

COURAGE IN THE CORONASTORM

Prayer: Lord, we look to you in our time of need and echo what King Jehoshaphat prayed in 2 Chronicles 20, "O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you... We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." Lord, these are strange times and circumstances are changing rapidly. We need your wisdom and guidance as we move forward. We also ask for your protection as this pandemic spreads across our nation accompanied with widespread panic. Keep your promise to watch over your people and provide for all our needs. We are keeping the faith and trusting you in all things. Let your mercy and grace abound today and in the days ahead. Amen.

As I was thinking about what to say to you today I was reminded of the time the disciples were out on the lake in their boat when a storm came up suddenly. That seems a lot like what is going on in our world today. With this Coronavirus pandemic, our world has been caught up in a storm without warning and people are reacting in some ways that seem like a panic. As always, I think believers should look to the Lord and his Word in times such as these. What is God saying to us?

Matthew 8:23-27

Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Without warning, 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!"

v. 24 without warning The disciples were in the boat with Jesus and yet a storm came upon them. This is the way life happens! Life blindsides us sometimes. Just because we're in the boat following Christ doesn't mean that everything will be easy. There will be storms.

Things can change very rapidly as we have seen just in this past week. Our world has been hit by a storm. The Coronastorm. We went from business as usual to empty shelves in the stores and government mandated closings of schools and businesses. Whether you think it is warranted or not, the fact remains that our "normal" has radically changed in a matter of days. This sudden change is having a negative affect on our economy and our plans. But God can just as easily change things for the better in an instant.

2 Kings 7:1-2, 18 (*city under siege and the people were turning to cannibalism*)

Pastor Phil's paraphrase... "about this time tomorrow they will plenty of food for everyone and it will be cheap." One of the officers there said, "no way, man; even if God opened the floodgates of heaven, it's not gonna happen"...**18** It happened as the man of God had said

Malachi 3:1

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple..." says the LORD Almighty.

So, **there is hope for a sudden change** and a brighter day. But right now, we're still in the storm. Storms represent the difficulties of life. Life often doesn't go as we planned. Life throws us curveballs.

--Murphy's Laws... Inside every large problem is a series of small problems struggling to get out.

v. 24 ...furious storm... That's a bit what this past week or so has seemed like. It's a frenzy.

Sometimes the storms come from the enemy...

In Matthew 13 Jesus tells the parable of the sower and describes how the evil one comes and snatches away the seed. He also talked about trouble or persecution coming as well as the worries of this life. These are not from God, but the enemy who wants to disrupt our walk with the Lord. However...

Sometimes storms come from the Lord...

Jonah 1:3-4 tells us that Jonah was trying to sail away from God's plan but, "the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up." When God sends the storm, it is to test us or to get us back on the right track, as in the case of Jonah.

Where the storm comes from is not the main concern. What matters is our reaction. Bottom line is **storms will bring us to a point of decision; will we turn to God or not?** When we suffer, if we keep the faith, we get our focus on God more. Affliction drives the wise to the Lord.

Psalm 119:71

It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.

This Coronastorm can cause us to panic or we can choose to pursue the Lord. It's your choice!

v. 24 waves swept over the boat This is how our troubles feel at times; overwhelming... You may be one that is feeling overwhelmed by this Coronastorm...

v. 24 but Jesus was sleeping **The Lord is not surprised or disturbed by the troubles** that come our way... We might get uptight, but he never does. This Coronastorm was no surprise to the Lord.

v. 25 Lord save us! We're going to drown!

½ right; ½ wrong... They turned to God, but their presuppositions were wrong. This is where you can get into trouble. When problems arise, you turn to God, but sometimes you turn to accuse and to blame, rather than believe; to complain, rather than comply. God wants us to turn to him! But he wants us to **turn to him with faith!**

v. 26 You of little faith, why are you so afraid?

We often think that the opposite of faith is doubt. But here Jesus indicates that **the opposite of faith is fear! Following fear leads to more troubles:**

Genesis 3:10 (Adam) I was afraid... so I hid.

Genesis 18:15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied

Exodus 2:14-15 Then Moses was afraid... Moses fled

1 Samuel 15:24 Saul said... I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.

1 Samuel 18:29 Saul became still more afraid of him (David), and he remained his enemy the rest of his days.

But, **Romans 8:15** says, **"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship."**

We don't need to fear. Fear normally results in Fight or Flight. For born again believers **Fear should succumb to Faith**

Fear and faith cannot keep house together; when one enters, the other departs.

v. 26 Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves... it was completely calm...

☞ Everything is under his control!

Ephesians 1:20-22

Christ... far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. **22** And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,

Last week we talked about the King and Country of God's government. Jesus is the king and he is over and above all. He has the final say and he is not surprised nor upset by this current storm sweeping across the globe.

I wanted to continue talking about the Kingdom again this week, but felt that the current turmoil in the world warranted a change of direction. As I was searching the scriptures this week looking for some encouraging words from our Lord I found it interesting that his encouragement is actually tied to the Kingdom...

John 14:1-3

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to **prepare a place for you. 3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Be encouraged saints! Ours is the kingdom of heaven. The Lord has been preparing a place for us in his kingdom which is far bigger than this world. His kingdom doesn't have the viruses and other various troubles of this world. We will be changed in an instant and our bodies will be clothed with immortality and power. No matter what happens in this life, we will live forever with Jesus in his universal, ever-expanding, unending kingdom! We have a lot to look forward to, and as

kingdom citizens now, the Lord is already with us just as he was with the disciples in the middle of the storm. We can trust him now in the middle of our storm.

Psalms 46

¹ God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. ² Therefore **we will not fear**, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, ³ though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging... ¹⁰ **"Be still, and know that I am God...** I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."¹¹ The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress...

Psalms 16:8

I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Our security is in our faith, not in our safety. There are those in our culture who live in great safety and prosperity, yet their lives are consumed with worry and fear. On the other hand, there are those in the world who live in very difficult and dangerous places who have security, because they are full of faith and hope. We want to be safe, but it is more important for us to be secure in our faith and find our courage in God. The Bible says, "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever" (Psalm 125:1). Security is not the absence of trouble, but confidence and courage in the midst of trouble that comes from faith.

God is faithful and we can put our faith in him. So, deal with fear by having faith in God! He is in control. He sees the big picture. He always has your best interests in mind. Trust him! He is near! And he's got this. He is over the storm.

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for your presence with us. We are not in this boat alone. And today, we pause to acknowledge that you are Lord of all; you are in control; and you are watching over your people. So, we choose to look to you with faith, knowing that you will provide for all our needs and we are safe in your hand. We give you glory and honor today. Amen.