

BE STILL
Psalm 46:10; Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41

Good morning, everyone! Welcome once again to Fil-Am Community Church on the web. Nice to see you all virtually. In the future, when Microsoft has perfected the Hololens and it becomes commercially available, you will be seating right here in front of me. And all of us are interacting in a virtual world. And I won't recognize you because you'll assume the appearance of your avatar. Well, that is nice and good but I don't know about you, as for me I still prefer real physical people that I can shake hands with and do beso-beso with.

We're in the midst of one of the most challenging crisis in modern times. The coronavirus outbreak has undoubtedly caused fear and anxiety. It's moving fast and perhaps everyone is thinking, "Will I be safe?" "Will I be next?"

So, because it's in the headline always and it's in the minds of people, I thought I'd suspend our series on "How Did Jesus Do?" and start a new one. I'm calling it **"Standing Strong"**. A series that will still focus on Jesus, of course, because he is our theme for the year. In the next four weeks, I'll share with you some principles to help you navigate the uncertainties we're all facing right now. And for you to stand confidently in this changing world.

To start it off, today's message is entitled, "Be Still". The other two messages are "Be Encouraged" and "Be Alive".

Let us all read together that verse on your screen, **"Be still and know that I am God"**. That's one of my favorite verses. God spoke to my heart through that verse at a time in my life when I was quite confused.

I want to focus on the first two words of that verse, "Be still". Seriously, in our world today, can you be still? Can you stand in line at a grocery store, for example, without looking at your phone and check your messages?

Can you stop at a traffic light without checking Facebook? I always see people doing this when the cars in front of them have already moved. Why can't we be still?

It's the same thing when we face troubles in life. Yes, maybe we're sitting down, paralyzed by fear, but in our hearts and minds, we're not really still. We're panicking. We're worrying.

God says, "Be still. I am God. I'm in control". Jesus spoke those same words when he was on earth. In this message, I want to look at one of the most famous miracles in the Bible. It is the miracle of Jesus calming the storm.

Years ago I pastored a church in Brooklyn which was located near the New York Harbor. In the harbor on the side of Brooklyn, ships from all over the world come to rest at the dockyard for a few days before they embark on another journey. Seamen of various nationalities would come down from the ship to see the sights and sounds of New York. And I had the opportunity to minister to some of them.

One Monday night, I received a call that a ship was at the dockyard for some repairs and would stay there for a few days. I seized the opportunity and so I immediately went to visit the seamen. One of them looked like Marco. I got to talk to some of them. I heard tales of woe. They were lonely. Imagine being out on the ocean for two to three months not being able to see land, not being able to talk to loved ones. One time, they docked at Nigeria. Once they landed, they were like newly-released prisoners who eagerly went from place to place savoring their freedom. The result was that two of them contracted malaria after drinking water in some place.

Sometimes they were even mistreated by the crew officers, given only a small lump of rice and little fish. And they were lucky if they got their salary on time. As I talked with them, I sensed a feeling of despair.

But it was their only way to support their families. I knew they had to be rescued from their sinking ship, figuratively speaking.

Matthew 8:23-27 is the story of a boat that was in danger of sinking because of a storm. On the boat were Jesus and his disciples. Then Jesus calmed the storm. This is an amazing story that it's recorded also in Mark and Luke. Let's read this passage in Matthew.

23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

Now, if you would turn with me to **Mark 4:35-41**. It's the same event but written in a slightly different way.

35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." 36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

41 They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

In this story we find some principles on how to deal with a crisis and more than anything else, our fear. In this message I’m going to refer to these two passages as I lay out these principles.

But first, the Bible says three things about the storms of life, three facts I want you to get before we look at the text. **Facts About Storms.**

1. Storms are inevitable. They will happen. You will experience them. We’re all experiencing one right now. And some of us, there are one, two, or three storms we’re experiencing. They are a part of life. In James 1:2 it says “...when you meet trials...” It does not say “If you meet trials.” Count on it! You will face storms in life. Nobody goes through life sailing easy from cradle to grave. We have tough times. And storms in our lives come in different sizes, shapes, and forms. We experience financial storms, health storms, emotional storms, family storms, and so on and so forth.

2. Storms are unpredictable. Although in general we know when a storm is coming, storms can come suddenly. Without warning. They catch us by surprise. They are unpredictable. In this story it says in v. 24 “*Suddenly a furious storm came up.*” Try as we may, we cannot predict the things that will happen to us. It’s amazing what people try -- astrology, biorhythm, palmistry, horoscope. They’ll try anything to see if today’s going to be a good day or a bad day. But we can’t predict storms in life. They are unpredictable. They are inevitable.

3. Storms are impartial. They happen to good people, they happen to bad people. They happen to believers, they happen to unbelievers. They happen to all of us. Matthew 5:45 “*He sends the rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*” And you know, being a Christian does not exempt you from being in storms.

Now, there is a misconception that people have, that the only time they have tough times is when they're disobeying God. That's not true. The disciples got into a storm because they obeyed God. Jesus said, "Get in the boat." They got in the boat and they sailed right into a storm. They were obeying God. They were in the center of His will. And they were right in the middle of a storm. When you're going through a tough time, don't automatically assume, "I must be out of the will of God." You may be exactly where God wants you to be. Storms are impartial, you see.

The fact is, God has not promised us a storm-free life. This is not heaven where everything is perfect and God's will is perfectly done. We have choices and people make mistakes and people get hurt. That's why we're to pray, "*Thy will be done on earth like it is in heaven*" because it's done perfectly in heaven.

So we see that storms are inevitable and storms are unpredictable and storms are impartial. The issue now is... what is my response going to be to the storms that are inevitably going to happen in my life? There are two ways we can respond to storms. There are **two possible reactions**. They are seen in this story in the way the disciples responded and in the way that Jesus responded. First reaction is this:

1. I can be filled with panic.

Our passage says, "*The disciples went and woke Him saying, 'Lord, save us. We're going to drown.'*" You know, these guys were trained. They'd been out on this sea lots of times. They'd been through many storms, but evidently this one was life threatening and scared them to death. "We are goners! We're gonna die!" That shows the intensity. The word that describes the storm in this passage is the word in Greek *seismos* from which we get the word "seismology" or "seismograph", which is an instrument that registers the intensity of earthquakes. So, Matthew compared the storm to an earthquake. This was a major, major storm. No wonder the disciples freaked out.

They panicked. They got uptight. They got afraid. That is our typical reaction when a storm comes.

But the alternative to being filled with panic is

2. **I can be filled with peace.** Look at the contrasting reaction of Jesus in **Matthew 8:24 "But Jesus was sleeping."** Sleeping in a storm? You talk about peace! This shows the humanity of Jesus for one thing. It shows that He got tired. After a full day of ministering, teaching and preaching, He was exhausted. He lays down and He takes a nap. If you've ever wondered, if Jesus can identify with my fatigue, this is an example of it. Yes, He knows what it means to be dead tired. So, you know what I'm going to do after this day is over. I'll quarantine myself! Gonna turn off my cellphone, go to our bedroom, hang a do not disturb sign, close the blinds and sleep like a baby. Aah, I feel like doing it already.

Anyway, I think Jesus sleeping is a picture of complete trust in God. Jesus was not worried at all by the storm. He was setting an example, teaching a lesson to His disciples.

Question: Did Jesus know there was going to be a storm before He even got into the boat? Without a doubt! Of course He knew. He knew they were sailing right into a storm. But He says, I'm going to take a nap. Jesus is so cool! He knows exactly what's going to happen yet He says, "By the way guys, I'm beat! I'm going to go over here and take a nap." It's part of His plan to teach a lesson about faith.

Nothing ever surprises God. "God, I'm going bankrupt!" He knows. "God, my husband is drinking again!" He sees it coming. Nothing ever surprises Him.

I can be in panic or I can be at peace when I face a storm. I can have faith or I can have fear when I face a storm. The fact is, sometimes sleeping can be a statement of faith. You say, "God, it is too big a problem. I can't handle it.

But it's Your problem. I'm not going to worry about it. I'm going to bed."
That's a statement of faith. A statement of faith instead of fear.

Where in the world do you get that kind of peace in a storm? You get that kind of peace when you apply the three principles taught in this passage.

How do you make it through a storm? When it seems like your ship is sinking you do three things. They are simple but they are profound. **How to Make it Through a Storm.**

1. REMEMBER GOD'S CLOSENESS.

That He is near you, that He is with you, that you are not by yourself. v. 23
"Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him." They had nothing to fear. Jesus was in the boat. Do you think God was going to let the boat sink with Jesus in it? That in itself should have calmed them. Jesus Christ was there with them, experiencing the storm with them.

If you're going to make it through a storm, the first lesson you've got to learn is this: **God is always with me.**

There will be nothing I will face the rest of my life that I face alone. God is with me. Jesus is in my boat. We tend to forget that in storms. God has promised every believer, *"Lo, I am with you always."* God has promised, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

Isaiah 43:1-2 *"Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you!"* What a promise! You don't need to worry if your boat is rocking because Jesus is in the boat. Remember God's closeness.

2. RELAX IN GOD'S CARE.

The typical response when we go through a storm is to wonder, “Does God even care?” Notice what the disciples said, Mark 4:38 *"The disciples woke him and said to Him, 'Teacher, don't You care if we drown?'"*

That's the common response we ask in a tragedy. Don't You care? Don't You care what's going on, God? The answer is, “Of course He cares.” And He hurts. And He sees what you're going through.

This is the second great lesson that we must learn if we're going to make it through storms: **God cares about what I go through.** Repeat this over and over until you get it in your mind! God cares about what I'm going through!

How much does He care? Read the Bible. Read the 7000 promises in this book. Then you tell me that God doesn't care. He does. **1 Peter 5:7 "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."** The one thing that the disciples did right in our passage, when they got afraid they took their fear to Jesus. They didn't start praying to someone else. They didn't start chanting. They didn't call on some saint. They took their fear to Jesus. Why? Because He's the only one who can do anything about it.

I remember some years back during an earthquake in California my grandma woke up because her bed was shaking. In fact the whole house was shaking. There was an earthquake. She immediately got up and went out of the bedroom. In the hallway, she noticed this picture frame which was swaying back and forth and she took it down, held it close to her chest, and she kept on muttering, “Apo, Dios, Apo, Dios” “Lord, God, Lord, God.” “Save me, save me.”

Then, the earthquake stopped. When she looked at the picture, she was surprised to see that it was not the picture of Jesus, but my aunt's picture.

What's the lesson? Make sure that it's actually Jesus you're calling, not some human being like ourselves.

The Bible says, "Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." And that name is Jesus, amen? Jesus died for you on the cross to save you.

Remember God's closeness and relax in His care.

3. RELY ON GOD'S CONTROL

Let His power see you through. *Mark 4:39 "He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm."* Jesus stood up in the boat in the middle of the storm and said, "Quiet! Be still!" or "Sit down and shut up!" That's literally what He said. Instantly, it was quiet. The wind died down. The sea became as glass. Those words could have been directed to the disciples themselves, "Quiet! Be still!"

Lesson number three. God is always in control.

God is with you, God cares about what you're going through and God is in control. There is nothing beyond the control of God. You don't understand this? I don't either. Many things we're not going to understand until we get to heaven. But God is in control.

Fear comes when we experience things in life that are beyond our control. When things are beyond our control it frightens us and the truth is there are many things in life that you can't control. Neither can I. So there are lots of things to be frightened by. But the good news that the Bible tells us is that the things that are beyond my control are not beyond God's control. And that's good news. I can't control everything that happens. To myself, to my family, to my friends, to the church. But God is in control! That's a storm reliever.

Jeremiah 32:17 "Sovereign Lord, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You." Before they got into the boat, Jesus said to his disciples in Mark 4:35, "Let us go over to the other side."

Now the very fact that He said they're going to the other side, means it is inevitable that they're going to the other side. He didn't say it would be an easy trip. He didn't say they wouldn't get wet. He didn't say they wouldn't have a scare, a panic attack in the middle. He just said, "We're going to the other side." And if He said it, they were going to make it.

Notice what Jesus said to the disciples in v. 26 "*You of little faith. Why are you so afraid?*" Jesus told the disciples two things: One, the root of your problem is fear. Two, the solution to your problem is faith. The greatest threat to the lives of the disciples was not the storm. It was their unbelief. Folks, the secret of victory over fear is faith.

If God knew in advance that the storm was going to be out there, why did He let them go through it? Because He wanted them to learn a lesson. It's the same lesson that all of us must learn, and the only way you learn it is by experience. You never learn this lesson from a preacher or from a Bible study or from a tape or book. You only learn this lesson by experience. The lesson is this: Jesus can be trusted in the storms of life. The only way you're going to learn that is to go through them. **Andre Crouch says, "If I never had a problem, I'd never know that God could solve them. I'd never know what faith in God could do."** It is when we respond to the storms in life with faith that we see God's power most visibly and we sense His presence most intensely.

The disciples really had no reason to fear. They had what every one of us had. They had the presence of Christ, the power of Christ, and the promise of Christ. You have to have those to make it through your storms.

Now, let me go back to my story about the seamen in Brooklyn. I went there because I felt the Lord was telling me to bring the good news to them. But as usual, when God is at work, the devil's at work as well. You see, there are two gates or entrances to the dockyard.

On one gate, called the Atlantic Ave. gate, the guard wouldn't let me in though he knew me because I was there two days before. So I went to the other gate, called the Hamilton Ave. gate, praying he would let me in. And the guard was more than happy to let me in. Then I got to talk with the seamen and that's when I learned about their sorry plight.

Afterwards they asked me to take them to Times Square in Manhattan to look around and buy some stuff. So, we went. I was now hungry and sleepy.

At 10:30 PM, we drove home and then stopped at McDonald's to pick up some food. But still I couldn't eat because I was driving. At the gate, the guard had changed and we nearly didn't get inside because of his many questions. Again, the enemy was at work. At that point, I became afraid and thought that God wasn't in it. But I thank God because he guided me in answering the questions well. Then, in the ship, after eating, I shared the gospel with eight of them. Afterwards, I asked them to bow their heads. Then said that if they wanted to receive Jesus they can raise their right hand. No one did. But I noticed that they were looking sideways. Finally, one raised his hand, and another and another. That night, God saved eight souls. God saved their troubled ships from sinking. And you know what, one of them even called me when they were already out in the sea.

One thing I learned from this is that God is in control though we may feel or think otherwise. We may even feel uncomfortable and the situation may seem to be unbearable, but God is still in control.

What's rocking your boat this afternoon? What's causing your ship to sink? What kind of storm are you going through? What is causing this great fear in your life? Is it the coronavirus? Is it a strained relationship? Is it a financial difficulty? Is it a painful memory that's got you so tied up that you can't see anything else? Is it a health problem? Is it a secret storm? Something on the inside?

An emotion that's overwhelming you? Guilt? Or grief? Or anger? Or bitterness? Or jealousy? Or worry?

Maybe you feel like the circumstances of life are tossing you back and forth and you feel like you're just a little toy boat out there in a big ocean and you're getting bashed back and forth every day. And you're thinking, "I'm going under! I'm not going to make it!"

If that's the way you feel, then God wants to say to you today, No matter how big the wave is, Jesus can rebuke it. And He wants to calm the storm in your life. He wants to say, "*Peace! Be still!*" Only Jesus Christ can calm the restlessness in your life right now. Quit looking for somebody else to be your solution. Quit looking to some experience to be your solution. There's only one thing that can calm storms -- Jesus Christ.

Notice the very last verse in this passage: "*Then the men were amazed and asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and waves obey Him.'*" Good question! What kind of man is this? The answer is He isn't a man at all. He is the Son of God! He is God who came to earth in the form of a human being so we could know what God is like. Jesus said if you've seen Me, you've seen God. I can't relate to some big ethereal thing in the sky. But I can relate when I know God came in the flesh. I could see how He loved and see how He cared and see what He did. And He will help you in your storm, but you've got to get Him in your boat. He's no good if He's back over on the shore. You've got to have Christ in your life to make it through the storms.

How do you get Christ in your boat? Simple. Ask him to board your ship. That means asking him into your heart as your personal Lord and Savior. Perhaps, you came here thinking that you can sail through life alone. Friend, that is true until you find yourself in the midst of a big storm. Then, you call on Jesus. But you don't have to wait till the storm comes. Call on him now.

Believe that he died for your sins on the cross. Believe that he was buried. Believe that he rose again from the dead.

Tell Jesus, "Lord, I can't save myself because I'm a sinner. I'm not perfect. I can't handle the problems of life. Please save me. Calm the storms of my life."

One last word: The Bible teaches that storms are inevitable. They're going to come. Storms are unpredictable. They come without warning. Storms are impartial. It doesn't matter how good or bad you are, you're going to experience them. But the other thing that the Bible teaches is that storms are temporal. They're temporary. They don't last.

Mark Twain and a friend walked outside one day in the rain. The friend said, "You think it will stop?" Mark Twain said, "It always does."

That's true with any storm. You've got to go through it but it's not going to last forever. Some of you feel like you're in a major storm right now and God's word to you is, "Hang in there!" The sun will shine again. There is hope. God is with you.

And this afternoon, just like what he said to the sea, Jesus is saying to you, "*Be still and know that I am God*" (Psalm 46:10). You don't have to be afraid because the God who is close to you and cares for you and is in control at all times will carry you through the storm.

Prayer:

Is Jesus Christ in your boat, or is He standing back there on the shore? Are you trying to sail through life all by yourself? Why? There's no reason to. God didn't make you to live your life independently, on your own power. He made you to live in harmony with Him, to have a relationship with Him. That's what Jesus Christ came to earth to make possible. Open your life up to Jesus Christ today. I don't care what kind of religious background you have. Open your life to Him today. If you want to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior, raise your right hand and I'll pray for you. (Would you say, "Jesus Christ, as much as I know how, I ask You to come into my life and save me. Make me the person that You want me to be. Help me to realize that You will always be with me. Help me to realize that You care. Lord, help me to realize that You have everything under control. It may not fit my timetable or I may not agree with everything that's going on because it doesn't suit me, but I realize that You've got it under control. So, as an act of faith, I want to relax and release the pain, the hurt, the worry, the fear and I want to receive Your presence, Your spirit and Your power, and Your protection and Your promise in my life.")

Perhaps, you're here this morning with a burden in your heart. You're going through a storm and you don't have the strength to hold on. You don't even know when it's going to end....

If you're not going through a storm right now, thank God. What do you do? You minister to those that are going through storms. That's the purpose of this church. God cares. He cares about you and He cares about everybody else in this community. He cares about everybody in the world.