

Peace in the Storm

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, we can turn back to our reading in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 4. And like I say, we're going to look at the end, verses 35 to the end of the chapter, where we see Jesus with his disciples leaving the place of the where, as it says, going across the other side. They go into the boat and they find themselves in the midst of a storm. And then they cry out to him in verse 36. The disciples, they woke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?
- And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. Well, we've just had a storm, the first named storm of the year.
- And because of the way that they now name the storms, and you get a long list of the names of the storms, there's always that sense that, well, one's passed, but another one's coming.
- Storm Amy has passed. Then we have Storm Bram, whenever that may come. Then it goes on to Siege and Andra. There's that storm.
- [1 : 1 5] They've all got a name. And there's that sense, well, there's always going to be another storm coming. And we know that very well, where we live, that as we go into the winter months, that that is just the case.
- And when we come into a storm, we can end up with things being in short supply. If a storm goes on and the ferries don't sail, we find things being in short supply.
- When you go into the supermarkets, go into the shops, they've run out of different things, whether it's fruit and veg or bread and milk, there's things in short supply.
- But when we think about it in our own situation, it's not just about these storms that come in a physical sense, but the storms that come in life.
- And there are many of them. And it seems like we go from maybe one storm to the next, to the next. When all our lives just seem to be full of trials and difficulties that come our way, they can be personal ones when it's just ourselves that are going through them.
- [2 : 2 0] They can be family ones. They can be trials in our community. They can be trials in our congregation. They can be trials in our nation and the world in which we live.
- And we see all kinds of things going on that just leave us feeling that sense of being overwhelmed by the situation that we're in.
- And when we're in these kinds of storms as well, when they're personal, when they're collective storms, there can be a sense of things lacking in these storms as well.
- There can be a sense maybe of patience lacking. When we become an impatient people in some of the situations that we find ourselves in.
- And we just have to look at our lives and our congregation, our community, our nation, and the world. And we think of all these different things going on around us. And we're losing patience.

[3 : 17] We may be, in our personal circumstances, are losing patience with people around us, or services around us. We're losing patience because things don't seem to be going as we would desire.

We can be losing patience as a congregation. When we think of the vacancy and the situation there, and we've had that bulletin update today, where there can be a sense of our patience being tested.

Where are we going? What's going to happen? How are we going to go forward? There can be that sense of patience being lost. It can be in so many different ways.

We can lose patience with government. We can lose patience with leaders. We can lose patience with the world in which we live in. But it always takes us to the point where we start to lose patience with God.

We start to lose that trust in God. And that's when it becomes even more dangerous. When we start to think that God, as we see with the disciples here crying out, do you not care?

[4 : 22] And that's the cry that we can have in so many different situations. Lord, do you not care? Do you not care what's going on in my life or in our congregation or in our world?

Do you not care what's happening? And then we can lose other things. We can find other things in short supply as well. That sense of joy, that sense of peace.

They can go and we can lose that sense of these things as well. When we are in days of testing, when we are in days when our patience is being tested, we can lose that joy and that peace.

We don't see things in perspective. When we lose sight of the perspective under which we should be looking at things. Because there are other ways of looking at things.

Besides our own thoughts, beside our own impatience, despite ourselves, there are other ways that we can look at things. And we see that there are two perspectives in this passage that we've read.

[5 : 28] In this account of Jesus with the disciples in this storm, there's two different perspectives in the very same situation. And the first perspective we see is that of the disciples.

Their perspective in this is that Jesus doesn't care. They have a sense of fear in the midst of the storm.

They don't know what's happening. They don't know where they're going or what's ahead of them. There's this sense of fear because that's their perspective on things.

But there's another perspective. And that's the perspective of Jesus. And when you look at Jesus in this passage, even in the midst of the storm, he's sleeping.

But in the midst of the storm, he's reminding them that he has power, that he has authority, that he is able to give peace and calm.

[6 : 33] And that's how we should look at the perspective of our lives as well. Whatever we are going through, when we see things from our own perspective that seems out of control, no direction, uncertainty, all of these things we can see, well, the Lord has control, that he has power, that he has authority over all things, that he is able to reveal his will to us in the midst of everything that comes our way.

And a lot has happened for the disciples. It's been some day for them when you look at this chapter, when they've heard, as we read some of the teaching that they'd been under. When you see the parable of the growing seed, the parable of the mustard seed, and other things that Jesus had been teaching before we came to this point.

They've heard so much from Jesus. They've already seen so much from Jesus. And then it says in verse 35, on that same day, when evening had come, he said to them, let us go.

And so what we see here is that Jesus is with them. He's reminded them of the significance of his kingdom, a kingdom that is coming, a kingdom that is growing.

And now we're going to see how he reminds them that it's for them as well, that it's a very personal kingdom, a kingdom when he shows his own, the power and authority that he has.

[8 : 05] And so as they're caught in this storm, Jesus challenges them. And that's what he does with us in our own storms as well. He challenges us. And the challenge is this. Do you trust me only when things are going well?

Or will you trust me in the storm as well? Will you trust me when things seem out of your control? Will you trust me?

That's the challenge. And there's five things to take from these verses for us to do. We have first, trust. We have trouble. We have tone.

We have teaching. And we have turning. I just briefly want to touch on these five things. Trust, trouble, tone, teaching, and turning.

And the first thing we see is trust. Trust. And the situation starts in a setting of trust. What we find is that on this day, as Jesus has been teaching with them, that same day Jesus spoke to them and said, let us go across to the other side.

[9 : 18] And what do you notice? They don't ask why. They don't ask where are we going. They don't ask any details about how.

All it says is, leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. They left immediately.

And what you see here is, there was a sense of trust. They've only been with Jesus a short time, but they are trusting him.

And it's shown just in how they go. And they go immediately. Over the time of following Jesus, seeing what he is doing, the miracles he's performing, the teaching that he is giving them, why wouldn't things go well now?

They're beginning to see, well, Jesus has a plan. He has a purpose. He's done all these amazing things. And it's almost like, well, we're expecting more. They might say, well, it's always going to be like this.

[10 : 29] It's always going to be easy. It's always going to go well, because Jesus is with us. It's going to be smooth. It's going to be plain sailing. So there's this element of trust.

And so there should be. There should be an element of trust, because they've seen what he has done. But the question that they find themselves here is, but how much do they trust him?

How much are they going to listen to him? How much are they going to keep on trusting? Because you see, trust isn't just for a moment. Trust isn't just for a short time or certain situations.

Trust is what we need going forward all the time. As we approach winter once again, one of the things that you'll begin to see on the television again is winter skiing.

It's amazing to watch downhill skiing, doing the slalom through all the gates and all of these things. It's amazing to watch and the speed that they get up to.

[11 : 39] And as I watch it, I think, well, that's not something that I would be very keen on trying myself. It looks quite terrifying. But imagine doing it when you're blind or only partially sighted.

Well, people do. And it's part of the Paralympics now. It's part of sport now, where people with disabilities will do all of these sports. But imagine going down a hill on skis and you can't see where you're going.

How is it possible? Well, what they do is they're paired with someone who can see. And they're trained to ski first on the flat, just learning how to ski and finding their way around.

And eventually, they go on the slopes and they start to do the slalom, going in between the gates. And you ask yourself, but how? Well, it's because the person who's able to see and skiing with them is giving them direction.

Turn to your left. Turn to your right. And so it goes on. But they have to listen. They have to trust that person beside them.

[12 : 45] Because if they don't completely trust, it's going to be catastrophic. It's going to end in a crash. And it's a vivid picture of the Christian life in this world.

Because the reality is that we cannot see ahead of us everything that's ahead of us. We can only see in part. Spiritually, we're so often blind about what course our lives are going to take, what course we're going to take going forward as a congregation.

We don't have the eyes to see. But we have to trust. We have to trust that there is one with us who promises to give direction, who speaks to us through his word, who reveals himself to us through prayer.

So trust is important. Trust in Jesus is an essential part of any relationship that we are to have with him. A personal relationship, trust him that he will guide.

A collective relationship, trust him that he will guide. We need to trust. So the disciples here, they immediately responded to the call to go over to the other side with that sense of trust.

[14 : 06] Trust. But there's more to trust than just good times. Trust is something that is often tested and proved in more difficult times.

And that's what we see secondly here. Because trouble comes. The disciples were doing as the Lord asked. And they find themselves in trouble. And it says that as they went out in the boat and others with them, in verse 37, a great windstorm arose.

This storm came quickly. And it's the kind of storm that can happen in these regions. And especially fishermen, and many of the disciples were fishermen, would be aware of this, just how quickly these storms can come.

But yet, even they seem to be caught out by this. They don't seem to understand why would Jesus take us out and this horrendous storm has come.

The waves were breaking into the boat so that the boat was already filling. The way Jesus has told them to go has led to trouble.

[15 : 18] And that's so often the reality of following Jesus as well. The reality of following Jesus isn't that life is always going to be plain sailing.

It's a reality that there are going to be troubles and trials and testing along the way. How many troubles do we face in life?

Health issues, relationships, personal issues, financial issues. The list is almost endless. We all have these troubles that we have to face up to.

But we can learn in these troubles. And that's what the disciples have here as well. They're not immune from trouble.

And none of us are. But God's word is there to help us. And to help us through them all. Through everything that we have to face up to.

[16 : 22] The Lord promises to be with us. James Packer, again quoting from Your Father Loves You, that book. He says this, This is the ultimate reason from our standpoint why God fills our lives with troubles and perplexities of one sort and another.

It is to ensure that we shall learn to hold him fast. The reason why the Bible spends so much of its time reiterating that God is a strong rock, a firm defense, a sure refuge, a help for the weak, is that God spends so much of his time showing us that we are weak, both mentally and morally, and dare not trust ourselves to find or follow the right road.

And so there he's giving reminders to us. It is to trust God. But then he goes on to say, When we walk along a clear road feeling fine and someone takes our arm to help us, it's likely we will just impatiently shake that person off.

But when we are caught in the rough country road, in the middle of dark and a storm brewing and our strength spent, and someone takes our arm to help us, we would thankfully lean on him.

And God wants us to feel that our way through life is rough and perplexing so that we may learn to thankfully lean on him.

[17 : 54] And he says, Wait on the Lord. That's so often the advice that the Lord gives in his word. Wait on the Lord. So in the midst of our trouble, we have the Lord to lean on.

The third thing we see here is the tone. How do the disciples react when they are afraid? What do they say?

The boat is filling, it's being overwhelmed, but Jesus is in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?

Do you not care that we are perishing? Look at the tone in these words. You can sense it. There's frustration in these words.

There's fear in these words. There's doubt in these words. Do you not care that we are perishing? If we are drowning, there are times in trouble when we can turn to God in this way and we can have that tone of anger towards God.

[19 : 08] Whatever it is, we can turn in frustration and say, Lord, do you not care where we are going? Do you not care what's happening to us? As a congregation, do you not want us to grow and to flourish?

Do you not want us to have another minister come in? We can cry out in all kinds of frustration. But it's to wait on the Lord.

It's through personally. It's through collectively. It's through in all aspects of life. The Lord has a plan. But our cry is so often frustration. It can be frustration towards God.

It can be frustration towards others, how we speak to others. Our tone can be off. Our frustration can be vented in so many different ways.

You see, we are sinners. The disciples are sinners. And they are crying out in their frustration, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?

[20 : 15] And so can we do that as well because sin robs us of peace? We can lose that peace and we are just looking at it from our perspective.

As you drive, especially on the mainland or more so on the mainland, when you are driving on busy roads and you see signs at the side of the road or above the road if you are on the motorway, one of the most common ones you see is frustration causes accidents.

And it's true. When you become frustrated and impatient and try to overtake in the wrong place or do a manoeuvre, it causes accidents.

And frustration in life causes so many problems as well. They have done what Jesus told them and this is where they end up and they cry out in frustration.

Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? And you see the tone. It's like Psalm 107 when the sailors, they cry out in the midst of the storm.

[21 : 23] They cry out in their fear. The tone can be there and it can be an off tone. Let us be careful how we address God and how we address one another in the midst of our frustrations, whatever they might be.

But then we see fourthly there is teaching here. What teaching do we have here as Jesus rebukes the wind and the waves? It says in verse 39 he awoke and rebuked the wind and the sea and said peace be still and the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

Well Jesus here is teaching. He's teaching them trust me in the storms as well. Who is this is the cry that they come to and who is it?

It is the Lord. It is God that is with them. The storm is changed into a calm by his word. That's the power that he has.

Now when we see a storm around us the sea doesn't just immediately go calm. It can take hours and days for the sea to settle down once again but here it's instant.

[22 : 47] Just at his word there is peace there is calm. And that's the teaching that we would want to take from this as well.

That we can trust God to change the storms that we face and to give us calm because he is God.

He is God who is able. As someone said once to realise the worth of an anchor you need to feel the storm.

And whatever storm we face whatever comes our way and whatever way and shape it feels like it's overwhelming us. Jesus is able to calm.

He is able to say these words peace be still. He has control. There's a poem My Father's at the Helm.

[23 : 51] It comes in maybe different forms but this is one. It's talking about a little bark so that's a little boat. The curling waves with awful roar a little bark assailed and pallid fears distracting power over all on board prevailed.

Save one the captain's darling child who fearless viewed the storm and cheerful with composure smiled a dangerous threatening form. And can you smile a seamen cried while terrors overwhelmed.

Why should I fear the boy replied my father's at the helm so when our worldly hopes are crushed our earthly comfort's gone we still have one sure anchor left God helps and he alone.

We will have storms when things seem to be out of our control but we have that anchor God's help and he alone can help.

So finally we just want to see in the midst of the teaching there's a turning there's a turning as we see at the end. He said to them in verse 40 why are you so afraid have you still no faith but then they said who then is this that even the wind and sea obey him have you still no faith it can be easy to come and trust Jesus when things are going well and we might be interested in coming to know Jesus and to follow Jesus and think even as we're going through this well if I trust Jesus he's going to give me peace and everything is going to be great again but he can give peace but it doesn't mean that the storm always goes sometimes he just gives peace for the storm but we can see that he is with us and that he is able to help when we are entrusting ourselves to him and his plans and his purposes and his will he can give us peace in it all the writer

[26 : 17] Andrew Murray he once wrote this and he's talking about times of trial and testing he said first he brought me here it is by his will I am in this straight place in that fact I will rest next he will keep me here in his love and give me grace to behave as his child then he will make the trial a blessing teaching me the lessons he intends me to learn and working in me the grace he means to bestow last in his good time he can bring me out again how and when he knows let me say I am here he said by God's appointment in his keeping under his training for his time can we apply that to ourselves today whatever our circumstances whether we're looking at individually or collectively we are here by God's appointment we can rest in that fact we are here in his keeping that his love is always faithful we are here under his training that he can teach us in the midst of everything and we are here for his time he can bring us and will bring us through the disciples would apply it as their lives would go on to see that they wouldn't just answer who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him but that they would see this is the

Christ that's what they would come to recognize as life goes on for them they would see this is the Christ the one who gave his life for his church for his people and they would see and glorify him all the more does he care of course he does more than they would ever recognize fully until that point where they would see him on the cross and see him risen from the grave who is this it is the Lord and it's the Lord who is with us we might not see him fully when we think just of the perspective of our trials whatever they are but by faith we can see him fully who is it that is with us it is the Lord and as we trust him and know that he is with us and as we rest in his will as we rest under his love as we seek his teaching and guidance he is the one who will bring us through may we find that joy and peace in him let us pray

Lord our gracious God we do thank you that you are one who is able to turn every providence for your glory the things that we cannot understand the things that seem beyond our comprehension we thank you that you already have plans and purposes and so we seek your will be done that you would guard us by your love by your peace that you would keep us by your spirit and that you would assure us of guiding us and keeping us on the way we ask all for the glory of our Lord and Saviour amen we're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in psalm 27 page 32 of the psalm books psalm 27 we'll sing from verse 11 to the end of the psalm teach me

O Lord how I should live and lead me in your way make straight my path because my foes oppress me every day and then you have this confidence at the end of the psalm in verse 13 yet I am sure that in this life God's goodness I will see and in this command wait for the Lord be strong take heart for him wait patiently we'll sing verse 11 to the end of the psalm to God's praise teach me O Lord how I should live and lead me in your way make straight my path because my foes oppress me every day give me not over to the will of the enemies for liars rise to slander me and plead thy cruelties yet yet

I am sure that in this life God's goodness I will see wait for the lark be strong take heart forever with patiently after the benediction I'll go to the main door we'll close with the benediction now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore Amen