

Fil-Am Community Church  
Pastor Dave Bennett  
Date: 12 April 2015  
Key Verse: Matthew 14:22-36 & Psalms 29:1-11

## **“JESUS IN THE STORM WITH US”**

Good morning Fil-Am Community Church, it is so good to see you here this morning, and we wanted you to know that we do not take your presence for granted. This morning we are going to go over a familiar story you have more than likely heard time and time again, about Jesus walking on the water toward his disciples during a storm.

The message is called “**Jesus in the Storm with us**” so as we say let’s get into the word, or more importantly let’s get the word into you.

Christian faith is secure only when we recognize and live daily with the assurance that God is always with us, even in the storms of life.

Most of us are acquainted with the story recorded in Matthew’s gospel where Jesus walked upon the water and came to His disciples in the midst of a raging storm.

We have heard the facts of the story since childhood. Nevertheless, there are a few further truths to I would like to explore this afternoon.

For informational purposes let us look into some of the background and the setting for this story.

Jesus was approaching the high point of His ministry.

It was at this time that He performed many miracles, including the **feeding of a multitude** with but a few loaves of bread and two fish.

He was becoming **popular** with the people and a **source of concern** to religious authorities.

**Persecution** was still very prevalent, as King Herod just had John the Baptist beheaded.

Matthew notes the significance of this cruel death with a twofold statement.

He tells us Herod heard of the fame of Jesus and reacted with, "It Is John the Baptist, who has come to life again."

He also tells us that, when Jesus heard the news of John's death, He departed into a desert place to pray, to meditate, and to be alone with His thoughts.

This was surely a moment of personal pain in our Lord's own heart. Jesus loved John the Baptist. They were first cousins, boyhood companions who, quite likely, had spent many hours together growing up.

It was at this precise moment and time that Jesus ordered His disciples to get in the boat and go over to the other side.

Rather than go with them, Jesus stayed behind to dismiss the crowds and for the more personal reason of private prayer and communion with His heavenly Father.

The disciples set forth, under direct orders from Christ and boarded a ship headed for the other side.

This is very similar to us on a daily basis.

As we step out our doorstep ready to face...

- ✓ The **unknown**,
- ✓ The **unexpected**,
- ✓ The **unfamiliar**.

Then just as it was with the disciples, there was an unexpected storm!

## Have you ever walked into an unexpected storm?

I know I have more times than I care to remember.

It is during these trying times, when we need to recognize Jesus!

### 1. WE MUST LEARN TO RECOGNIZE JESUS.

The nerves leading to the eye are much larger than those leading to the ear.

Science tells us that we give twenty-five times as much attention to what we see as what we hear.

We must learn to recognize Jesus.

- ✓ The disciples had lived with Jesus.
- ✓ They knew Him in a very personal and intimate manner.
- ✓ Yet from this incident we understand there was a moment when they did not recognize Him.

Does it happen with us?

Are there those times, those unexpected circumstances of our lives in which we simply do not recognize the Master's presence?

After all, is it not easier to be conscious of God when we are in a church setting?

Or perhaps it might be easier to be aware of Him when on our knees in prayer, or when engaged in those obvious Christian duties?

- ✓ But what of the **night**?
- ✓ What of the **darkness**?
- ✓ What of the **lonely** moments,
- ✓ The **personal** struggles,

The times when our hearts yearn to reach out and touch someone else and there is no one there?

- ✓ What of the trying times?
- ✓ What of the storms?
- ✓ Are we then able to recognize Jesus?

The disciples did not! They were too wrapped up in the struggle of the moment.

- ✓ They saw the tossing **waves**.
- ✓ They felt the **threat** of **death**.
- ✓ They heard the **wind**,
- ✓ Saw the **lightning**,
- ✓ Felt the pelting **rain**.

But in the midst of all that was going on they did failed to recognize the Lord.

So I emphasize yet again, we must learn to recognize God!

Just when we think all is running smoothly, all is well, all is under control; then there comes the startling realization that storm clouds are brewing.

Just as we think we have solved the last problem, or taken care of the last pressing need, that's when the...

- ✓ Mailman arrives,
- ✓ That's when the telephone rings,
- ✓ Knock at the door in the middle of the night.

No matter how often we have been down the road, there are always surprises. We still have more to learn.

The disciples were about to learn the greatest lesson they would ever receive, the truth of Jesus in the storm.

They knew Jesus already as the supplier of all of their needs.

- ✓ They had witnessed Him pay taxes with money from a **fish's mouth**.
- ✓ They knew He could multiply **loaves and fishes**, that He spoke words of life, that He had **power over the works of the devil**.
- ✓ They knew Him as a **great teacher**.

Still, never having met Jesus in a storm, they **did not** recognize Him.

All too often we make the same mistake, again and again.

- ✓ We believe Jesus for our salvation and for the forgiveness of our sins.
- ✓ We look to Him as the supplier of all our needs.
- ✓ We trust Him to bring us into glory one day.

But when everything is falling apart, we find it difficult to see Jesus.

We can't seem to believe that He **would allow a storm to teach us** how to trust Him.

We are never quite sure He is nearby when things really get rough.

The ship is now tossing.

It appears to be sinking, winds are blowing.

Everything is going contrary and it seems all hope is lost.

The Bible says:

Matthew 14:25-27

<sup>25</sup> *And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea.*

<sup>26</sup> *When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."*

## 2. WE MUST LEARN TO COPE WITH OUR FEARS.

Most of us have experienced our children's dependence on us to face their fears, when they have nightmares, or when there is thunder and lightning during a storm.

They will wake up, scream, and jump out of their beds; they can walk down the valley of their bedroom and hall and into the valley of our bedroom.

They jump in your bed!

Your hugging them does not stop the rain or the thunder, or the lightning; however, it does change how they face it!

They'll fall asleep in your arms. The fear they had alone, they no longer have, because momma or daddy is with them.

You help them face their fears in the midsts of their struggles.

This is exactly what the Heavenly Father does for us when we face our fear and insecurities.

Fear!

It is a destructive force that plagues each of us at certain times. Of course, some fear is normal. It helps us survive certain dangers.

For example, the fear of walking out in front of a car, or the fear of falling off a tall building-these are normal fears. They function for a noteworthy purpose.

Let us look at a dictionary definition of fear: "an emotion excited by threatening evil or impending pain, accompanied by a desire to avoid or escape; apprehension; dread; uneasiness about a thing; horror; alarm; terror; dismay and fright." Most of us have known fear in these varying shades of meaning.

But fear is also a spiritual force. It can actually destroy us **if we yield to it.**

Fear is not of God. God is not the author of fear. God does not send fear upon His people.

There are two ways of handling pressure. One is illustrated by a bathysphere, the miniature submarine used to explore the ocean in places so deep that the water pressure would crush a conventional submarine like aluminum can.

Bathyspheres compensate with plate steel several inches thick, which keeps the water out but also makes them heavy and hard to maneuver. Inside they're not alone. When their lights are turned on and you look through the tiny, thick plate-glass windows, what do you see? Fish! These fish cope with extreme pressure in an entirely different way. They don't build thick skins; they remain supple and free. They compensate for the outside pressure through equal and opposite pressure inside themselves.

Christians, likewise, don't have to be hard and thick-skinned--as long as they appropriate God's power within to equal the pressure without. Jay Kesler

Remember 1 John 4:4, “...*Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*”

We are so often like the disciples, none of which recognized Jesus when He came walking on the water to them.

It could be that we believe and expect Jesus to be at the Samaritan well, or in the temple driving out the money changers.

We expect Him one day to be at the right hand of the Father, to make us kings and priests. But never do we expect Him to be with us in the storm!

2 Timothy 1:7 NASB

<sup>7</sup> *For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of **power and love and discipline.***

2 Timothy 1:7 Amplified Bible

*<sup>7</sup> For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (of cowardice, of craven and cringing and fawning fear), but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control.*

With God living in us, fully, there is no room for fear.

We must discover in Him and through His Holy Spirit the power to cope with fear in all its many expressions.

### **3. WE MUST LEARN TO TRUST GOD IN THE DARKEST HOUR**

Dwight L Moody's favorite verse was Isaiah 12:2, "*I will trust, and not be afraid.*"

He used to say, you can travel to Heaven in First class or Second class (Coach).

Coach or Second class is the time when I am afraid, but still trust.

First class is when I trust and am not afraid.

First class is a much better ride; why not enjoy the trip along the way?

The storm which came upon the disciples came suddenly. They were put upon quickly. And there was no thought on their part that Jesus was nearby, watching over them.

If we are to speculate as to their thoughts, or their fears, in their moment of sudden danger, we may well imagine their reaction as being similar to our own.

One of the disciples may have thought, "This Is the work of the devil. He wants to kill us because of all those good things we have been doing."

Yet another may have thought, "Where did we go wrong? Which one of us has sin in his life? God must be angry with someone on this ship."

Yet another may have reacted, "Why us? We're doing what Jesus told us to do. We're not out of His will. Why this sudden storm. Jesus told us to get on board this ship.

### **"Why is this happening?"**

All of us come eventually to those darkest of hours, to those lowest of moments, and we tend to despair.

But we cannot let it get the best of us! We must trust Him in the darkest hour.

The Bible says that "in the fourth watch of the night," just before dawn, at the worst possible time, **when all hope was fading**, Jesus came.

He came unexpectedly and He came with miraculous power and demonstration.

How difficult it must have been for Jesus to **wait on the edge of that storm...**

- ✓ Loving them so much,
- ✓ Feeling every pain they felt,
- ✓ Wanting so much to keep them from getting hurt,
- ✓ Yearning after them as a father for his children in trouble.

Yet, Jesus knew they could never **fully know** Him or **trust Him**, until the **full fury** of the storm was upon them.

Only when they had reached the limit of their endurance would He **reveal Himself**.

Jesus knew that the ship would never have gone down, **but if it had**, they would be saved.

Now **their fear** would have drowned them more quickly than the waves beating on the ship.

Let us always remember this: Jesus **CAN** calm a sea of trouble in **our lives** at any time, simply by speaking the word.

But all this **comes through faith**.

**Sometimes the Lord calms the storm. Sometimes he lets the storm rage and calms his child.**

We **MUST** have faith in the lord. There is peace in time of trouble.

Jesus had told them to go, so **why** could they not have trusted His words.

Why not command the sea **in Jesus'** name to be calm?

Could not the promises have been put into practice? After all, He tells us, "**All things** asked in prayer . . . ye shall have."

Yet these things cannot happen in our lives **until** we have learned to recognize Jesus is in the storm with us.

These things cannot happen until we have received faith to **ride out the storm**, until we have learned to be of good cheer **even when** the ship appears to be sinking.

It reminds me of a verse we discussed in **IMPACT** class, about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the book of Daniel Chapter 3, the issue was that the King had an image of Gold built and decreed that everyone must bow down and worship the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had built, when they heard the sound of the horn or flute etc.

The problem was Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not bow down and worship this Golden Idol as they worshipped the one and only true Living God!

When this was brought to the Kings attention he was furious and had them brought before him.

Daniel 3:13-18, (NIV)

<sup>13</sup> *Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, <sup>14</sup> and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?*

<sup>15</sup> *Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown **immediately** into a blazing furnace.*

*Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”*

<sup>16</sup> *Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand.*

<sup>18</sup> ***But even if he does not**, we want you to know, Your Majesty that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”*

You all know the rest of the story, the furnace was stoked 7 additional times and the three were thrown into the fire, then King Nebuchadnezzar, looked and saw 4 people in the fire not three, and none of them were burned at all, not even a singed hair on their heads. He suddenly changed his tune and said in verse 26.

<sup>26</sup> *Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”*

Getting back to the story at hand we must be able to...

- ✓ In the midst of our storms,
- ✓ in the middle of our trials and tribulations,

It is imperative that we recognize Jesus in the storm, the darkest hour.

Jesus is always there.

Saints remember it says in Hebrews 13:5, (NASB), *Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"*

## CONCLUSION

So what are our lessons?

- ✓ We must learn to recognize the Master under all circumstances.
- ✓ We must learn to cope with our fears, to handle them, rather than be paralyzed.
- ✓ We must learn to trust in the darkest hour.

God does not wish His children to be filled with worry and anxiety.

Jesus is always with us, with power and in glory.

Our storms of life may be sickness, disease, pain, or loss;

But Jesus...

Can anyone say But Jesus?

But Jesus is in the midst of the storm. His hands are raised to help. His voice is near to command.

Let us not despair.