

Job 38:1-11
Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32
2 Corinthians 6:1-13
Mark 4:35-41

Sermon June 20th, 2021

God Answers Our Lament

Storms are often used as metaphors for the messiness of life. Mark uses a story about the disciple's experience on the sea as a metaphor for the persecuted church. Reassuring the believers through this metaphor that Jesus is in the boat with them. At times it might feel like he is asleep, but he is there. All one needs to do is pray to wake him up.

I think the image of a storm to explain the messiness of life is an accurate one. Intense storms more often than not come on suddenly with little warning, and are very unpredictable. If we ever lived on the East or West coast, we probably grew up listening to old tales of people going out to sea, and the storms they encountered **(Image)**.

For many of us who grew up in the prairie provinces, we think of severe Thunderstorms or those storms that produce tornadoes **(Image)** or blizzards or snow squalls. One moment everything is calm and in the next we are seeing the destruction that storms can leave behind.

For example, you get that phone call or door knock that changes your life. One of your loved ones is dead. Suddenly the wind picks up. The waves are tossing your boat from side to side. Or in the language of the prairies, the Thunder shakes your house. The lightning strikes only a few feet away. The trees in your yard are being uprooted.

You need every bit of energy just to keep the boat from tipping over. You need every bit of energy just to get yourself to safety.

Or, you are sitting in the doctor's office **(Image)**. You know something isn't right as you have not felt like yourself for a very long time. But it isn't until the doctor gives you the diagnosis that it really sinks in. Your stomach starts to feel like a raging sea or a tornadic storm. How do I try to live with this mental or physical illness I have been diagnosed with? How is this illness going to shape my future? How are people going to treat me?

Or, you have been diagnosed with dementia, and know that eventually you will struggle to remember anything at all. The independence, the power you had over your life is dwindling away day by day. You are terrified of losing yourself. You get frustrated, angry, when you can't remember something. You don't want to be a burden to your

loved ones. The boat you are in is rocking back and forth violently. The roof is coming off the house.

Or, the whole world you once knew has changed. All of a sudden you are restricted in what you are able to do. The things you used to take for granted you no longer have access to. You are sad, frustrated, anxious of what life will look like. You are lonely, isolated. The water you are standing in is getting deeper, as the boat sinks. You see the tornado coming towards you, and yet, you can't seem to find shelter.

The anxiety, fear, sadness, trauma we experience when we suffer from these intense storms in our lives can be debilitating. Can be life altering. Can threaten our wellbeing. Can threaten our very lives.

We can relate to the disciples who are scared for their lives. This storm they are in is intense. The boat is sinking. The boat is violently sifting back and forth (**Image**). There are moments where the boat almost tips right over.

The church at the time Mark shared this story was facing this intensity in the Empire. The emperor had set a decree to persecute Christians. People were losing everything from their possessions to their loved ones to their own lives. It was an intense storm like the one the disciples had endured when Jesus was with them.

So, in Mark's retelling of this story, the disciples are hanging on to the boat for dear life. Hoping for a miracle. Trying everything in their power to keep the boat from tipping over. Then they remember that Jesus is there with them on the boat. They are not alone. There is hope.

Now, one detail in this story that gets my attention is the fact that other boats were with them (**Image**).

The disciple's boat isn't the only one at sea. Other followers of Jesus are in their boats too. Enduring this storm. Except their boats don't have Jesus below sleeping.

Sometimes when we face an intense storm in our lives, we feel that Jesus is with us in the boat. Sometimes we are in one of the other boats, feeling that Jesus is nowhere to be seen.

In the book of Job that we hear a section from this morning, Job suffers through an intense storm of his own. For those of us who vaguely remember Job's story, he experiences tragedy after tragedy. He loses all his wealth. All his children are killed. His relationship with his spouse suffers as they grieve the loss of their status and children differently. Then he suffers some chronic illness. Job has lost everything, and becomes paralyzed with grief. He ends up sitting in silence for seven straight days.

In the Hebrew seven means complete. So, some would interpret seven days as when he was ready to break his silence, which could have been much longer than seven days.

Finally, when Job is ready to speak, he lets off on God. He wants to know why this is all happening. Job laments.

When the disciples find Jesus sleeping, they too lament. Wondering if Jesus really cares about them.

When we suffer from these intense storms, we too lament. We ask why **(Image)**? We get angry with God. With our situation. We speak out. We cry out for justice. For answers.

In both Job and the disciple's story they invite God into a dialogue. They invite God to act.

In both these stories God answers their lament. In Job's case God comes in a whirlwind, and challenges him to think of the complexity of being God in this world. Or in other words, to trust God a little more. God goes on to redeem Job from his suffering.

In the disciple's case, Jesus also will challenge them to trust a little more, after he calms the storm for them. Giving them peace.

In both these stories the people experience God's healing and redemption from their pain. The people experience the lifting of the storm, and the return to sunny days.

As we suffer through the intense storms of our lives, including this pandemic, God answers our lament. God challenges us to trust a little more, and heals and redeems us from our suffering. God eventually calms the storm giving us new life.

Many have struggled with the motif that we are all suffering through this pandemic together. When in fact we can relate our suffering much more so with our gospel story. We are facing this pandemic on our own boat. Some boats may have more than one person on it, but there are several boats out in this storm (Image). Maybe our boat has Jesus sleeping below. Maybe not.

What we see in our gospel though is that no matter what boat we are on in the midst of the storm, Jesus' calming the storm impacts us all. We might not be able to see Jesus. Jesus might look like he is sleeping. But, when Jesus awakens it is not only the boat he is in that experiences peace from the storm. It is all the boats on the sea.

God is listening to our lament. God is inviting us to trust a little more in God as the winds swirl around us. God is doing something in the midst of this storm, and any other

storm we are facing to heal us and redeem us. To give us peace. To bring us to the other side where we will experience sunny days. God is doing something. We just need to wait a little longer for those clouds to part, so we can bear witness to all that God has done to lift us from this storm.

Let us pray, compassionate God, when we face the storms in our lives. When these storms confuse us and leave us asking questions, open our hearts to trust in you. To listen to your voice. Open our eyes to see where you are at work in the midst of the storm healing us. Redeeming us. Giving us peace. **Amen.**

© copyright, 2021, Wallace Bornhuse. All rights reserved.