding in motorcades. We're not going to have everybody kind of bowing and scraping for us. We're not going to be flying around in private jets and doing wonderful things in arenas and making lots of money off of this.

Here, guys, out of here. You can imagine the disciples kind of saying in their hearts, what's the deal with Jesus? Everybody loves him, and they love us too.

Why are we doing this? And so I kind of want you to imagine with me, here's Jesus saying, there's a time for you to get away from the temptation of the moment, get out of the situation.

And so to you as believers, I say along with Jesus, get in the boat, believer, and get away from temptation. When you find yourself in the situation where your heart is being drawn to the affections of the world and things that have no eternal consequence, it is time to get in the boat and get away from the situation.

And by the way, where did they go when they got into the boat? They went into a storm. So I think it's fair for us to recognize that because of Christ's love for you and Christ's love for me, He will take us away from a place that will overwhelm us, but He may well lead you into a storm at the same time.

[15:41] Isn't that strange? Because we like to think that if we're following Jesus, it's all going to be smooth sailing and everything's going to be perfect and we're not going to have any troubles.

Well, Jesus said, hey, out of here, guys. I want to protect you. Get in the boat. Get! And off they go and the next thing they have is a mess on their hands. Now for these simple little fishermen that became disciples, getting into a boat and rowing across the Sea of Galilee was no big deal.

Thanks to Google and Wikipedia, I know that a rowboat about this size probably make about two, two and a half hours, two and a half miles per hour and possibly ten miles across.

And so they kind of imagined a late night arrival on the other shore and back off they were to wherever they wanted to rest. and that's not the way it worked out. You notice there in verse 18 it says, the sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.

He had sent them away from the temporary approval of the throng and he'd gone up the mountain to pray alone. And as he prayed throughout that night, here were the seamen disciples rowing and as they began to row things got tougher and tougher and they had a headwind and when you're rowing a large rowboat with a bunch of guys in it and there's a headwind against, they weren't making any headway at all hardly.

[17:14] It tells us there that they'd made about three or four miles. And if you pay attention, they were in, as it says here, in the fourth watch.

That's between three and six o'clock in the morning. And so if you turn into your Bible, you're there in John, keep your finger there, but I want you to go over to Mark in Mark chapter 6, we read that things were not going well at all.

Verse 48, he saw them that they were making headway painfully for the wind was against them and about the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking on the sea.

We don't do boat rides very often and I would venture to say that if I were to ask how many of you have rowed across a lake before, there are very few of you that would say you've done that.

Rowing is hard work. It really is. And rowing a boat that can carry 12 men means pushing a lot of water out of the way with brute force to make any headway.

[18:26] these guys had been rowing all night and the storm got stronger and more powerful and they were aware that they were in a difficult place.

It says there in Mark, and we look at it, it says, they were making headway painfully. What had begun as a quiet boat ride had turned into an absolute disaster.

Now, they were experienced fishermen, but it's understandable that the storm became more than they could bear. Incidentally, this is not the only storm that is recorded in the Gospels.

It's the second one in which the disciples found them in a mess. Can I give you just a little bit of detail on the first one? Because in the first one, guess who was in the boat with them?

It was Jesus. And where was he? In the boat, asleep. I mean, he was just, you know, just resting and these guys were just sweating bullets in the storm and finally they wake him up.

[19:34] I like it in the King James. It says, carest thou not that we perish? You know, I mean, hey, if you like a little King's English, there it is. Carest thou not that we perish? You know, it's like, where are you, bud?

We're suffering and you're not paying attention. How'd that one end up? Remember? Jesus calms the storm and everything's okay.

Well, here they were rowing again. Knowing the disciples, I don't think one of them thought or one of them said to the other, wouldn't it be nice if Jesus showed up right now? Do you think the disciples were thinking that way?

No? They were just pulling on the oars and come on, John, will you put a little more back to this thing? Do you realize we've only made three hours, you know, three miles here, we are not doing very, nobody stopped to think, oh man, I wish Jesus were here.

We could really use Jesus' help right now. Man, why hasn't he come to help? That didn't go through their minds. They were doing their own thing. We've done that too, haven't we?

[20:37] Haven't we? Bit in the boat, slogging across through the problem and never stopped for a moment to say, Jesus, we need your help. I want you to mark, still there in Mark chapter 6.

Let me read it again to you. It says, and he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. I want you to understand that Jesus had, for one thing, sent his disciples away from the temptation of popularity into a difficult situation.

I think sometimes we assume that the difficult situations we are in happen to us because Jesus is not paying attention. That's not necessarily the case.

Sometimes he puts us there, and he puts us there to teach things about his sufficiency that we would not learn apart from that.

over in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, the apostle recounts or shares with us the experience of having some kind of physical affliction.

[21:50] The Bible doesn't tell us, but it does tell us that he pled with the Lord three times to have it taken away, and the Lord said, no, no, no. I've allowed this in order that you might learn my sufficiency.

He said, when I am weak, what Paul says, when I am weak, then he is strong. I find out his sufficiency in the moment of my distress because that's where I discover that he can help the best. I want you to understand that Jesus sent his disciples into the storm knowing what was going to come, and we can count on Jesus to send us into storms.

Don't think to yourself that being a believer is going to mean that you have some kind of contractual guarantee that you're not going to have problems in your life. That's not true.

That's not true. In fact, if you were to track through the Scriptures, you will find over and over again that in both the Old Testament and the New Testament that God uses problems and difficulties to make us stronger in our walk and our confidence in him.

[23:02] Over in Exodus, and you don't need to turn there, Exodus chapter 13 verse 17 says this, when God led his people out of the land of Egypt, he took them the long way because he was concerned that when they eventually got to Palestine, to the promised land, if they hadn't been toughened up, they would have been too much of the wuss.

Do you know what a wuss is? How many of you know what a wuss is? A wuss is just kind of a Casper milk toast. You know, it's a guy who doesn't have any backbone. He said, he was concerned that when they arrived, they wouldn't have the guts to do what needed to be done, which was go sticking long pointy spears in people's bodies and killing them.

He said, hey, you weren't into the battle. God toughened them up. God left enemies in Israel. It also tells us in the Old Testament, God left enemies in Israel in order that the coming generation would know what it was to deal with adversity and hardship.

So, I want you to recognize that Jesus takes us into storms and He has an intention in doing that. But there's something else that I want you to mark here in this passage. Remember, Jesus had gone up the hill to pray and He had spent a great deal of time in sweet communion with His Father. And prayer with His Father was not an obligation or something to be endured. It was a time of enjoyment and blessing and peace. But I am struck by the fact that even in the midst of Christ's prayer with His Father, He had His eyes set on His disciples.

[24:39] That's what we know. And so, you can count on Jesus watching over you and watching over me with unconditional love. One of the books that Judith and I over the years have found to be so blessed is a book by K. Arthur called As Silver Refined.

It's a book that God brought providentially into our lives at a point of real difficulty and heartache. And one of the things that K. Arthur points out is that there's not a moment in our life that comes to us that has not already been measured in the hands of a loving Father. He never lets something happen to us that He's not already weighed and measured for its effect on you and His care and love means that that circumstance that you find yourself in is going to be something that is going to produce growth and maturity in you.

You know, we sometimes look at the hardships and difficulties that we're enduring and we think, I can't go through that. I don't know why I'm in this situation. I want you to know that in the midst of the situation Jesus is paying attention.

He knows what you're going through and He cares for you and He is in control of that moment.

There's one other thing that I want you to find there in the passage and turn back to John chapter 6 if you will and I want you to find sufficient encouragement.

Not only was Jesus protecting His disciples by taking them away from the temptation, not only was He paying attention to their need in the middle of the storm, but He brought sufficient encouragement.

[26:16] In John chapter 6 verse 19, here's what we read. It says, When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat and they were frightened.

They were tired. They were completely overwhelmed by the storm. And you can imagine twelve wet, frustrated fishermen together in a boat kind of commiserating together.

How many of you find that grumbling and complaining just makes things go better? Raise your hand and say, I know that. But even though we know it doesn't make things go better, how many of us do it anyway?

I'm just guessing that the disciples were kind of commiserating with each other. I mean, hey, fuss, fuss, fuss, and suddenly, you know, rowing and someone looks over there.

Whoa, who is that? Walking on the water? I mean, talk about a pretty spectacular miracle. I mean, that had to be a little unnerving, you know. Whoa. In fact, you know what?

[27:23] Let's go back to Matthew chapter 14 again because we're going to see that it wasn't like, hey, Jesus, good to see you. Come on over and help us. Matthew chapter 14, let's get a picture of this thing.

there they are, sweating. Jesus arrives. Not a one of them said, whew, glad you're here. Seeing you reminds me of the last time you helped us.

No, that's not what happened. Matthew chapter 14, verse 26 and 27, it says, but when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified. How many of you have been terrified before?

I mean absolutely to the point that you couldn't get your breath. That's what happened here. They were terrified.

And it says, it's a ghost and they cried out in fear. I mean, these are adult men. Do you get that?

Now, listen to me. Adult men, men who had spent their lives on that lake fishing, for them to cry out in terror meant that they were absolutely overwhelmed by what they saw in the moment.

[28:39] And listen to what Jesus said. Verse 27, and immediately Jesus spoke to them saying, take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid.

Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid. And so as you pick up on this, I want you to stop and realize that the ones we're talking about are hand-picked men, at least 11 of them, that are going to be pillars of the church.

The New Testament church. And here they are in storm number two, completely overwhelmed. And so when you find yourself on occasion completely overwhelmed and later on kind of frustrated, how come I didn't get it?

Will you be patient with yourself as Jesus has been patient with you and as Jesus was patient with the disciples? Don't you wish that spiritual growth happened on a more rapid pattern?

Bear with it. Jesus is far more patient with our frailty than sometimes we are with ourselves. And here is Jesus. Instead of berating, instead of chewing up the disciples and spitting them out, hey guys, what's the problem?

[29:54] Do you remember the last storm? What about the feeding of the... No, he didn't do any of that. He says, hey, calm down. It's I.

Take heart. And so I want you to understand this morning that for one thing as believers you're going to find yourself in storms. Admit it.

There are going to be storms. Don't get caught by the enemy with this unbelievable and unreasonable expectation that just because you're a Christian you're not going to have heartaches and difficulties.

You will have them. But here's what I want you to understand. Jesus is with you in your storm. That's what we see here.

He had been watching even in the time of his sweet communion with his father. He had his eyes on his disciples. Do you understand that?

[30:57] He knew their need and at the right moment he showed up and when he did they were terrified and he says, hey, calm down guys. It's me. It's me.

I am so overwhelmed when I stop and think about Christ's love for his own. Weak as the disciples were at grasping the glory of Christ and his ability to take care of needs.

Overwhelmed as they were by the storm and then overwhelmed as they were by his presence, Jesus very tenderly dealt with them in their frailty without scolding them.

And mark one other thing. Look in verse 21. Then they were glad to take him into the boat and mark the last little part and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

I want you to mark this in your own thoughts in your own life. Jesus will meet your need and he will take his disciples to the other side. Do you know that?

[32:10] Where you are in your difficulty and the storm of life that you're enduring, I want you to know this, that Jesus is committed not to abandon you and not to leave you in that mess and that heartache.

Do you know what he said? To his disciples, he said, Lo, I am with you even unto the ends of the age. I am there with you. Listen to me carefully.

I want you to get your hands around this. The principal purpose of this book is not to give us more information but to bring us face to face with the lover of our soul and establish a permanent, personal, genuine relationship with the Lord of glory.

Do you understand that? And when you read this story about Jesus and the storm, you have to think to yourself, man, if he put up with those disciples, I got a chance.

He loves me and he is not turning his back on me in the midst of the mess and the heartache and the difficulty that I am enduring.

[33:28] That's my Jesus. Do you know that? Do you know that? And so my question this morning is this, truthfully, I want you to think of that.

Do you know him? Do you know him? I'm not talking about chronology of the Bible. Well, I remember that he came and he did this.

No. Do you know him? Do you have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? And by the way, how do we get that?

Oh, it's by going to church on a regular basis and checking the box that says I was there. You know, it's maybe I need to be baptized or maybe I need to take communion or maybe, you know, hey, listen.

Here's the way a person comes to a personal relationship with Christ. I want you to hear this and get it clear in your mind. You come to a personal relationship with Christ with, first of all, sensing the convicting power of the Holy Spirit that says I am a bankrupt and miserable sinner in the presence of a holy God and there is nothing I can do that can bring to me credit and glory and worth and I stand justly condemned before God.

[34:49] the first place that we come to is an understanding of our own unworthiness and brokenness.

The second thing that happens is that the Spirit of God gives to us a conviction that we can't solve the problem ourselves and we reach out by faith and take the finished work of Christ when He died on the cross in your place He satisfied the judgment of a holy God against you and He is willing to give to you all the credit of His holy righteous life and your sins are covered by His blood.

Do you know something it says in the Bible? It says that He only made one O-N-E one sacrifice for sin it's done it's settled it's permanent and what does the Bible say?

Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord say it with me shall be saved. Let's close in prayer. Holy Father we are we are overwhelmed with