



“Storms Are Raging All Around Us”

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Scripture (CEB):

Mark4:35-41

³⁵ Later that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the lake.” ³⁶ They left the crowd and took him in the boat just as he was. Other boats followed along.

³⁷ Gale-force winds arose, and waves crashed against the boat so that the boat was swamped. ³⁸ But Jesus was in the rear of the boat, sleeping on a pillow. They woke him up and said, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re drowning?”

³⁹ He got up and gave orders to the wind, and he said to the lake, “Silence! Be still!” The wind settled down and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ Jesus asked them, “Why are you frightened? Don’t you have faith yet?”

⁴¹ Overcome with awe, they said to each other, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”

Sermon:

Ok, so I’m not going to ask you to raise your hands, or do anything to make you feel too vulnerable, but let me offer this:

If any of these statements resonate with you, give me an Amen!

I worry over climate change, and rising seas.

There is grief over the separated children and parents at the southern border.

There is anger over the cruelty of this policy, over the cold-heartedness and calculated cruelty over it.

I fear the rise of white supremacists, and neo Nazi's.
There is stress because we clearly can't say that our children really are safe in school.
And...Housing is tight.
And...Jobs are scarce.
Bills are higher than our paychecks.
Someone is sick.
Someone is dying.
Someone is alone and sad.
Racism and religious fanaticism are dangerously prevalent.
I'll bet you have your own items to add to this list. Go on, shout it out.

Ok, so that's enough.
But I think we get the point...there are indeed storms raging all around us.

And it feels as if somebody, who ought to be in charge, is asleep on a pillow in the back of the boat.

We want to wake them up and say, "Hey, we're drowning here!"

The terror of the abyss is upon us! We have done all we can and it is as if it is nothing! After all, Jesus' pals were fishermen, they knew a thing or two about bad weather!
But this storm was wilder and crueler than their fisherman's toughness. Sure, they were already hard at work trying to save their lives, and Jesus'...but it wasn't enough!
They were overwhelmed. Death was before their faces.
They woke Jesus up just in time to let him know, they were gonna drown, NOW.
And we get:
PEACE, BE STILL.
SILENCE, BE STILL.

What? That cannot be enough!

Sometimes, that is exactly enough.
Sometimes, that is exactly all we need to do: Be still. Be silent. Seek peace.

Now, listen to me, because I speak of what I know here: you can work, and work, and work...every day, long days, and still there is more you can do. You can push back against our myriad of storms all day, every day...and still there is more to do. You can work so much you don't eat right, sleep well, enjoy your friends and family, feel the sun on your face, give hope a chance to live in your heart.

Sometimes, you have to listen and hear: BE STILL. SILENCE. PEACE. BE STILL.
Where do you hear it?

In the garden perhaps? In the glory of music? In the wild open lands of a hike, or a camp? In the eyes of your beloved, or in the faces of your children?

Seek peace, be still. Spend time in silence.

The storms, Jesus promises, will quiet.

Look for it.

In the world, yes of course.

But in your heart, where storms rage...look there.

With Jesus in the boat of your soul...steadyng you, settling your fear, claiming you with love and calm.

Maybe, like the disciples, saying: Who is this, who calms the storms?

I believe it is the voice of God. And in giving our fear to God, there is the hope, there is the promise of quiet, stillness, rest.

Recovery from the storms.

Science is telling us more and more that humans are hard-wired to seek God, and yes, to experience God.

Through prayer, through meditation, through silence, and in the quiet...we can experience the calm of knowing God's loving presence, holding us, giving strength when ours is all gone. Acceptance and peace, when we cannot find it in our own frantic busyness.

We are living through stormy, very stormy times of dissolution and destruction, of fear and hatred, of despair, and of death.

But there is the One who, at least in this story, fears it not and rests easy on a pillow! There is the presence of Jesus who trusts in the One who has the power of speaking and stopping our fears from overwhelming us, like waves overwhelm a boat in a storm. Jesus is our model of trust in the One who holds all life and all death, all forces of creation and destruction, and who, as Creator, is also Master.

Loving Master. Generous Creator. Parent to all of us.

Teresa of Avila is a beloved saint of Spain from the 1500's. She was, like many Spaniards, hot-headed and pretty forward with her emotions. She was a woman in the Roman Catholic church at a time when repression was deep. And she did huge works of good and of mercy, created huge changes and reforms in the church, challenged all the male hierarchy of the church, anyway.

Teresa traveled widely through Spain, started monasteries, wrote to popes and kings. Yet always found time to be in silence, to find some quiet, to silence her soul in the midst of her busy life: "Mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with (*your friend*) Him who (*you know*) we know loves (*you*) us. **The important thing is not to think much, but to love much and so do that which bestirs you to love.**"

She also prayed this way:

SING: "Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten, those who seek God shall never go wanting. God alone fills us." (Chants from Taize)