

INTRO:¹

One of the things that Pastoring now for a number of years has afforded me is the opportunity to see trends in people. In the first few years, I'd be in conversation/relationship with different people and think, "*man, everyone's SO different/so multifaceted in their circumstances and struggles.*" And to be sure, at times, that made things exciting, but I'll tell ya, it was really discouraging, cuz how do ya love, serve, bring the truths of Jesus to bear on a person when EVERY person feels like the FIRST person you've EVER met? By God's grace though, what happens when you've done this for a little while - and not just Pastoring, but A LOT of things in life - is you begin to see that while every person is ABSOLUTELY unique, we nevertheless, TEND TO operate along a lot of the same lines; PARTICULARLY with respect to things like, how and why we engage/RE-engage with God, faith, and certainly church. One of the things I've found to be a driver for that, tends to be struggles or "storms" in our lives. Just something that forces you to kinda pick your eyes up OFF yourself and start to consider things BEYOND yourself. Ya know, statistics say that one of the highest levels of American church attendance, in the last 50-75 years, came on the Sunday...following 911. Churches were packed!...And so knowing all this, I'll tell ya, I generally come in here each Sunday/maybe ESPECIALLY during Christmas, assuming that IF you're here, it's generally for 1 of 3 reasons: **One**, you're presently in some kind of storm. You feel "out sea," as it were, in some area of your life and you're hoping to find direction...Or **Two**, maybe you're not IN a storm, but rather've recently come THROUGH a storm and are hoping just to find a little rest and solace...Or **Three**, maybe you're not in or coming OUT of a storm, but rather/and whether ya know it or not, are ABOUT to meet a "storm" and are here cuz ya need to be prepared...In a lot of ways, "storms" and struggles characterize our lives!...And so it's good that we've come to a passage in **John** ALL about life's storms! Specifically, if you're taking notes today, one that's gonna show you **3 Things: First, A Picture Of Life As Being Full Of Storms; Second, An Understanding Of The REAL Storm You Face; And Third, How You Can Find Calm In The Storm. 3 Things!**

TEXT:

So **First, A Picture Of Life As Being Full Of Storms:** So the scene here is that: Jesus and Disciples have just departed the masses after, as we saw last week, Jesus having turned 5 loaves and 2 fish into enough food to feed about 15,000 people - a miracle we saw that prompted the crowd to wanna make Jesus their king. They saw this unbelievable power in Him and consequently thought He'd be the perfect guy to deliver them out from under Roman rule. But Jesus, having come NOT to clean up the world, but to forgive it, instead sends His Disciples away and removes Himself from the crowd by going up on a mountain. Problem is, as **vv.16-17** say there, with evening coming and Jesus nowhere to be found, the Disciples, rather than risk having to spend the night somewhere random, get into a boat and head from one side of the Sea of Galilee to the other, to a place called Capernaum, I've actually been to the Sea Galilee. It's not small. The shortest distance across it is about 5-6 miles. And for these Disciples, we're talking 5-6 miles...in a row-boat...at night!...Such that, as it says in **vv.18-19**, when they'd gotten about

¹ Works consulted:

- Lord of the Storm - Gospel of John, Part 1 - April 7, 1991 - John 6:16-21 + The Terrifying Jesus - The Apostles' Creed; Getting a Vocabulary for Faith—December 12, 1999 - John 6:16-24 + The Crossing - Seeing Jesus—February 16, 2014 - John 6:16-25

3-4 miles in or kinda right in the middle of the sea, an incredible storm kicks. And honestly, the translation there is a little weak there, cuz what we're really talking about is a full-on squall/a kind of mini-hurricane. Which remember, this is before you had engine-powered boats or navigational systems. So to be caught in something like this really is to be thrown into something COMPLETELY beyond your control.

This why in a lot of ancient literature, the sea was representative of chaos and the fact that life in this world is naturally filled with things that can sweep you up and swallow you up without a moment's notice. And I know, that's kinda hard for US to grasp. Cuz we have all kinds of modern mechanisms, medicines, and methods the sorta insulate us from out-and-out chaos *right?* My mother-in-law lives in a little bit more of a rural area of the country, but even she - in the midst of terrible storms that can knock out her power and put her house at risk with all the trees around - even still has a generator/a backup power source if everything really goes sideways. It's really tough for US to see that, as Tim Keller says, our lives really are more like "sea voyages" than they are "land voyages," meaning EVEN WITH all the modern mechanisms we have for minimizing chaos, there's still PLENTY of things that, like this "storm," can suddenly stir up and really bite you. Might be a medical diagnosis for an otherwise healthy person, or a sudden economic downturn that wipes out your savings. Maybe an unintentional mistake that totally derails your career. Even just the notion that, while you think you know your spouse's heart or your friends' hearts, there's nothing that 100% guarantees that won't turn-on or turn AWAY from you in some capacity...And I say that not to be overly dramatic or cuz I'm trying to scare ya, but simply to show ya that, in many respects, the situation the Disciples are in here is like **A Picture Of Our Lives**, as being FULL of things that - even if ya don't wanna admit it or are pretty good at mitigating against it - are nonetheless COMPLETELY out of your control! And no matter how hard ya "paddle," as it were, you're not getting through those things!...(let's pray)...No! It's just that our lives - no matter how much savvy, competence, wisdom, or discipline you have - really are more like uncontrollable "sea journeys" than "land journeys"...AND YET, they're journeys that Jesus ABSOLUTELY sees!

Cuz along with a **Picture Of Our Lives**, the *Second* thing we get here is: **An Understanding Of The Real Storm We All Face**: And I say, Jesus absolutely sees you in your storms, cuz look in *v.19* there. You gotta catch this! Cuz the impression we get there is that while the Disciples are completely at the mercy of this storm, SUDDENLY, Jesus is walking on water toward to em! *Why is that?* Cuz Jesus was up on the mountain, and the Disciples were down in the water, until SUDDENLY Jesus is down ON the water coming toward em. *What's going on?* The impression you're supposed to get...is that He's been watching em from above the whole time. From up on the mountain/looking down on the world as it were. Seeing His people/seeing YOU battle through storms, struggle with overwhelming problems you can't handle...and then coming down to speak a word of grace and truth to you in the midst of it. *And what does He say?/What does He say to the Disciples? v.20, "It is I; do not be afraid."* **Think about that!** Jesus, seeing you in need; then showing up at EXACTLY the right time - not early, not late, but right when you're in the absolute middle of things/the middle of the storm and the middle of the sea - and instead of immediately calming your storm says, *"It is I, don't be afraid!"* **Why would He tell em not to be**

afraid? Why according to v.20 there, did the Disciples suddenly BECOME afraid when they saw Jesus? Cuz wouldn't you expect it the opposite? They're in the middle of this storm/ YOU'RE in the middle of a storm and you see Jesus coming to you. **Don't you expect they'd say, "Yes! Here He comes. We're gonna be ok."**? Of course! But they don't! Instead, it says they got scared/literally terrified WHEN He came...Cuz here's what going on: The storm is bad enough, but remember most of these guys are fishermen, so likely, there's still at least SOME part of them that's going, *"we're gonna figure this out. We've been here before. We know the water."* So while they might've been scared; they weren't terrified. Rather, they get terrified when they see Jesus walking on water. And the Greek there is more like, "strolling on water"/ "having a nice stroll through a hurricane." THAT'S when they're "frightened." Cuz, you understand, THAT'S when they realize they're in the presence of something utterly and totally beyond them! While they might've had a shot navigating the storm; they got NO shot navigating the One who strolls through storms...In other words, in the presence of Jesus, **they're facing a storm far greater than mere wind and waves.** They're facing the storm of a holy God.

Now admittedly, that word "holy" gets a bad wrap. Cuz we hear it and think "uptight" or "prudish" *right?* "Holier than thou." But what it really means is "set apart/distinct," which is EXACTLY what Jesus is showing Himself to be by walking on water. He's showing forth the fact that He's utterly different. He's from somewhere else. He's...supernatural. The Disciples are realizing, they're in the presence of something from another world and consequently/like any of us would do, react in terror. But ya notice, it's not the scream and run kind of terror, but the more be frightened and paralyzed kind of terror. That odd combo of both attraction and repulsion. It's like, for example, when you tell your kids a ghost story or better yet, like I like to do with my girls, when I find a really good hiding place around the house and then when they least expect it, jump out and scare the mess out of em. **What do kids ALWAYS do in those situations?** They get totally freaked out and then say *what?* "Do it again Daddy!" **Right?** Like there's a kind of attraction-repulsion thing going on...The same is true with God's holiness. In Him being holy and unique, we wanna be near Him, but then when we get near Him we're afraid OF Him cuz He's so altogether different than us. And you see this throughout Scripture: The Prophet Isaiah wanting to get near to God, but then saying, *"Woe is me. I'm a man of unclean lips. I'm undone."* Or Moses wanting to see God's glory, but then having to hide and turn away from Him, lest he die. In other words, we have in us this kind of "splitness," you might call it, that goes all the way back to the fact that, starting with Adam and Eve, you and I were created to live in deep fellowship with God. Created to walk with and enjoy Him in the garden - to wanna be near and depend on Him. BUT instead of doing that, we decided to try and live independently FROM Him, and consequently fractured our souls/like fracturing a bone. So the result's been - ever since Adam and Eve - we're, as Keller says, *"traumatized by the holy...such that we can't live with God and we can't live without Him."* We want Him but then fear Him. We're split!

Think about some of the most terrifying literature/movies of all time. Ya know, the classics. like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, or I don't know if you can call it a classic, but the mid-90's movie "Primal Fear" with Richard Gere and Ed Norton, or more recently, M. Night Shyamalan's "Split" with James McAvoy. **What do they all have in common?** They all take this truth that we're split

in our souls and then simply draw it out to the extreme **right?** They put imagery, for example, to the Apostle Paul's **Romans 7** description of our hearts as being split between wanting and not wanting to do good...and it's terrifying!

Why do you think so many people/maybe YOU are here today cuz you're genuinely seeking God AND YET, when God speaks to you today/maybe already has/invites you to in some way get closer to Him...you immediately gonna get scared! You immediately think, *"If I REALLY obey God in that area, REALLY let go of that thing He wants me to let go of, trust Him in that way, He might not come through for me; will ask me to do something I don't wanna do; or embarrass me, disappoint me, just hang me out to dry."* You immediately get scared until maybe by Tuesday or Wednesday that wears off, you come back here, and rinse and repeat...**Don't you see? The REAL Storm You Face** is how to relate to and be in relationship with a holy God! Cuz THAT'S the storm from which ALL your other storms are either calmed or exacerbated!

So **Finally, Where Then Can You Get That Calm:** And this is SO important not only cuz we all obviously need it, but because we so often get it wrong. Cuz think about the last time you faced a storm - of any kind. **What was some of the "comfort" you got from others?**...Probably something right like, *"I know this is tough now, but it'll pass."* Or *"if ya just hold on, something good's gonna come of this."* Or as more and more people seem to be saying these days, *"Ya just need to manifest...manifest!"* And look, I'll be the first to say - with the exception of that manifesting garbage - I've offered up a ton of "cold comfort" like that/more than I care to admit. We all have! But notice, that's NOT what brings calm to the Disciples here. What brings THEM calm actually has nothing to do with the storm. Rather, it has to do with Jesus saying, *"It is I; do not be afraid."* Cuz you see, in **v.21** it's **"THEN** - after He says that - *that they were glad to take Him into the boat.*" Cold comfort might, for a time, warm your heart, but it won't change it! Might lessen some of the anxiety, but won't make you a calm, composed person of fortitude. Only what Jesus says here can do that! Can change your heart in such a way as to bring you true calm not only in the storms of life, but in the greater storm of relating to a holy God.

Cuz see, when Jesus says, *"It is I; do not be afraid,"* the literal translation there is really awkward. And so what we have is a kind of smoothed-out/more readable one. But in Greek it says, *"egō eimi"* or literally *"I am, fear not."* **Now, does that sound familiar?** "I am"? It should cuz it's the covenant name God identified Himself with to Moses in the OT - Yahweh/I Am. Moses asked God, *"who should I tell Israel you are?"* God responded, *"tell em, I am!"* by which He meant, *"I'm everything. I'm perfect. I have no beginning or end. I don't need anything. I'm not just A power, I'm THE power. All the power in the world/in every storm is simply on loan from me! Cuz I'm not like anything you've ever known...I...Am!"* Jesus says this about Himself and therefore, not only is He very clearly AGAIN equating Himself to God, BUT He's saying that His God'ness/His holiness, instead of being a threat to you, can NOW actually be a comfort FOR you. That's what He means by *"fear not."* Cuz of course, think about how much of a comfort it would be to know that the One who's Lord over every storm IN your life is also Lord OF your life. But even more than that, what a comfort to know that you don't have to fear the power and holiness of God - that greater storm. That God's no longer against you, but for you.

THAT'S what Jesus is saying! ***How can He say that?*** Especially, when as I mentioned, it's so different from every other instance in which God's holiness is revealed. ***How can He say this?***

Think about the scene here: You got these Disciples right - a group of sailors - stuck and scared, in a storm, but THEN suddenly delivered. ***What story does that remind you of?*** The book of Jonah ***right?*** In which Jonah - this prophet of God - disobeys and runs away from God by boarding a boat. So in response, God sends a huge storm TO that boat! So that Jonah, REALIZING that He's getting what he deserved, but in the process putting his fellow sailors' lives at stake, demands that they throw him overboard to be saved!...So a group of sailors, in a storm, stuck and scared, but then suddenly delivered. Very similar to what you have here MINUS one key detail: THESE sailors/the Disciples are saved not cuz someone like Jonah gets sacrificed on their behalf, but because someone totally UNlike Jonah/someone who DIDN'T deserve to be sacrificed...nevertheless would be... ***You see?*** The REASON Jesus can say all this, is cuz He's the greater Jonah! He's the One who was truly thrown overboard into the storm, so that the holiness of God could be upheld and YOU would be able to "fear not!" HE'S the true Jonah!

And Friend, when you really take that in - understand that in going to the Cross and rising from the dead, Jesus Christ has not just promised to one day END all storms with a new heaven and new earth, but in the MEANTIME, has brought a calm to that TRUE storm of how you relate to God/if you really understand and trust that He did all that for YOU - took the ultimate storm for you - then His power/His holiness becomes a comfort and an assurance in your storms, rather than a threat. Cuz of course NOW, no matter what storm you face, you KNOW He's both willing and able to care for you in it! If he did THAT for you/took the ultimate storm for you, you think He's gonna abandon you in the storm you're in now or will be in?...Never!...And in knowing that - your heart/your soul - just like the disciples were "*immediately brought to shore*" - TOO gets immediately delivered to shore...Which is to say you become able to handle the storms... ***Let's Pray...***