

I was looking at this painting, and at first, I wasn't very impressed. It was the picture of storm - dark clouds and rain on the top, and a turbulent ocean with big waves on the bottom. Right in the middle of the painting was the picture of a rock, with the waves were crashing down on the rock and the rain pouring down on top of it. It was a nice piece of art, but not that great, I thought. Just a storm.

But then I looked more closely, and there was a little bit of the color red in the middle of the rock. It was a bird, sitting in the recess of the rock, his red color contrasting all the dark colors around him. Now I was starting to understand the painting. And do you know what the bird was doing as it sat in that rock in the middle of the storm? His eyes were closed - he was sleeping. It was the picture of perfect peace even as the storm raged around the bird. It made me think of our text today about the storm and Jesus calming the storm.

In that story, the disciples are like the bird. And Jesus is their rock, their refuge in the storm. Is Jesus your refuge, your rock, when you face storms? Today we are going to talk about the storms we face as Christians, and we are going to talk about Jesus, and his amazing and shocking power to help us as we face problems and trials and difficulties. Survive The Storms of Life.

Could anything be more peaceful and more idyllic? “The evening came, he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go over to the other side.’ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were other boats with him.” They took Jesus with them in the boat, just as he was, tired and exhausted after a long day of teaching and talking to people. The crowd was so large that Jesus had to stand in a boat on the edge of the Sea of Galilee and teach the people as they sat on the shore. He told them stories about the kingdom of God to show them his love for them. The people could not get enough of Jesus. They got into boats and followed him as he went across the Sea of Galilee.

There is a wonderful calm that comes to us as we see Jesus sleeping on a cushion in the back of the boat. The boat sails through the water. The sun sets in the west. There is Jesus tired and exhausted as he often was after a long day of helping people. We look at his head and one day he will wear a crown of thorns. We look at his body and one day it will be badly beaten with sticks and a whip. We look at his hands and feet and we know they will be nailed to a cross for us. We look at his face and see the blood that would stream down his face as he prays to his heavenly Father “Father if it is possible let this cup pass from me, not my will but yours be done.”

The Savior that we see sleeping and exhausted is the only hope we have of being saved. I could exhaust myself in trying to please God and I will always come short of his glory. I cannot pay for one single sin that I see everywhere in my life. What calm and peace we find in Jesus as we think of the words of 2 Corinthians 5, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” What calm and peace comes to us as we think of the words of Isaiah 53, “The punishment for our peace was upon him.” The people wanted to be with Jesus. They wanted to go across the Sea of Galilee with him because they found in him a peace and calm this world could not give.

However, The peaceful conditions on the Sea of Galilee change quickly. “A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Now that sea is famous for its sudden intense storms. It sits 700 feet below sea level, so the air is very warm.

And just 30 miles away are mountains, almost 10,000 feet high. The cold air from the mountains was always swooping down and clashing with the warm air, and you would get these raging thunderstorms coming out of nowhere.

That's what happened here. A furious squall came up. Water was filling up the boat. The disciples were afraid - it was one of the most powerful storms they had ever seen. Now remember, these disciples aren't the kind of people that would get scared easily - they are fishermen for a living. They're on the water all the time - they grew up that way - they've seen all kinds of storms. But this was different - this storm was so strong, they thought they were going to die.

Have you ever been caught in a storm like that? We live in a world that's famous for its sudden intense storms. Everything is calm - you have to get a blood test for a routine health examination. The next thing you know, you're lying on a bed staring at the ceiling lights and they're wheeling you into the operating room. You've been sick before, but this is different. You might actually die.

You've had money problems before, financial setbacks, and things like that. But this storm is different. You might actually lose your house. You've had marital problems before, or relationship problems before - but this storm is different. He, or she, might not come back. It might be over, it's all your fault and you might be alone.

The worst kind of storm is a guilt storm - one minute you're living a good life - and the next moment, you make that bad decision, you say something you shouldn't have said - the sin you committed didn't take long - less than a minute - and now you feel ashamed and guilty and it won't go away - you are in the middle of a storm of guilt and shame.

Have you ever experienced a powerful storm in your life? I've heard it said that you are always either recovering from a crisis, or about to have one. Where are the storm clouds for you? When we're in the middle of a crisis, we feel afraid. We pray. We wait. And nothing happens. And we say to God - "Don't you care? Don't you see what I'm going through down here?"

What did Jesus do when the disciples woke him and asked him, "Don't you care if we drown?" You see, Jesus looked so plain to them - a tired man sleeping on a pillow in a boat. What could a tired man like that do, when the storm is raging? They weren't waking him up because they thought he would perform a great miracle. They woke him up because they needed help bailing out the boat. They woke him up because it just wasn't right that the rest of them were screaming with panic while Jesus was sleeping on a cushion. Don't you care, Jesus?

And as we go through our storms, we wonder too - is Jesus really strong enough to help me? We see the picture of Jesus hanging on the wall - can he really help me with my cancer? Can he really help me with my marriage? We sit in church and look at the statue of Jesus hanging on a cross - can someone that looks so weak be strong enough to help me? Is he strong enough to take away my shame? Does he even care? Does he even know that I'm here?

Jesus got up, and the Bible says that he talked to the weather. Have you ever seen anyone do that before - talk to the weather? He didn't have to wave around his hands like the magicians do in Las Vegas. He just speaks - "Quiet" - and his words are so powerful - more powerful than my words or your words.

And the sea became dead calm. Normally, the waves keep rolling for awhile, making that splashing sounds, but not here. The words of Jesus are so powerful - the thunder and lightning

and rain and wind and waves suddenly disappear - and the water was like glass - peaceful. He's the Lord of the storm. The Lord of health problem. The Lord of the guilt. He can make it go away. He can change your sleepless night into peace. He's that powerful.

Do you believe it? He tells his disciples - "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" What's interesting here is that the disciples were almost more afraid after Jesus calmed the storm - don't picture them all smiling and nodding and high fiving each other after Jesus calmed the storm.

No, it says that they were terrified. The original Greek actually uses three words to emphasize how much awe they felt when they saw the power of Jesus Christ - they were, quote, "afraid, with fear, a lot" - that's how the Bible literally says it. They realized that they were standing in the presence of someone who had an incredible amount of power - the thunderstorms bow to him, they said to each other. Who is this?

If you have ever felt anxiety in your life, then this Bible story is for you. If you have ever lost sleep because you were worried about something, then Jesus wants you to stop and pay attention. He wants you to repent of your fear - put it away - put it aside - and look at the power of Jesus Christ. Whatever big problem you are facing, Jesus is bigger. With one simple word, Jesus can turn your stormy sea into a dead calm.

He has the power to make the problem go completely away. Or maybe he won't do that. But he has the power to give you strength you never knew you had to endure the crisis in your life. He has the power to turn your problem into something good.

And what is you're caught in a storm of sin and shame and guilt? He has the power to take away your shame. He has the power to cause you to stop falling into the same temptation over and over again.

And what happens when death rudely interrupts your life? He has the power to lift you up to heaven when you die. To lift your loved one up to heaven. He has the power to raise you from the dead. He has the power to make you strong, if you are the one left behind on this earth.

Jesus doesn't promise a peaceful life to you and me this side of heaven. He knows we will experience storms. When he was with those disciples, he knew that they were going to experience a terrible storm. But he was with them. And as we sail out of here today, Jesus knows what terrible storm might be right around the corner for you. Don't be afraid, Jesus says. He is with you, just as much as he was with them. He does care. And he has all the power you need as you go through your storm. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, all you who have anxiety and stress - come to me, Jesus says, and I will give you rest."

How does a little child survive a tornado? 5 years ago, the Smith family moved to Oklahoma - tornado alley. They didn't want to move there, but that's where the father's job took him. Moore, Oklahoma. They got settled. One of the first things mom and dad do is show their kids - what? Can you guess? Where the tornado shelter is. Were they just being paranoid parents? Be more relaxed, right? And then it happened - On May 20th, 2013, the city was destroyed by an EF5 tornado. 24 people died. Did the kids survive? They were home alone when it hit. They knew where to run because their parents showed them where to go.

How does a Christian survive a crisis? He runs to Christ. She runs to Christ. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, we always say. God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Run to him. Amen