

Danger at Sea!

[Allstate ad, video] NOT pointing finger at Allstate -- just was struck by the message of the commercial and what it says about our society: "uncertainty will not rule your life if you put your life in good hands" -- implying that if you buy this insurance, everything will be okay.

As humans, we don't like admitting that life is fragile and uncertain. We try our best to control things. Or we put our trust in finances, insurance, or the latest product, to hold things together, to keep uncertainty to a minimum.

But WE are followers of Jesus, we should think differently about life; being a disciple of Jesus is a whole way of life -- we don't have to fear, we don't have to panic! -- for our leader, our Lord, is the God of the Universe

-- this was a lesson that Jesus wanted to teach his disciples -- that he is the Lord of the wind and waves, so when storms come, we can call on him; and he will amaze us...

We are in this series called "The Road to Redemption" we are talking about walking along the road with Jesus, about the call to discipleship in the Gospels,

-- by the way, this series is gaining traction -- we are excited that the men's Tuesday morning group will be studying this (talk to Paul Shedlock if you want more info)

we will be studying **Luke 8:22-25** this morning... [read]

just to alert you, I'm not going to read it all at once, but piece by piece -- Luke follows classic storytelling here, so we will look at the text through the lens of story, letting the suspense build; look at four elements of the story: **setting, introduction of problem, resolution of problem, impact** -- at each point, connecting it to our lives and to the greater story of our life together as church

Setting

[verse 22]

-- Luke doesn't give us specifics; "one day" -- which gives it a sense of the ordinary, this is what the journey on the road with Jesus is like

-- "they got into a boat and set out;" they launched forth -- when we choose to become Christians, we become followers of Jesus, when he starts walking, we follow -- He leads us into adventures and into mission: we share our testimonies, build churches, get involved in ministries... sometimes Jesus sends us to unexpected places or far away places; and we set out -- we set out, we get going: usually bright-eyed and bushy tailed; excited, idealistic, expectant

but then, inevitably, somewhere on that road, "one day" come storms

Introduction of Problem

[verse 23]

-- storm suddenly sweeps down on them -- quick geography lesson **[photo]**: small lake, but 700 feet below sea level, flanked on the eastern side by steep hills and cliffs -- the wind comes rushing down between those hills and hits the warm air of the lake, and BAM, a storm comes up suddenly

-- inevitably, along the way storms come; we are not immune

-- one of lies of popular Christian culture = that if we are good people, bad things won't or shouldn't

happen to us -- but nothing in Bible that promises an easy life; in fact, the heroes in Scripture had hard lives; Jesus even said, "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33) -- hard times do come; life can be difficult; when cold air collides with warm air storms build
 -- The key is in our response. Do we turn to God in trust, do we give up, are we washed away by the storms?

What about storms that come to us in our life together? Our life as a church? What do we do with those?
 -- the most common storms (and sometimes the scariest) that come into our life together, into our ministries, is CONFLICT; after all, we are unique people, designed with different personalities, growing up with different backgrounds -- how many of you are extroverts? introverts? not sure?! that will create some conflict right there!
 -- conflict is inevitable! conflict happens! but the key is our response to it -- will the conflict that we face divide us permanently? be allowed to fester so that it destroys us? how will we respond?

-- what is the response of the disciples?

Resolution of the Problem

[verses 24-25a]

-- Jesus rebukes the wind and raging waves, "sudden and complete calm" -- when they cry out to Jesus, Jesus acts

-- "rebukes"? = the waves/wind themselves weren't evil, part of creation and created order, to blame laws of nature is to blame the Maker of those laws;

= Jesus is perhaps rebuking the force behind the storm; the force of destruction, confusion, fear; the storm or conflict is not the problem, it is the potential force to destroy, to divide us, and that is the force he rebukes

-- the disciples DO do one thing right: they take the problem to Jesus, which is good

-- but they also react in panic: "we're going to drown -- we are perishing!"

-- we have this same tendency to panic, assume the worst; like **Chicken Little**, who, when an acorn falls on his head, panics, runs around and tells everyone that "the sky is falling!"

-- there are real problems, and problems that are too big for us; the text says the disciples were in danger

-- but they could have reacted differently, could have said, "Jesus, we need help, storm is too big for us!" the storm may be big, but God is bigger

-- when we face conflict in the church; we usually have one of two responses: we either panic -- OH NO! often running away; leave church and find another one; leave a team or group -- OR we avoid it:

-- we want church to be our happy place, we want smooth sailing; but that means we depend on nothing going wrong, rather than depending on God

-- so we might avoid conflict: ignore it, keep silent, pretend everything is okay -- unfortunately, conflict doesn't just go away

-- "where is your faith?" addresses their reaction

-- panic and avoidance are in fact, part of the problem -- because in our panic and avoidance, show our lack of faith, show ourselves to be "functional atheists" -- act as if there is no God, as if it all depends on us; act as if God can't or won't do anything about it -- we don't trust that God is a good God.

Let me pause for a minute. I want to make sure we understand one thing. Panic and avoidance are both wrong, yes. But that doesn't mean we have to like the storms, like the conflict. It stinks to suffer. Conflict is uncomfortable. Sometimes Christians take a stoic route, denying any emotions. But the

psalms are full of sorrow and anger. Even Jesus wept in the Garden of Gethsemane. It's okay to express our emotions about what has happened. The key is what we do with those emotions. One of the great things about our God is that he wants us to take these emotions to him, even if they are not pretty.

--This is different than panicking--panicking and avoidance question God's power, question whether God is able to redeem the situation. We believe that God is our Redeemer--he can make good out of everything that happens. Philip Yancey once said, "There is nothing that can happen to us that God can't redeem." We may not like the situation, yet Jesus calls us to take it to him and watch him redeem the situation.

-- Where is your faith? -- it is almost as if Jesus is saying, "honestly, do you think God would have let his only Son, the promised Redeemer, and his disciples, the future leaders of the church, drown in a storm?"

-- honestly? do you think God will allow his precious church, the body of Christ of which he is the head, to be destroyed? beaten up, maligned, divided, yes; but never destroyed! have you forgotten already all the things God has done in the past?

-- where is your faith? it is a rebuke, but a gentle rebuke; this is not how true believers act -- a rebuke that reminds us of good news, in the words of John Ortberg: "There is a God. It is not you."

-- This rebuke is good news. Jesus doesn't say, "Life is hard. Deal with it" -- get over the difficulty, grin and bear it. -- Our Lord doesn't leave us to face the storms alone; he is in the boat with us. We don't have to deal with the difficulties ourselves; we take them to God and let HIM deal with them -- God this is YOUR problem!

Russ Newberg shared a great story with me about Corrie Ten Boom, who was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp in WWII, but eventually freed. In her book, *The Hiding Place*, she shared how she met one of her former guards, and she could not lift her arm to shake his hand. So she prayed, "Jesus, I cannot forgive. Give me your forgiveness." When she did, "a current seemed to pass through her" and she was overwhelmed with love. She was able to shake hands with the guard. She called out to Jesus and he worked wonders.

We are in a healthy place now as a church, so we can resolve NOW, in the good times, that when we face conflict or storms, whether its something big or something small; decide now that we will NOT panic neither will we avoid it; we WILL trust that God is powerful and that he CAN and WILL act -- resolve now that we will cry out to Jesus!

Impact

[verse 25b]

-- the sudden and complete calm was a miracle! something these fisherman never saw

-- "who then is this?" they wonder --> such power of nature can only be God!

-- The disciples knew from the Old Testament that only God has such power: **Psalm 65:5,7**: "You answer us with awesome deeds of righteousness, O God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas... who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations."

Nahum 1:3-4 "His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and dries it up; he makes all the rivers run dry."

-- such power over nature can only be the Creator! He is Lord of the wind and waves!

-- not only that, God is bigger than forces of evil, more powerful than forces of destruction and division; he can rebuke the force of evil behind the storm

-- Luke is highlighting the identity of this Jesus; this text is part of several leading up to the great statement of Peter in 9:20, when Jesus asks his disciples, "who do you say that I am? who am I to you?" Peter boldly responds, "the Messiah of God" -- Luke wants to see Jesus' true identity -- Jesus is not just another teacher and prophet; he is the Son of the most High God!

-- we too need to be convinced of Jesus' identity first and foremost; important lesson not just for life, but for ministry and leadership: our leader is Christ, God himself -- **Ephesians 1:21-22**, "Christ is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church."

-- we don't serve just anyone! our Lord, our Master, the head of the church is the Mighty God, Creator of the Universe, who can overcome the storm, who can keep us safe within the storm -- no need to panic -- when we cry out to Jesus in the storm, we will see his power at work -- when we bring the conflict to him, it is his chance to amaze us -- he will work in it and through it, to accomplish his purposes -- we don't need to panic or avoid conflict; in fact, true faith is giving it to Jesus, trusting in him to work -- if you think about it, conflict can be a good thing, because it is an opportunity for God to step in! -- God can use it to accomplish his purposes -- take the conflict to Jesus and watch him work, we will be amazed -- and those moments of wonder and amazement will help us to let go of our control and trust God no matter what. And when he does intervene, when he makes good of the situation, we can celebrate that -- that will help us remember to trust when storms come down on us again.

My **two questions** for you:

1. Who is Jesus? -- the question we all have to answer at some point in our lives

-- do you believe that he is the Son of Almighty God, the Creator of the Universe? Is Jesus your Lord?

2. Where is your faith?

What is your response when you face storms? When you face conflict?

Do you trust in this God? Or are you trusting in yourself or some other earthly good?

Do you truly believe that the head of this church is Jesus, the one who stilled the storm?

One of the great hymns of the faith was written in response to a storm. In the nineteenth century, Horatio G. Spafford lost his four daughters when an ocean liner sank in the Atlantic; only his wife survived. It was an earth-shattering, overwhelming loss. What did this heartbroken man write as he processed what had happened?

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll —
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul.