

June 20, 2021

Texts: Psalm 107: 1-3, 23-32; Mark 4: 35-41

Title: "When Storms Hit Home"

Father's Day

On this Father's Day I want to say "thank you" to all dads, grandads, and those who are like a dad to someone in their lives for all you do to shape lives, and for the example you provide us in managing the ups and downs in life. I hope that you feel honored and appreciated today.

Comedian Jim Gaffigan posted on Twitter, "My 4-yr.-old gave me a handmade card for Father's Day. Maybe for Christmas I'll draw him a picture of some toys." A man named Mike Jackson tweeted, "Get your dad what he really wants this Father's Day by turning off the lights when you leave a room." And a tweet from username "Dad and Buried" reads, "Called my dad to wish him a happy Father's Day and we spent the whole time discussing back pain and ibuprofen. The circle is now complete."

Good dads and moms have a natural impulse to protect their children and to serve as an example to them in tough times. I think it's appropriate that our Bible text from the gospel of Mark falls on Father's Day. It's the story about the disciples caught in a terrible storm and they need courage, they need leadership, and they need an example of how to face a challenge that's beyond their strength.

And by the way, how would you react in a situation like that? What would a life-threatening storm reveal about your leadership skills and ability to control stress? I don't know where you were when that storm came through here a week ago but when the winds get so violent and you can't do a thing to stop it, how do

you react? Some of these disciples were seasoned fishermen. So this must have really been a bad one that they thought they were going to die. They were so frightened they woke Jesus.

Maybe you've cried out for Jesus at some time in our lives. You hit a storm. Not just a stressful event. But an event or a season of life that's so devastating that you don't have the strength to face it on your own. And where is Jesus? Is he awake?

And of course, **everybody goes through storms at some time or another.** Many marriages go through stormy times and some end up in divorce. I've seen, as a pastor, the pain of divorce especially when there are children involved.

A healthy marriage is vitally important to most people's sense of identity, security and well-being. When a marriage falls apart, the partners can go through the same stages of grief as someone whose spouse has died.

The loss of a loved one is also a terrible storm with devastating effects. William Sloane Coffin was a very popular and influential pastor who lost his son Alex in a car accident. He said that he received lots of cards and phone calls and visits from friends and church members and fellow pastors. And most of them had no idea how to comfort him. He said the least helpful people were his fellow pastors. They quoted the Bible at him a lot. But they didn't understand his grief. As he said, ". . . the depth of my grief made those words unreal."

The worst part in the storms of life is that Jesus may seem to be asleep. "Why doesn't he intervene?" we cry out in our distress. Where is God in my distress? Don't you care that we are perishing? Author Reynolds Price tells of

getting a letter from a young man named Jim who'd just been diagnosed with cancer. Price had survived his own bout with cancer a few years earlier, and Jim was writing to him because he knew Price would understand his fear and his questions. Jim wrote, "I want to believe in a God who cares . . . because I may meet him sooner than I'd expected. I think I'm at the point where I can accept the existence of God but I can't yet believe that He cares about me."

That's the question we'll all wrestle with sometime in our lives. And if God does care about us, why does He let the storms happen? I think the answer's right here in our reading from Mark's gospel.

The story's an affirmation. Yes, Jesus does care. When it seems you can't hold on a moment longer, he does care. When the water's ready to go over your head, he does care.

Listen to this: Jesus had all power in heaven and earth available to him. He chose to empty himself of his power and take on the life of an average man. He chose to endure hardship. He chose to endure oppression from the Roman government and rejection from the religious establishment and his own family. He chose to be hungry, to be lonely, to be abandoned and betrayed by his closest friends. He chose to suffer wrongful arrest and torture and humiliation and death. Jesus chose to place himself into every imaginable storm because he had faith that God was using these storms for a greater purpose, for the salvation of the world. He knew God Almighty was with him every step of the way. That's how he could face down every storm without fear.

Glen Scrivener says that a few years ago he prayed to God that he would get to know God better. Within a week of that prayer, His employers deported him from England back to Australia, his long-time girlfriend broke up with him, and his parents announced they were divorcing.

In the midst of all these painful events, Glen had a revelation: God was using these storms to answer his prayer. He realized that following Jesus often allows us to head into some really challenging times. Jesus may very well lead us directly into a storm. But it's not because he doesn't love us or wasn't prepared for it. **It's because we can't understand the power and the peace of God unless we encounter it in the middle of a storm.** The best way to get to know God is to be caught in a storm with Him.

And that's a lesson the disciples needed to learn, and they couldn't learn it any other way. So they woke Jesus from his sleep, and he spoke to the wind and the waves, "Peace! be still!" And there was a great calm. Then he turns to the disciples and asks, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"

The central question in life is not how many storms we must pass through. The question is whether we have faith for the storms. All of us encounter them. Sometimes it will seem as if God Himself has forsaken us. And it's at those times that our faith will be critical. Do you believe in a God who loves you and has promised never to forsake you? Do you believe that however dark the clouds may be, behind those clouds, the sun still shines? Do you believe that beyond every cross, there is an empty tomb? If you do, you'll weather every storm. If you

don't, today is the day to appropriate that faith for yourself. Amen.