Storms of Life

Mark 4:35-41

Key Verse: 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.”

The year 2022 is just around the corner, and we now welcome the new year by sending off the year 2021. When we look back on this year, many things happened to us and among us personally, nationally, and globally. At the beginning of this year, we expected the end of the pandemic, but it continues to this day. Wave after wave of COVID has attacked this world like a tsunami. This world is now fighting against the so-called Omicron variant. We continue to expect the end of this virus next year, but we are still unsure. Like the series of these variants, our life is one storm after another, whether small or big. Today Jesus calms a storm. By calming the storm, Jesus reveals his power and authority as God who controls nature. Jesus also teaches his disciples how to overcome the storms of life.

First, storms come even to Christians. Look at verses 35-37. Jesus taught the kingdom of God to the crowd through many parables. When he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything. Jesus realized that his disciples needed rest. So, they took a boat and were about to cross the lake, leaving the crowd behind. What happened to them in the middle of the lake? Verse 37 says that **a furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped**. Geographically speaking, Lake Galilee is located more than 600 feet below sea level and is surrounded by mountains. When cool air from the Mediterranean Sea passes through the valley and clashes with the warm air on the lake, a sudden storm occurs, even today. A few weeks ago, a series of tornados hit several states, including St. Louis, and killed more than one hundred people in total. Tornados also occur when warm and cold air meet.

Some of Jesus’ disciples were veteran fishermen who had experienced storms in the lake. But this one was one they couldn’t control. Jesus was with them in the same boat. He was sleeping at that time. Here, we learn that his disciples, and us Christians, meet storms in life like others without exception. We expect life with Jesus to be storm free. But we meet storms almost every day, even though we believe in Jesus. There are no exemptions from storms in life. How blessed would we be if there was no suffering or death! But, just like everyone else, we also suffer from sickness and die. Some of us suffer from financial difficulty and others from sickness. What is the difference then between Christians and non-Christians? How can we deal with this dilemma? We can’t avoid storms. Whether we are Christians or not, we all meet storms of life. The difference is that Jesus helps us overcome storms of life. Jesus also teaches us how to prepare for the coming of those storms. Of course, Jesus also calms storms.

Second, we must wake up Jesus. Look at verse 38. “***Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?***” Jesus’ disciples woke up Jesus. Jesus was sleeping in the middle of the storm. We often think that God is sleeping in the middle of our storms of life. God does not seem to take care of us while we are drowning. We shout like the disciples, “Lord, don’t you care when we suffer?” Waking up Jesus is like an act of prayer. We have to wake up the sleeping Jesus through prayer. We have to cry out to the Lord for help. If he doesn’t wake up from our shouting, we must shake him. As Jesus said, we have to ask, seek, and knock. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, “*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*” (Mt 7:7)

Hezekiah was one of the great kings of Judah according to 2 Chronicles 29-31. He reformed the temple and performed a spiritual revival for his idolatrous people. God blessed Hezekiah and was with him. But the king of Assyria threatened Hezekiah and Judah with an army of more than one hundred thousand. The fate of Judah was like a smoldering wick before a perfect storm. How did Hezekiah deal with this storm? The Bible says that King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah cried out to heaven in prayer. (2 Chr 32:20) They collected their strength and woke up God in heaven. What happened to them? 2 Chr 32:21 says that the LORD sent an angel and annihilated all the fighting men and commanders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian King. So, the Assyrian king withdrew to his own land in disgrace. When we are in the middle of a storm, we must wake up Jesus. We must cry out like Hezekiah and Isaiah and like Jesus’ disciples.

Storm comes because of our sins or mistakes. Students get F’s because they didn’t study. Some people encounter financial difficulties because they didn’t know how to manage their money. Storms also come from the Lord. Still, storms from the LORD have a good purpose. God does not give us storms which we cannot handle. God teaches us how to overcome these storms and provides a way-out. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, “*No testing has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tested beyond what you can bear. But when you are tested, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it*.” Whether the storm comes from our sin or from God, we must cry out to the Lord. We must wake up the Lord until he responds. This is prayer.

Third, storms will calm down. Look at verse 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 got up and rebuked the storm, which calmed down. The storm was furious and about to swallow up the disciples and their boat. But by Jesus’ one command, it completely died down. “Quiet! Be still!” When I visited a house, a big dog began to bark at me, a stranger. But when his owner shouted, “Quiet!”, the dog suddenly became very quiet. Like this obedient dog, the storm obeyed Jesus’ word and calmed down. Later, the disciples were terrified and asked each other, **“Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!**” (41) In reality, the winds and waves won’t listen to our shouts. It will not move at all by the words of any person. But they obeyed Jesus’ word because he is the Creator God. When Jesus said in the beginning, ‘Let there be light,’ there was light. When Jesus said, “Let water make river and sea,’ rivers and seas appeared. As the creator of the universe, Jesus has the authority to command and control nature, including the winds and waves.

When we look back on the year of 2021, we have met many storms in and out. But we realize that all these storms have already passed, are controlled, or are in progress. At first, we felt like dying, but we were saved and survived. The fact is that Jesus helped us deal with those storms or he himself controlled the storms. Anyway, all the storms of 2021 are now gone, and we say goodbye. Still, we will not be free from storms in the new year. We’ll meet new storms each new year. But remember that God will help us to overcome these storms and he himself will calm down the storms. Jesus wants us to believe that the new storms will also calm down as time passes by.

Look at verse 40. “He said to his disciples, “***Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?***” After rebuking the storm, Jesus rebuked his disciples’ lack of faith. What is the faith that Jesus wanted his disciples to have? Faith that Jesus would protect them from the storm. Faith that Jesus can control the storm. Faith that they will be absolutely safe when they are with Jesus. In Luke 18:1-8 Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray through the parable of the persistent widow. In this parable, Jesus teaches us to pray persistently like the widow until God answers our prayer. As the conclusion to this parable, Jesus said in verse 8, “*I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth*?” In this era of post-modernism and the generation of uncertainty, God seeks men and women of faith. The Son of Man Jesus seeks people who live by faith, not by sight. When we only look at the storm, God looks small. But when we fix our eyes on God himself, the storm looks small. The size of a storm depends on how we look at it. Storms come like the unceasing wave. This year, I experienced two long A-Fib episodes which made me anxious. Just when I forgot about it, A-Fib occurred again. A-Fib may appear again in the new year, but I believe that God will control it. I believe that my life is in God’s hands. So, I am not afraid of A-Fib anymore. Jesus seeks our faith in the middle of the storm. We must believe that all storms will end in peace eventually, and we will reach the heavenly harbor safely. I pray that we all may hear Jesus’ word in each and every storm of our livese, “Quiet! Be still!” Amen!