

Calm seas don't make good sailors

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Matt. 8:18-27/ Mark 4:35-41/ Luke 8:22-25

Introduction:

The title says it all.

Because of a storm Luther went from Law school to Theology...

Questions:

1. "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"
 - a. Why us? Why me? Why now?
 - b. Jesus' silence hurts more than the storm itself...
 - c. Questioning with resentment.
2. "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"
 - a. When the circumstances speak louder than the Word of God...
 - b. Lack of trust.
 - c. Lack of understanding of the mission.
3. "Who is this?"
 - a. Creation bows to the creator.
 - b. Our relationship with God.

Conclusion:

Promise. "Let's go to the other side."

Presence. "Jesus is in the boat."

Peace. "Jesus is at peace."

Power. "Jesus has the power to solve all the issues."

Pedagogy. "The great Rabbi uses the storms to teach his disciples."

Purpose. "Boats are safe on the shore, but that's not where boats were meant to be."

Prayer. "God acts on our prayers."

Practical. "Creation cannot rise up against the Creator."

This is one of the most famous stories of the Bible. If you search “Jesus calming the storm” on the internet, you will find *many* pictures. Both Christians and non-Christians know this story.

Before we start, we need to know: (i) The disciples are moving from theory (Parables) to practice (the storm); (ii) Jesus said “let’s go to the other side” - they *must* get to the other side!

Three characteristics of a storm in our lives: (i) It is “democratic” - It comes to rich and poor, Western or Eastern, young or elderly... (ii) It is *sudden* - “at once” the storm broke out against the boat. Indeed, that’s how it happens in our lives: An accident happens at work or at the park; a routine visit to the doctor ends up with a diagnosis that changes life forever; a child raised with love in the church, suddenly rebels against God and the parents... (iii) It is *uncontrollable* - the disciples did try everything they could, but the storm itself, they could not stop it.

What’s the good news, then? That Jesus is in our boat... He has the answers to our questions.

1. Let’s use the questions present in the story as a map. The first one was asked by the disciples: **“Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” (Mark 4:38)**

Perhaps, this is one of the saddest questions ever asked in the Bible. *Absolutely*, the Teacher cares for us! Why are they asking that kind of question? The question tells us *nothing* about Jesus, but it tells us *a lot* about the disciples. It tells us three things about their relationship with God: (i) They do not accept that storms come to Believers. It is easy to understand the storm sent to the Prophet Jonah when he was fleeing God’s calling, but it is not easy to accept the storms “when they are doing God’s work” or “when Jesus is in the boat.” Somehow, there is this misconception that Believers are shielded from storms just because they are Believers. (ii) Their question reflects their pain towards Christ’s silence. Indeed, I believe we can all relate to that one. Sometimes God’s silence hurts us more than the storm itself. As they were steering the boat, with their buckets trying to empty the flooded boat, and working so hard not to let the boat sink... Jesus was (silent!) sleeping. (iii) Their question is carried with resentment. They don’t want to know *why*, their questioning carries *accusations*. They sound like the judge, not the disciples.

2. Jesus rebuked the storm; he was the only one who could’ve done so. Now it was his turn to ask a question: **“Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” (Mark 4:40)**

What a shocking contrast we see here. You would expect Jesus to contrast faith with unbelief, but that’s not what he does; he contrasts faith with fear! Jesus is talking about *trust*.

What is trust? Trust is the confidence we put in someone or something, (usually) when we lack information about a certain subject (e.g: Trusting the pilot knows how to fly an airplane).

The storm overwhelmed the disciples with some information: The wind, the waves, water inside the boat... On the other hand, they received very little information from Jesus, the captain of the boat: "Let's go to the other side," plus his silence as he was asleep.

When we lack information from our captain, all we have left is trust. These are the very moments our faith is put to the test. Honestly, it is easy to "trust" in Jesus when everything makes sense - but, I suggest not to label that as trust/faith, since all we are doing is based on information anyways. When is our faith truly tested? When the information is too little, and thus, all that is left is trusting in him.

Moreover, where were the disciples going? They were going from a Jewish territory to a Gentile one. In the disciples' mind, Gentiles were not God's people, therefore Jesus wasn't supposed to give them attention at all. The journey did not make sense to the disciples, how much more if they had to die for the sake of the journey. *To put it into context: Think of Palestine vs Israel or Russia vs Ukraine or Canada vs USA (trade war).

When the storms speak louder than God's Word, and we are not on the same page with His mission, we will lack faith and question His ways...

3. Now Jesus rebuked the storm (and his disciples as well). The sea and wind became calm, as calm as in the early mornings (in Brazil, the sea at 6 am is so calm; but at 9 am there are bigger waves). The miracle has scared the disciples *more* than the storm!

Which reminds us of something beautiful, the fear of the Lord. Before, the disciples had the "fear of the storm" which is lack of faith. Now they have the "fear of the Lord" which leads them to ask a beautiful question: **"Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him."**
(Mark 4:41)

Creation bows down before the creator. Jesus is God, the creator himself. He was in the beginning, he is the Word of God which from nothing has created the whole Universe; out of chaos he brought the beauty of a world in just a week (Genesis chapters 1 & 2).

It is interesting the words Mark chooses to use here: Jesus "rebuked" the wind. Mark's Gospel is filled with the demonstration of God "rebuking" the demons. Here, when creation rises against the creator, he "rebukes" it and calms it down. Just like creation remained quietly and bowed down before the creator, so did the disciples change their tone: from resentment ("Teacher, don't you care if we perish?") to the fear of the Lord ("who is this? Even the wind and waves obey him").

Conclusion: The disciples learned (and we as well): Fear of the storms takes us far from God, and it hurts our connection with God because it blurs our understanding of who he is. The fear of the Lord leads us closer to God, and it clears our understanding of who God really is - we CAN trust him, he is the all powerful one!

Just as we organized this text with the questions as our road map, I want to conclude this text with eight applications that start with the letter "P:"

Promise. "Let's go to the other side." Jesus' promises are yes and amen; if he said "we are going to the otherside," trust him, we are! God's promises = reality itself.

Presence. "Jesus is in the boat." We do not need to be afraid because His presence is in the boat with us. If God is not worried, why would we be worried?

Peace. "Jesus is at peace." He is the proof that storm and peace can dwell together. The storm did not affect his peace. We can enjoy peace in the midst of chaos too. The storms are only external, our peace is internal.

Power. "Jesus has the power to solve all issues." Why should we trust him? Because he can solve all the problems. He solved our greatest problem: Death & Hell. We can trust he can solve all the other issues as well.

Pedagogy. "The great Rabbi uses the storms to teach his disciples." As the title says: Calm seas don't make good sailors; God never wastes the storms of our lives. He makes our faith stronger as we go through the storm.

Purpose. "Boats are safe on the shore, but that's not where boats were meant to be." Storms, criticism, resistance, backlash, only happens to disciples who have the courage to navigate the sea.

Prayer. "God acts on our prayers." Jesus acted when the disciples questioned him (though it wasn't their best question). In his sovereignty, God chooses to act through his church. As we pray and navigate, God acts.

Practical. "Creation cannot rise up against the Creator." Nowadays, Genesis faces most of the criticism from non-believers - they reject creation. If they deny creation, they deny sin, and consequently the whole Bible with it. That's just a symptom of our fallen world trying (very unsuccessfully) to rise against the creator.