

CHRIST CAN CALM YOUR STORM

By Rev. Lawrence Baldrige

May 2011

Matt 8:23-27

²³And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. ²⁴And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." ²⁶And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

The Sea of Galilee is 680 feet below the Mediterranean Sea. These sudden squalls come down from the summit of Hermon with terrific force (seismoß megaß) like an earthquake. Mark (Mark 4:37) and Luke (Luke 8:23) term it a whirlwind (lailapß) in furious gusts. (Kurie, swson, apollumeqa). More exactly, "Lord, save us at once (aorist), we are perishing (present linear)." (Kai oi anhmoi kai h qalassa autwi upakouousin). A nature miracle. Even a sudden drop in the wind would not at once calm the sea. "J. Weiss explains that by 'an astonishing coincidence' the storm happened to lull at the moment that Jesus spoke!" (McNeile). ATR

The Sea of Galilee is 13 miles long from North to South, and at its widest point a little less than 8 miles wide. At its deepest point it is something over 100 feet deep. It is not really very large and one wonders why it is called a Sea; but the Sea of Galilee has been the favorite sea for Christians, for there Jesus was comrade and Savior of his fishermen friends; and it was on the Sea of Galilee that our Lord performed one of His greatest miracles by stilling the storm that suddenly broke upon their fishing boat.

The remains of a fishing boat found on the Northwest side of the Sea of Galilee, nearly 2,000 years old, is probably much like the boat that Peter and James and John owned. The boat could hold 15 men, and was 26.5 feet long, 7.5 feet wide, and 4.5 feet high. It was a boat like this, with a mainsail to power it, that Jesus was on during the storm that came upon them that fateful day. They were not looking for a storm that day. It just came upon them suddenly, furiously, unmercifully.

Scholars of the Holy Land tell us that the storms upon the Sea of Galilee would drop suddenly upon them funnelled down from Mt. Hermon and the higher elevations of the Syrian Mountains. Suddenly the storm was there in its full destructiveness. That's what happened that day, and you must know the story. The storm was like a tornado. Commentators tell us about it: "A great concussion", or "shaking" of the sea; the stormy wind moved the sea, and the waves; and both wind and sea shook the ship, and the men that were in it. Luke calls this tempest a "storm wind", (Luke 8:23) and Mark says, it was "a great storm of wind", (Mark 4:37) and both use the word "loelaps", which signifies a particular kind of wind, which is suddenly whirled about upwards and downwards; or rather, a conflict of many winds: it seems to be a whirlwind, or hurricane. It is said, that this tempest "arose", not by chance, nor by the power of Satan, but by divine providence; for the trial of the faith of Christ's disciples, and that he might have an

opportunity of giving proof of his deity on the sea, as he had lately done in several instances on the dry land.

Luke says, that this storm of wind "came down"; referring to the motion and course of the winds, which are exhalations from the earth, raised up into the middle region of the air, from whence they are expelled by a superior force to the lower region, and from thence move in an oblique, slanting manner, downwards. The place where this tempest arose, or into which this storm of wind came down, is here said to be: Let me recount the story: The storm fell upon the boat and it was filling up with waves. Jesus was in the back part of the boat asleep. Earlier He had said, "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head," but here he was laying His weary head upon the hinder part of the boat. He was asleep at the stern where the Captain of the Ship should be, but He was sleeping so soundly that, apparently, they had a difficult time waking Him up.

Finally, when they did wake Him, He rebuked their lack of faith. Then He cried out to the wind and the waves, "Peace! Be Still!" And the Bible says, "There was a great Calm" and the disciples stood in amazement and wonder that their Master could calm the wind and the seas. "What manner of Man is this?" they asked. Jesus mentioned their manner of faith as being too weak; the disciples mentioned the manner of His power as being amazing.

I believe that the main reason the disciples told and retold this story and the reason it became a part of our Scriptures is simply because life is filled with storms that come suddenly like a whirlwind upon our lives. They were thinking about us, as well as about themselves. They knew that this story of their little faith and His great Almighty power would help us to have more faith when the storms of life come. I want to use their motivation of saving this story for us to be as personal as I can be to you and to say to you *Christ Can Calm Your Storm!*

THE STORM OF THE DISCIPLES WAS THE STORM OF FEAR! "It was in the night, and Jesus had retired to rest. He was probably weary, and slept calmly and serenely, he apprehended no danger, and showed to his disciples how calmly one can sleep with a pure conscience, and who feels safe in the hands of God." They were in great fear of dying. Their boat was filling up with the sea, and when the sea swallows the boat, their lives will also be swallowed by the waters. This storm was a challenge to their very being. They might cease their earthly existence at any moment. Their courage fails them in that moment. But then they remember what they in fear had forgotten: Jesus is on board the ship. In fact, they're there because Jesus told them to launch out for the other side. He owes them something. It is His fault they are on the verge of extinction. The Fear came from something as old as life itself. I would call it the 'survival.' fear.

Do you have in your life a 'survival' fear? That fear might come from a particular illness you have. Or that fear might come from a problem you have. You might be afraid that your marriage won't survive. Or you might be afraid that your job might not survive. This primal survival fear meets us around every corner. Will I be accepted by my colleagues and my friends? Will my acceptance survive? This becomes very important to us because our self-image is at stake. There are great economic fears anymore. Will we survive economically? Will we

survive, literally, in a world of drug addict drivers, and of the violence that keeps getting worse each day?

Whatever your personal fear, Christ can calm your storm. You must have more than a little faith. When troubled by those particular fears that threaten your future and your present, you must be sure that Christ is in your vessel. When you feel like you are losing your marriage, when you feel you are losing your acceptance, when you feel like you are losing your dreams, then, above all things, you need Christ aboard your boat. In your fears you can you must turn to Him, not once, not twice, but 70 times 7 if necessary, and He will give you deliverance and the courage to continue your voyage over the troubled waters of your life.

Gen.15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

Exodus 14:13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

I was looking up 'fear not' and found that it is the command that God gave more than any other command. I found 144 instances in scripture of 'fear not.' God commands us, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea i will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." When Christ is in your heart, God is with you. *Christ can calm your storm.*

THE STORM OF THE DISCIPLES WAS ALSO A STORM OF ANXIETY. They were very anxious about what the future held for them, and they must have been anxious about what their families would do if they drowned. In that culture the man was the only provider, and if one of these fishermen died their families would never be able to recover from the loss of income, and the loss of their provider and loved one. When they went out to fish, and when this storm arose, they were full of anxiety. Listen to what Jesus says about anxiety:

Matthew 7:25 “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? [7] ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

When we worry about tomorrow we destroy the peace and the joy that is to be ours through Christ today. Twice in the last week I have awakened at 4 or 5 am, and been worried about particular things and have lain there sleepless worrying. On both occasions, I did that day the things I thought would address those worries, and things worked out well. When we do what we should do about any problem we have, that is all we can do and God doesn't expect more from us. But worrying about things I can do nothing about is sheer foolishness. A great prayer was written some years ago, the Serenity Prayer, *Lord give me the strength to change the things I can change, and the courage to accept the things I cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference.* That prayer should fit us well.

Look at Christ asleep in the storm, fully trusting in the Heavenly Father to keep Him in everything, and unafraid of the future, having accepted and surrendered to the will of God. If you have truly surrendered your life and destiny to Jesus Christ, you will be safe in the middle of the storm. Christ can calm your anxious heart if your heart has believed in Him unto salvation. You don't have to worry about your job, about the safety of your family, about your marriage, or anything else, if you have surrendered all these things to Christ. Have you given your family to Christ? Have you put love of God even above love of family? Anxiety will melt away when you do, and in the process you will be a more loving parent, a more loving husband or wife. *Christ can calm your storm of fear and anxiety.*

CHRIST CAN ALSO CALM YOUR STORM OF DESPAIR. I still remember the first time I read *Walden* by Thoreau, and he said, "Most men are living on the jagged edge of despair." As I live my life, I see that truth more plainly than I saw it then. Perhaps when younger, I doubted this. But today, when I see all the addiction to drugs, all the addiction to sex, all the addiction to materialism, I look at people differently. In their addictions they are simply exhibiting their despair. They have lost hope. They think there is no hope and no help for them.

Wasn't this the way these fishermen/sailors looked at life in that storm? They must have seen the waves, and heard the roaring wind, and heard their little boat creak and crack as it was buffeted about taking on water, ready to sink. They had lost hope. In that dramatic chapter in the book of acts when Paul and the prisoners on that wheat ship headed toward Rome were driven wildly by a Noreaster, the Euroclydon, and they were sure that they would be drowned. Then when they had cast out all that would weigh the ship down, Luke writes:

Acts 27:20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

Reading between the lines we can say with absolute assurance, Christ was aboard that ship. The Centurian didn't know it. The soldiers didn't know it. The prisoners didn't know it. But Paul knew it. Paul knew that the same Christ who was aboard Simon Peter's little boat, was also aboard this large wheat ship that held the most important prisoner who ever sailed the Mediterranean, the Apostle to the Gentiles. But Paul knew that he was not the most important Person on that ship. That person was Christ, and Christ calmed the storm.

Christ is always with believers. He is always aboard our little boat. During the Cold War, the Russian Christians operated the underground church that met secretly in the homes of

the believers. The Russian Secret Police found out about one of those Christian cells, and broke into the service. The captain ordered that the people be counted, and the officer got all their names, and called them off and counted each. Then he said, "There are 31 traitors to the state in this home." The leader of the Christian group said, "You've miscounted. There are 32 here." He counted again, and cursed the one who disagreed with him. That brave person said to the KGB officer, "But you have left out one Person, His Name is Jesus." That officer said, "Oh, that's what you mean."

If you have lost hope, look in the back of your boat, and wake up the Jesus that is asleep there, and ***Christ can and will calm your storm.***

THE FINAL STORM THESE SAILORS FACED WAS DOUBLESS THE STORM OF SIN. Isn't it interesting that when we face ultimate things like danger and death, we always think about our sins. I think these men must have intuitively thought that their own sinfulness had brought about their fate. I think this intuitive feeling shows us that our sin does indeed bring us under the judgment of God Almighty. To be sure, not every storm, not every catastrophe, not every draught and every deluge, is the judgment of God on sin. But sin does bring judgment. Why do I say that? I say it because the ***Bible*** says it.

This morning I read some words in the ***Old Testament*** that made me wonder about our country. Those words were these: ^{Ex 18:24} Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: ²⁵ And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. ²⁷ (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;) ²⁸ That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you. Spurgeon said that Christ saved us FROM our sins. He wrote: "No man is a true Christian if sin reigns in his mortal body. Sin will be in us--it will never be utterly expelled till the spirit enters glory; but it will never have dominion."

Our sins of adultery, fornication, covetousness, pride, any sin, any sin, will bring with it its own judgment. Moreover God is the great Judge and He will give the final Judgment upon all our sin. But sin destroys any nation. Nations and individuals fail and fall because of their sins. So these men must have wondered if their own sins brought them into this predicament. "***All that we call human history--money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery--[is] the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.***" C. S. Lewis

Only Christ can calm the storm of your sin. I want to be perfectly honest with you and also very personal with you: if you are in a storm of sin, only Jesus Christ can give you calm in this storm. Human hearts are sinful. We are capable of any vice, and we can sink much lower than the animals that inhabit this world. The ***Bible*** says we are like dogs returning to their vomit when we backslide. The ***Bible*** says that we are like pigs that root in the muck. On the other hand, we were created in the Image of God and have great and glorious possibilities if we repent of sin and receive Jesus into our boats. If He is in our boat He can calm the storm of sin and we will sail with Him to heaven; if He is not in our boat, the storm of sin will drive us all alone to

Hell. These sailors faced the storm of sin. So do You. *Christ* can calm all your storms. Will you ask Him to still your storm?