

I was talking with a colleague this week exchanging what sermon series we were in. This pastor shared that he was not brave enough to talk about storms in Southeast Texas not after the last 14 years. I laughed and said it was not about being brave. Rather, storms are a part of our lives, whether we like it or not – so we can prepare for another hurricane season beginning June 1 by looking at God in the storm. It's all too easy to skip to the end of this short story walking away thinking it was only about the lack of faith of the Disciples. But there is so much more here and in fact this story is the first of four stories about the Lordship of Jesus.

We begin with Jesus instructing the disciples to get into the boat to cross the Sea of Galilee on way to the country of Gerasenes. Before beginning this journey, Jesus taught about the use of parables and taught about the sower, the lamp under a bushel, the grower and the mustard seed. We can imagine after the teaching to untold numbers of people that Jesus is tired. The disciples as experienced fishermen can handle crossing the sea so he rests. Jesus know they know what they are doing. The idea of a storm coming on quickly would have not been unusual. But something about this storm rattles the disciples. The wind continues to whip up the water and creates the storm. The disciples are overwhelmed and reach out to Jesus to save them.

We resemble this place in our lives, don't we? We all have been here when things quickly get out of hand. Everything else must stop to deal with the crises of the moment. We want to shout to Jesus to wake up, pay attention. The desperate shouts to Jesus to save us. Into the chaos of that moment and in our moments Jesus rebukes and then speaks peace. Jesus literally tells the wind & the sea off. He chastises them, much like we do to

animals or people who disobey. Jesus brings order to the chaos. Our translation adds the word of peace, Eirēnē in the reading from Mark. But the Greek word here is not peace as we know it. It is galēnē which only appears in the NT in 3 places – all in the calming of the storm on the sea of Galilee.

As the storm ends, the disciples are left with this question. Even though they have been with Jesus for awhile they still do not grasp all that he has tried to teach them. ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’ It is this event that demonstrates to us that Jesus the son of God, is fully human and fully divine. Jesus has power over creation.

Jesus may be able to calm the storms but we have no control over the weather. What we can control is our response. I remember the first hurricane season I experienced. Ellie was a baby and I had just gone back to work after maternity leave. Everyone was talking about a tropical depression while we were at Wednesday night bible study. None of us gave it much thought – a depression wasn’t going to do much. After that experience, I made sure that I had the checklist of supplies and was ready to go June 1 every year after that. I wonder if we could create our own Faith checklist of things we need to when the storms are all around?

We need to have transportation. The disciples had the boat. I know some of us have been evacuated by boat and prefer not to do that again, we still need to have a way out. Whether it is to evacuate or get supplies we have to be able to move and aid in recovery.

We need to have a core group of friends who, not only go through the storm with us but are there for the support. Harvey was both a blessing

and a heartache. For so many days we could not move from where we were because water separated us. We knew people were struggling and we couldn't do the things that we longed to do. Harvey also forged friendships and partnerships. We learned who we could work with and who we could not.

We need to find ways to calm our minds and dispel our fear. This is the hardest. The first 2 are things that we naturally do. Jesus asks that do they fear? That is the first step, naming that which we are afraid of. I know I've shared before but I struggle with snakes. I know I am not alone. I know others don't do bugs or mold, etc. We all have those things that make us afraid but when we can speak our fears within the community we do not have to face them alone. When we acknowledge that which we fear we give ourselves the opportunity for our faith to grow. Fear does not mean we have no faith but it can paralyze us. The disciples let their fear of perishing keep them from doing what they knew to do. Jesus is not only commenting about the spiritual faith but the faith in their skills as those who lived on the sea. We cannot let our fear keep us from acting. Trying something new that does not work is not failure, doing nothing is failing.

Finally, we have to calm the sea. When we get overwhelmed we often feel as if we have lost control and chaos abounds. More often than not what we need to do is simply stop and hold our breath. I know what you're thinking, don't we need to breathe? In moments of trauma the worst thing we can do is try and take slow deep breaths. We are not set up to do that. What we have to do is to stop and hold our breaths. It's the equivalent to hitting control, alt & delete on a computer to reset it. Once our bodies and minds have stopped then we can begin to breathe slowly. Another option is

to do square breathing, 5 things I can see, 4 things I can touch, 3 things I can hear, 2 things I can smell, 1 thing I can taste. Moving through these re-routes our brains to focus on the senses and not the chaos.

As we prepare for the storms that may rage around us are we prepared? Do we have a plan and supplies? Are our friends ready to journey with us? Have we named our fears and calmed our minds? Then we're ready to take the next step. May we practice calming our minds so that we may be with those in the storm who do not have our Faith. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.