

Out Of Control!

Bible Reading:
1 Samuel 17: 32-49
Mark 4: 35-41

PREPARED BY
KEN GEHRELS
PASTOR
CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF OTTAWA
ONTARIO, CANADA

They can come up out of the blue - summer storms, that is.
You're at the beach with the family, relaxing as the kids laugh and splash.
Suddenly the wind picks up, clouds roll in and you're running for cover.
Who here *hasn't* experienced something like that?

Not too bad when you're at the beach. A short dash to the car, and everything's OK.
Not quite so simple when you're a fisherman. Remember watching *The Perfect Storm*? Caught out, far from land, surrounded by nothing but rain, wind, and waves crashing round you like moving mountains.
Terrifying is the only word to describe those.

And terrified is what the disciples were that night.
Earlier verses in Mark 4 tell us that Jesus had spent the day sitting in the boat, teaching a large crowd that had gathered on the beach.
As the sun set over the Judean hills which bent and twisted to the west, they joined him in the boat and headed for the other side - ministry will happen there tomorrow. To the east were mountains rising up. In between was the Sea Of Galilee. It is quite common for winds to come roaring across the mountains or through narrow passes among those hills.

Some of Jesus' disciples were fishermen. They'd been on these waters before. They knew the power of storms. They probably also knew the names of victims of those storms.
Small wonder, then, that they become frantic.

Caught in a storm -
We all get caught, at one time or another.
Maybe not on the water.
But we face the towering clouds of doctor visits, surgery and chemo.
Or the violent winds of children rebelling.
Or being tossed back and forth by friendships at school that seem so good one moment, but then leave you in the lurch the next.
Or the helpless, sinking feeling when your spouse walks out.
Or drowning in loneliness.

In James 1:2 it says "*When you face trials...*" It does not say "*If you face trials.*" Count on it! You will face storms in life.
Nobody goes through life sailing easy from the cradle to the grave.
The older we get, the more weather-beaten we become.
True?

So it is that the Word of God allows us a peek into the lives of these disciples.
Rowing frantically.
Bailing like mad, probably.
Jesus sleeping through it all.
Finally, enough is enough!
"Teacher - Rabbi - do you not care that we are perishing?"

Some smart aleck once said, "A person does not drown because they have fallen into water; a person drowns because they're not able to get out of the water."
Soaked to the bone, the disciples can see no way out.
They're going to drown. *Jesus, don't you care?*

It's a marvelous snapshot of Jesus here.
We see Him as fully human - worn out and sleeping through a storm.
And yet we see far deeper.
Fully divine, Jesus knows the purposes of ship and sea, and so there is no panic - just sheer calm - as he lives in both His divine and human natures. And it is as One fully immersed

..... in this case literally.....
in the affairs of human life
He stands up and powers down the storm.
Peace! Be still!

As I read this account and in my mind see the Son of God stilling the storm I can't help but think to the book of Psalms:

Ps 65:5,7 "God of our salvation.... You still the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves...."

Friends, sometime believers ask me the eternally huge question - "Why?"

And so often, there really is no clear answer.

What I do know is this - Christian or not, we all will face deeply threatening and painful chapters in our lives. Jesus once said

"God sends the rain on the just and the unjust." (Mt 5:45).

It is **NOT** so that we have tough times only when we disobey God. The disciples got into a storm because Jesus said, "Get in the boat and start rowing."

They were in the center of His will.

And they were right in the middle of a storm.

When you're going through a tough time, don't automatically assume, "I must be out of the will of God."

You may be exactly where God wants you to be.

We'll all face storms.

The challenge is how we face them.

That said, please understand something critical to this passage -

It is **not**

I repeat - **not**-

a passage about the heroic faith of the disciples and how Jesus responds to that heroic faith and saves them.

Instead - well,

look at Mark 4. What's Jesus talking about in the words just before He stills the storm? What's the last parable he tells?

See it?

Faith as small as a grain of mustard seed.

Which is about all the disciples can muster.

They have more faith in the power of nature to drown them than they do in the Lord of nature to save them.

And Jesus gently let's them know it, too.

They'll need some work in that area.

But He doesn't say anything **until** the storm has stilled.

Jesus did **NOT** say "Go away. Come back only when your faith is stronger than your fear, and then I will help you."

Friends, He takes us as we come; and if we come with hardly any faith at all, **even then**, He immediately goes to work.

What really matters, at the end of the day, is that Jesus comes to us **however** we come to Him.

Faith..... even as small as a grain of mustard seed.

And there is the confidence for our week ahead. For none of us can say that we really live with a champion's faith.

Someone once found a survey from some sociologist - It said that only 2 % of our "worrying time" is spent on things that might actually be helped by worrying.

The other 98% of our "worrying time" is spent as follows:

40% is spent worrying about things that never happen

35% is spent worrying about things that can not be changed

15% is spent worrying about things that turn out better than expected

8% is spent worrying about things that are so petty that they don't matter at all.

That's us, isn't it?

So the gospel calls us, woe us, draws us towards greater faith in the Lord of Life and Creation -

Not just passively accepting intellectual truths about Him - knowing in our head that He is God's Son, that He died on the cross and rose again and returned to heaven.

But taking all the stuff of life to Him - storms and all.

And trusting,

with confidence,

that He'll come through — somehow.

We're called to grow and help each other towards a mature faith;

a faith with an element of courageous confidence that Jesus is equal to occasion we're experiencing.

Which is the whole point of the David story.

David tries to wear the human defenses - military army.

And, oh, how badly it fits.

He leaves it in the tent.

Instead, this giant in faith goes out to face the spiritual dwarf, Goliath, clothed with a well-fitted faith in the Creator, who is his Heavenly Father and Almighty Protector.

Read this Old Testament account carefully. It is **NOT** an underdog story, like the heroes portrayed in "Rocky" or "Karate Kid", where the little guy digs deep within himself and comes up a winner.

Instead, it's the story of the power of faith;

the power that comes from heaven to the one who was completely sold out to God.

It's a call for us to re-position our trust in the Lord, and in that way to have a new confidence and find a new power for living -

- in times of sunshine and quiet warmth

- in times of darkness and storm.

So, as we head out into the rough and tumble of life, remember, friends:

Remember - the **Presence** Of God

I am reminded of teaching from the New Testament.

Heb 6:19-20 *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.*

This says that Jesus has gone into the deepest inner core of Heaven. He's right in the presence of the Creator of the Universe.

He's there on behalf of all of us who go through storms in our lives.

As Romans 8:34 reminds us:

Jesus is at the right hand of God and is interceding for us.

Which means that we're not facing our storms alone.

And even though we may -

we **will** get plunged into deep and turbulent waters

And even though there doesn't seem any way out
we're in way over our head
Jesus calls down power from heaven -
- power to rescue

Which is the second thing to remember.
Remember not only the presence of God.
But also the **Providence** of God.

It's what our Catechism talks about in Q/A 26, talking about "God the Father Almighty."
*I trust Him so much that I do not doubt He will provide whatever I need for body and soul, and He will turn to my good whatever adversity He sends me in this sad world. He is **able** to do this because He is almighty God. He **desires** to do this because He is a faithful Father.*
Providence means that God looks at our lives with **Passion**.
And He enters our lives with **Power**.

Which is why the Catechism continues in Q/A 28:
[please say it with me]
*We can be patient when things go against us,
thankful when things go well,
and for the future we can have good confidence
in our faithful God and Father
that nothing will separate us from His love.*

How can you work on remembering the *Presence* and the *Providence* of God?

Let me close by laying out two tips to help us grow from a disciple-like faith towards a David-like faith.

Tip # 1 - *Remember past victories and give God credit for them.*

See what David tells Saul? About God's strength powering him over the bear and the lion.

Ever notice how we sometimes tend to focus more on unanswered prayers than answered ones? I wonder why that is?

Sometimes we tend to forget the care and blessings God provides. Or somehow we think that **we** were the authors of our own success.

Like the little boy playing on the barn roof. He slipped and on the way down, terrified he prayed, "God, please help me." His pants caught on a nail, and he came to a sudden and ripping halt. And he wiped his brow and said, "Never mind, Lord, I got caught on a nail."

Remember past victories and give God credit for them.

And tip # 2 - *When you're in a tight spot, or see one coming, speak - out loud - of your confidence in the Lord.*

There is power in actually verbalizing what you believe.

Say it to someone close to you.

And if there is no one to listen - speak it out loud to the Lord in prayer.

Or - say it in the face of your opposition. That's what David does - speaking confidently of God's power to the spiritual pigmy whom he soon would kill.

Someone said - *"You can't control your circumstances. And you can't always entirely control the doubts that flash into your mind in those circumstances. But you **can** control your speech in those circumstances.*

"Don't say, "This is too much. I should quit." Saying that will affect how you think, what you believe, and how you act.

Instead, affirm out loud your confidence in God's Providence Power.

Here's some verses of Scripture to use:

"I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." (Phil. 4:13)

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley I will fear no evil for you are with me." (Psalm 23:4)

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?. The Lord is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27)

[Pause]

Yes, those storm come seemingly out of the blue.

But, brothers and sisters in faith,

We don't face the storms alone.

And, as it was for the disciples, so it is for us,
those storms don't have the last word.

Christ does!