

WELCOME 20th March 2022 – 3 Lent '22 C

Luke 8:22-25

Welcome! It's great to be together again...**Bible** Study Qs are provided to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word & work in your life, then you can share that w/ someone else. We'll also use these for our **Zoom** Bible Study Catch-up on Friday. While the restrictions are lifting... We're still doing things we need to maintain a level of safety: Hand sanitizer. Masks optional but for some a good choice. Thanks set-up & clean-up folks! We *always need extra hands* especially today with Morning Tea!

(this week's slide) **As we move into this week...** **More** heavy rain floods heatwave storms predicted across Australia as wild weather continues...**Sydney** weather: storms & torrential rains lash NSW as humidity soars to 90%...**Showers** & storms return to east coast...

If there is a universal experience it is "storms." We **ALL** have them hit more often than we like. Not just the atmospheric kind... Life is punctuated by storms like a sentence by commas... Storms of change & transformation. Storms of suffering & grief. Storms of failure & confusion. Storms of depression & uncertainty. Storms in the economy or on the international horizon. Family storms. Workplace storms. Public/Private... Storms can blow us off course, beat against or drench our faith. Many storms feel like they're about to sink us & pull us under for the last time.

Jesus shows us the **real** storm – the **real** danger - is not the circumstances against which we struggle, but the storm inside that churns w/in. In the midst of **THAT** storm, in the midst of life, in the midst of our fear, Jesus invites us into his peace.

When you say "yes" to this invitation... you find Jesus w/ you in the storm... w/ you in the blown-about moment... w/ you always. Jesus invites you to accept his invitation... to allow His presence to conquer the worst of the storms... the ones within.

"Where is your faith?"

Let's pray & then we'll see...

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Loving Father, we turn within to find strength & refuge instead of to you, yet you always welcome us back. In you alone we find confidence, rest, peace & wholeness. Remind us of your steadfast love revealed so clearly in Jesus; disclosed with his life death resurrection & rule. Make today a day of peace the world & all its evil can neither give nor take away... and bring it to life through us... in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

Let's sing then we'll hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. How would you answer the disciples question on the calm side of the storm?
Who is this man?
2. How is that different than from the midst of the storm?
What's changed? What do you make of that?
Let's pray...

3 LENT '22 C – RSVP: INVITATION TO PEACE

Psychologists tell us that for humans, there are only 2 naturally occurring fears. We are born w/ only 2 fears...Just so you know...spiders, speaking in front of a group & praying in public are *not* on the list! Those are *not* in-born fears. But do you know which 2 are? 2 natural human fears? Falling...take any newborn & raise/lower them & the arms go out...Moro reflex. 2nd...Loud noises. Another part of our “startle reflex.” Ask Leonie about sneezing around sleeping or almost sleeping babies.

Every other fear is *learned by experience* or *embraced by choice* or “*convince-ion*.” Now...not all fear is bad. Fear often keeps us from danger or from doing something harmful/hurtful/dumb...Most of us are afraid of at least 1 thing for 1 reason/another.

On the Sea of Galilee, sensible fishermen are wary of the sudden storms that can sweep down from the surrounding hills, mtns, plateaus w/o warning. 208 mtrs below sea level...lowest lake on earth & sits in a basin formed by Galilean Hills to the sth/west (460 mtrs), Lebanon’s Mtns to the Nth (3000 mtrs), & high plateau to the east – (1000 mtrs) Golan Heights. Lk itself is fed by snowmelt & geothermal hot springs & at differing depths to its 50 mtr bottom its temperature varies wildly & has its own subsurface currents. It is the perfect storm for perfect storms.

One day Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s cross to the other side of the lake.” So they got into a boat & started out. As they sailed across, Jesus settled down for a nap. But soon a fierce storm came down on the lake. The boat was filling with water, & they were in real danger.”

Was anyone in the boat surprised by the storm? Did the storm catch them unaware? Probably not. Anyone who lived in Israel knew the Sea’s reputation & the fishermen had likely been caught more than once in a violent squall. And Jesus? Well...no. He’s Jesus...He knows what’s coming. In fact there’s a reason he’s headed across the lake into what is Gentile territory. He’s headed for a divine rendezvous among the non-Jews. It seems Jesus led them into the storm...or at best *ALLOWED* the storm to rock their boat/lives. There are no surprises on this earth for Jesus. That is the nature of God’s sovereign rule on this earth.

Broken world means storms happen. None catch God on the back foot/off guard.

If there is a universal experience it is “storms.” We *ALL* have them hit more often than we like. Not just the atmospheric kind...Life is punctuated by storms like a sentence by commas. You might be in the middle of one today. Health. Age. Infirmary. Something on the horizon. \$\$ - family – work – decision – lingering chronic worry/problem...There are storms. We wish God would pre-empt them; make them go away. Usually doesn’t happen. Some...God leads you into or allows them to

interrupt your path. Quite often we’re the cause of our own storms. We make this decision & this decision & this choice & then bam things are tossing & floundering & it’s the natural result of us steering right into a cyclone. Others are just unavoidable. We didn’t ask/cause/go looking...Broken world = storms happen.

But in the storm what’s Jesus doing? Sleeping like me watching TV. But this isn’t idleness or inattention. We often think sleeping means “doing nothing.” In fact, Jesus is *LIVING THE REALITY* of his relationship with the Father. Look @ Scriptures:

You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal Rock. – Is 26:3-4

In peace I will lie down & sleep, for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe. – Ps 4:8

I lay down & slept, yet I woke up in safety, for the Lord was watching over me. I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies who surround me on every side. – Ps 3:5-6

I know the Lord is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me. No wonder my heart is glad, my soul rejoices & my body rests in safety. For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave. – Ps 16:8-10

He is sleeping not just because his mission/ministry have exhausted his human reserves of strength, but because his trust in the Father is unshakable, his devotion to the Father’s will is unassailable, & his passion for the Father’s mission to save a lost world is unbreakable. Jesus can sleep as soon as they set out & through the storm because he has absolute assurance his life is designed to serve the Father’s purpose plan & will & nothing will stop his journey to the cross/empty tomb least of all some rootyoot “fierce storm” on the Galilean fish bowl. (*Gk = mother of all storms*) Jesus knows what’s ahead but assumes the sleeping posture of one who has no doubt uncertainty or mistrust in the protection provision presence of the Father.

TRUTH: If you are doing what God has said do...*mother of all storms* is not the problem.

The disciples are the exact opposite of sleeping...& let me be clear...I can’t blame ‘em. I don’t believe the disciples were exaggerating the danger they were in. Their fear seems understandable/excusable. We understand anxiety & worry that arises from life-threatening situations. I have been on boats at sea in storms...planes in some awful turbulence...one that blew a tire on takeoff...& in more hospital EDs in the middle of the night than I can remember...At that moment life is overwhelming. Circumstances are out of control. Order has fallen to chaos. The water is deep & safe harbor is not in sight.

You know what that’s like?

So they held a committee meeting & took a vote as to who would talk to Jesus & drafted a brief statement of their concerns...No they didn’t.

In that boat there were a dozen panic-stricken disciples falling all over Jesus & each other shouting one thing then another & finally: **“Master, Master, we’re going to drown!”** rouses Jesus. They didn’t think “sleeping Jesus” was much use. They want “busy Jesus,” “active Jesus,” “in command Jesus.” They knew he had power over demons; they’d seen it. They knew he had power over disease; they’d seen it. They knew he had power over death. They saw him break up a funeral. They knew he had power over fish.

THAT was the Jesus they were after...Aren’t we all? When all you have is the storm ...when it’s a raging chaos where you are...when pandemonium surrounds...when there is no clear path & you’re just hanging in there...sleeping Jesus doesn’t seem to offer much comfort calm or peace...I want “fix” “solution” **NOW!**

But Jesus shows us the **real** storm – the **real** danger - is not the circumstances against which we struggle, but the storm inside that churns ^{w/in}. It’s undeniable...the real threat is not the wind, waves, or water...the situation in which we find ourselves. The real storm, the more threatening storm is always the one raging ^{w/in}. The storm in our hearts & souls...the inner cyclone is the one that blows us off course, beats against us, drenches our faith, & threatens to pull us under for the last time. Fear, vulnerability, & powerlessness blow ^{w/in} us. A sense of abandonment, dread of the unknown, judgment, 2nd-guessing, & criticism pound against us like waves while anger, blame, cynicism, or denial become our shelter & refuge.

In the midst of **THAT** storm, in the midst of life, in the midst of our fear, Jesus invites us into his peace. **When** Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind & the raging waves.

Suddenly the storm stopped & all was calm. He speaks to the chaos out here...but most especially to the chaos in here. I’ve always seen this as him speaking to the disciples & the wind & waves get the hint & settle down too...*All was calm* inside the boat as well as outside. It was then that they should have remembered & we dare not miss...Jesus was always in the boat ^{w/} them. The wind that rattled their teeth, bothered him not the least. The waves that knocked their feet from underneath them didn’t so much as interrupt his snoring. The surging swelling roaring chaos didn’t flutter his eyelids. Waves crashing into the boat didn’t make him shift his pillow.

Peace, according to the Scriptures isn’t the absence of conflict, distress, & noise. It’s the presence of God who orders all things for their proper time & place. Peace, *shalom* is about God establishing his presence power & provision in here so that we trust his hand over all things out there. **“Where** is your faith?” That’s not a slap across their foreheads in judgment, but an invitation to trust more deeply & rest more

securely/confidently in the one who calls even wind/waves into being & orders all things according to his purpose for their proper time & place.

It’s an invitation to trust that not even death...the great chaos that seeks to swallow each of us forever...can stand against the will of the Father to save this storm-tossed world & our storm-racked lives through the life/death/rez/rule of the Son. It’s an invitation to see & know that Jesus is here with us in every storm...an invitation into life held by the hands that will take every storm – chaos – turmoil & remove them far as east is from west & in their place grant peace that nothing can disturb.

“Who is this man? When he gives a command, even the wind & waves obey him!”

Jesus shows us the **real** storm – the **real** danger - is not the circumstances against which we struggle, but the storm inside that churns ^{w/in}. In the midst of **THAT** storm, in the midst of life, in the midst of our fear, Jesus invites us into his peace. When you say “yes” to this invitation...you find Jesus ^{w/} you in the storm... ^{w/} you in the blown-about moment...^{w/} you always. Jesus invites you to accept his invitation... to allow His presence to conquer the worst of the storms...sin, death, evil - the ones within.

TAKE IT HOME:

In what part of your life right now do you need to remember...
Jesus is in your boat?

Let’s pray... Sovereign Lord, each of us & indeed this world stands facing difficulties & struggles. Sometimes the way seems dark & we feel our lives are a chaos of grief & pain. Teach us that the size of our storm fades in the presence of your greatness. Lord, rise up within us, let your Spirit & your power manifest through our weakness, so those around us see it is you who works on our behalf. We choose to give you thanks today & believe this season of darkness will be shattered by the light of your love & redeeming grace. Thank you that you are with us in whatever we face & that you are greater than any rage of this world. You alone are Lord & you alone promise a future filled with hope. We praise you, for you make all things new & grant peace this world can neither give nor take away...In Jesus’ Name, Amen.