

Faith In the Home
The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
Matthew 14:22-33, "Looking Through Storms"

The natural power of a storm can be awesome, terrifying, and yet beautiful. The lighting in a Midwest thunderstorm can be more impressive than fireworks on the Fourth of July. While I always enjoyed watching a thunderstorm when I lived in the Midwest, where there were thunderstorms, tornado warnings were often not far off. When a big storm hits there is nothing you can do but seek shelter, because there is nothing else in our power that we can do while a storm rages. Storms can uproot and change lives. Just this week the town of Baring, Missouri was destroyed by a Tornado.

That is why storms are often used a metaphor for people who are going through hardships where they feel powerless. These metaphorical "storms" can reshape us, change us, and move us in different ways. As awful as these experiences can be, they do grow us. Why? Because, often enough God is in the "storm" with us. He may even have sent us into the "storm."

In Matthew 14, after "The Feeding of the 5,000," Jesus tells His disciples to get into the boat and to sail to the other side of the lake, while He takes some time to be alone and pray to His Father. The disciples spend most of the night out in the lake caught in a nasty wind storm that they are unable get through. They faithfully fight the winds that they are sailing against, yet they must have been tired because they were sailing until the fourth watch of the night. This means that it was likely between 3am and 6am. They had been battling this storm all night. Then, suddenly, the disciples cry out in fear because they see what looks like ghost to them walking on the water. Afterall, no human can walk on water, right?

The figure of course isn't a ghost, it is Jesus. Jesus says, "Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid." The disciples may have actually heard Jesus proclaiming Himself to be God as God did in the burning bush, because the Greek could be translated to "Take Heart, I AM! Do not be afraid." Peter calls out and says, "Lord if it is you, command me to come to you." Jesus does so and He told Peter, "Come!" Peter actually walks on the water now, too, but when he comes to Jesus, he takes his eye off him and focuses on the wind and the waves. As a result, Peter begins to sink, and as He cried out, Lord, "save me!" Jesus grabbed Peter with His hand, and said, "You of little of faith, why did you ever doubt?" As Jesus got into the boat with Peter the winds stopped, and the disciples as tired as they were worshiped and said, "Truly, you are the Son of God!"

What are the applications points that we can take home and model for those around us?

1. When a metaphorical "storm" hits, we can make it harder on ourselves when we focus on the wind and the waves like Peter did rather than Jesus. When we dwell on the hardships of our trials anxiety and fear can take over. If we focus on God, we remember that He is true to His promises and that He works all things to His glory and to the benefit of those He loves.
2. In our trials we can moments where we are leaning on God, but then we have moments where we focus on the "wind and the waves," and we sink to doubt and even despair. In these moments Jesus is still faithful to us. He will save us sinking.
3. Trials and hardships do build perseverance. Those close to us who see our faithfulness to God in the midst of hardship will be blessed by the witness they see in our perseverance.
4. Peter's doubt and sinking into the waves is not the point. We should not focus on his lack of faith. Peter had faith enough to step out of the boat to walk to Jesus. The disciples were in that storm because Jesus sent them into it. When Jesus arrived in the boat and winds calmed, His disciples, tired as they were, worshipped Him, and their faith in Jesus increased. God will work to increase your faith as He walks with you in your trials or "storms."
5. You can always avoid trials or metaphorical "storms." They will come. Here we can hold on to Jesus' Word, "Do not be afraid." We have nothing to fear. Jesus who is God, and the Son of God, the Great "I AM" is with us.