

22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. **23** After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, **24** but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. **25** During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. **26** When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. **27** But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." **28** "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." **29** "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. **30** But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" **31** Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" **32** And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. **33** Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

"Would you rather..." You know how this works? Kids,

- Would you rather always have to wear earmuffs or a nose plug? "Ugh. These ear muffs are hot in NC." "Ewww. This nose plug is annoying sometimes."

We can get a little more serious for you tweens and teens:

- Would you rather not be able to talk or text on the phone ever again or never be able to use the internet – no surfing for info or facebooking friends or gaming or anything?

Now, if you adults haven't answered yet, here's a really weighty one:

- Would you rather always have to say everything on your mind or never speak again?

Ok, now you've got the hang of it. Now let's try one for Jesus' disciples. Put yourself in their shoes, and attempt to answer. In the midst of a raging storm, would you rather be firmly footed on dry land or be in a fishing boat – no motor, only sails and oars – being tormented by waves & wind?

"Oh, c'mon! This is a no-brainer." Before you answer, give thought to this critical piece of context: Jesus made the decision to send them into the storm, rather than allow them to stay on the land with him. So, now what do you think: would you rather be on the land, or on the water where Jesus made it clear "you've got to go"?

It is better to be... Sent by Jesus into the storm (vs.22-27). That's our 1st key truth.

It is easy to relate with the disciples. This is the tough side of life: facing the raging winds. Don't mistakenly think of the literal winds, which can fury here in hurricane storm season. We can relate to the disciples, because forces rage against us. The "storm" might relate to our health this time, or our employment, the management of our finances, raising kids in a world hostile to our faith, kids – facing temptation from so many directions. Man, there's just a lot of storminess!

Some elements that we face are **so** tough. Why does Jesus send us to face such daunting, exhausting forces? Why did Jesus send the disciples out ahead of him, to face the storm?

If you'll search the immediate and wider context, you'll see that there was a threat on the land, at this very moment. Let me lay this out for us: The disciples often showed a weakness for power, position or prestige. They wanted Jesus to reign as King, but didn't understand – as of yet – how he must suffer, die and rise again... and how the gospel would be preached in all the world... and how only then would the end come, with Jesus' return, and with every knee bowing to Him.

Take that weakness of the disciples and their inability to understand the full picture... and factor that together with the desire of the crowd on shore. We're told over in the Gospel of John that the people wanted to make Jesus king – by force. Had the disciples remained, one might easily conclude, they would have faced a more dangerous situation on land than on the sea. You see?!

Why does Jesus send **us** into the storms of life? There are many aspects to the answer. But from today's episode with the disciples (as throughout God's Word), we learn most dramatically: wherever he sends you is best for you. If that means into a storm, so be it. This we see...

He's got your best interest in mind in sending you there (in allowing you to be positioned in that place, at that time). And, he won't leave you to fend for yourself. He'll come to you with His aid at the right time – every time.

In vs.24 we hear: "The disciples, in their boat, were being tormented by the waves." Then, vs.25: "Jesus came to them walking upon the sea."

In vs.26, they are afraid at the sight. "Immediately," vs.27, he told them: "Be of good cheer. Take courage. Stop being afraid."

See the faith of the disciples grow. Jesus' words give the very thing of which he speaks... At one and the same instant they are assured "Jesus is here" & "don't worry." The very thing they had been fighting, the water that threatened to take their life, Jesus walked on it! He's come! He's shown: he's in control. He's spoken His Word: to calm, to strengthen and to cheer his disciples.

Keep in mind: at this point, the storm was still raging on the Sea of Galilee. [Motion to congregation] At this time – look around – the storm is still raging.

One of us is the target of malicious gossip. Another faces discrimination. One is stretched to an extreme by the demands of command, or a boss. Another one is taken to court and - through no fault of their own - loses what is priceless to them. One deals with the toxic behavior of a family member. Another wonders how her health is holding up.

I want you to think back to the words of the hymn sung just prior to the sermon [Be still My Soul]. What is to be still? My soul. This is God's Word on the matter of the turmoil we face in life. He doesn't still all the storms. He could. But he doesn't. At his word, storms still must bow and bend to his bidding. Yet, he allows the storms that rise up and rage in our lives.

At such times, he sends his Word to bring an even more powerful outcome. Yes, I'm making the statement: he does something even more amazing and mighty than stilling a windblown sea or stopping the turbulence in your life. As we listen to his Word spoken to us, He stills and quiets us. Think of it. The storms may rage on, yet he enables us to have peace amidst the turmoil that blows wild around us. He empowers us to trust.

Yes, the harassment by the raging forces wears at our hearts. But, to be grabbed up into his arms in the midst of the storms – we can rest. As long as I know you're in charge Lord, the wind may rage. As long as you have hold of me all the while, the waves may crash. As long as you will work this all out for my good, and the good of my little ones who trust in you and the good of my brothers and sisters in Christ, I know we're safe in the midst of whatever we face.

The answer to turmoil in life is not an end to all turmoil. The answer to turmoil in life is Jesus. He comes to us. Here, placed at your fingertips (the Bible), poured upon your head (baptism), and set onto your tongue (Lord's Supper), Jesus gives to us calm, strength and cheer. This is how the faith of God's people grows.

Now, you've grown. And yet, if you think your faith is strong, still: “Be careful that you don't fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). In the next part of our account, Peter in one instant displays faith – markedly bold faith! In the next instant, weakness strikes. Don't look down on Peter. Let's look to Peter for an example. Here's what we learn:

It is better to be... II. in the waves with Jesus (vs.28-33)

It is easy to relate with Peter here. This is the stuff of everyday life. Anyone doing the walking on water thing lately? Ok, not that then. What we can relate to is: both moments of strength and of weakness - faith leading to bold acts of trust, followed by weakness leading to crying out to the Lord for rescue. How often have you experienced these two side-by-side?

Jesus is standing on the water. Peter wants to be with him. For the moment, eyes fixed on Jesus, Peter feared nothing. Is anyone saying: “Right on, Peter! In the waves with Jesus is better than in the boat without him!”?

Step out in faith like Peter. Step out in trust even amidst the turmoil in your life, because in the waves with Jesus is the safest place in all the world.

Jesus was standing on the water. Now, Peter was too.

Jesus was still standing on the water. The wind was still raging. And Peter feared.

The evidence of his weakness is plastered on the page: he doubted. He began to sink. In the midst of his weakness, don't miss this: where he still placed his trust is evident. He didn't just cry out, like the disciples had earlier. Note the difference now. He directed his cry to someone. “Lord! Save me!” You see: for Peter, this was not a fall from faith. For Peter, this was a weakness of faith. Acknowledging his weakness, knowing not to launch into any sort of self-rescue attempt, Peter calls out to Jesus.

Call out with Peter. This is nothing other than the most basic form of “stepping out in faith” - that is, faith in action. Why do I say that? When we call out like this for help, we admit our faulty steps – our sins – and turn to the Lord to forgive us. We know no effort on our part will lead to rescue. We turn to the Lord: “Save me!” We place ourselves completely at the mercy and the grace of our God.

Our faith is often challenged. Our flesh and our enemy, the devil, whisper doubt in the midst of adversity. They question God's presence, his control, his love.

Oh, how sad of shape we'd be in if our God required that we go without any missteps! Don't expect to go through storms with never-a-doubt. The answer to facing the winds and waves that crash around us in this world is: call out to Jesus – call to him for rescue. Trust him to lift you up, wash you clean of sin, proclaim to you peace, remind you of your standing before him. And by all this, he'll stir thanksgiving within you, and breathe strength into you to praise him with words and actions as you go forward in faith.

Jesus did all that for Peter, and the other disciples, and...

They worshiped Him as Lord and God. We worship him as Lord and God. Worship him as your living Lord and gracious God.

“How to be still in a stirred up and tumultuous world?” That's really what we're looking at today. Comfort does not come from the size or strength of our faith. Comfort always comes when we are looking to the One in whom our Christian faith is placed.

Our Savior Jesus walks over all our greatest fears. The very things that stand as our greatest challenges & enemies, he places them under his feet – he holds power over them.

Our Lord showed that at the Red Sea. The water that one moment stood as a dead end, the next moment served as walls, like guards providing safe passage – by God's power a pathway to freedom. God's people free. The enemies left washed out.

Our Lord Jesus has shown the same power over all our enemies. Our sin is left nailed to His cross (Col.2:13-15). Our death is left buried in His tomb – we have life eternal with him (Romans 6:5-10). Our God brings us through death, to life in Paradise with him. The devil is told his accusations are invalid when hurled against us who are in Christ Jesus. For we are washed in his blood and robed in his righteousness (Revelation 12:10-11). And Satan's final defeat is sure (Revelation 20:10; Romans 16:20).

We look forward to when death itself, the last great enemy of God's people, will be hurled down along with Satan. And, the One who saved Peter from a watery grave, and then walked over the water with Peter at his side, will raise us up from our graves. And He will walk with us. Forever. He'll bring you through the storms of life. He'll hold onto you through the waves. Trust in him. Trust him until he brings you safely home. Amen.