

J.J.

IN THE MIDDLE OF DIFFICULTIES
Matthew 14:22-32; Mark 6:45-56; John 6:15-21

Matthew 14: 22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, 24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

29 "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

PRAY

INTRODUCTION :

I found this...

YOU KNOW IT WILL BE A BAD DAY WHEN...

- Your wife says, "Good morning, Bill," and your name is George.
- You call 9-1-1 and they put you on hold.
- Your pacemaker is recalled by the manufacturers.
- Your birthday cake collapses from the weight of the candles.
- You turn on the news and they're showing emergency routes out of the city.
- Your twin sister forgot your birthday.
- Your car horn goes off accidentally and remains stuck as you follow a motorcycle gang on the freeway.
- You wake up and your braces are locked together
- Your boss tells you not to bother to take off your coat.

You're really having a bad day when this happens.

Doctor to patient: "I have bad news and worse news."

Patient: "So let's have it."

Doctor: "The bad news is that you only have 24 hours to live."

Patient: "I can't imagine what could be worse than that!"

Doctor: "I forgot to tell you yesterday."

The disciples were having a bad day. In fact, they were having a bad night.

REVIEW

Last week, we started talking about Jesus in the midst of difficulties. We read the story

DURING DIFFICULT PERIODS

- Jesus allows struggles.
- Jesus sees.
- Jesus goes to our side.
- Jesus saves.

I. JESUS ALLOWS STRUGGLES

Matthew 14: 22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, 24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

As we can see here, it was Jesus who *made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side*

And while they were rowing, the boat was *buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.*

Etymology: buffeted “basanizo” tortured, harassed, distressed
“Against”, contrary in KJV “enantios” opposed, hostile

Isn’t that what life is sometimes? It’s like whatever you do, there’s always a struggle or you’re having a hard time moving forward because something or someone is against you.

And we might even say, “Lord, I’m serving you.” or “Lord, I’m obeying you” and yet why have you placed me in this situation?

There are times in our life that God will allow challenges and it’s not particularly because of what we have done.

Why?

1. He’s sparing us from temptation.
2. He’s testing our obedience.

Now, what is happening while we are undergoing this struggles?

II. JESUS SEES.

Now remember the story I preached and it was in Matthew 8.

When they were in the middle of the sea, Jesus was sleeping. At least, they know that Jesus is with them and can wake Him up. *That’s why Jesus said to them, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” (Matthew 8:26)*

This time, it wasn’t a life and death situation because it doesn’t show that they were scared of the waves, they were only really struggling (straining) and Jesus wasn’t with them.

But where is our Lord even during our times of struggle? When life seems to be against us? When there are no opportunities opening up for us? Or nothing is happening when it comes to your health or your finances?

Mark 6 : 47 Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. 48 He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them.

Remember during difficult times, God sees us, God knows what's happening to us.

Psalm 56:8 You keep track of all my sorrows.

You have collected all my tears in your bottle.

You have recorded each one in your book. (NLT)

III. JESUS GOES TO OUR SIDE

25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

Now, take note :

What was giving them the difficulties at this time? The water!

Now, you see Jesus walking on the water.

Remember, these are big waves and some theologians said that he's not walking on those waves like a surfer on top of the waves.

When Jesus was walking, He was walking, the waves were flattening out....giving way to Him.

Remember, He is God.

Biblical Illustration : Remember the Red Sea, God parted it so that the Israelites can pass.

The waves flatten out when Jesus was walking on it.

Illustration : Do you see servants around royalty in the past that whenever the king or queen passes by they stop whatever they are doing and give way and curtsey or do a bow.

That's what the waves are doing. It's their King passing by.

Isn't that what the disciples noticed in Matthew 8

Matthew 8 : The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

What's the lesson here THAT OUR LORD IS WALKING ON THE WATER THAT'S CAUSING THE DIFFICULTIES OF HIS DISCIPLES?

Jesus is on top of the situation or thing or the person that's causing you the difficulties!

What's causing your difficulty right now?

Is it your boss? Is it your neighbor? In short, are people the reason behind your difficulties?

He's in control of them.

*Proverbs 21: 1 The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by the Lord;
he guides it wherever he pleases.*

What are the other things that's causing you difficulty? Your finances? Your health?

You see in the Bible, we all know Isaiah 43:2

Isaiah 43: 2 When you pass through the waters,

*I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.*

But all of these can only happen based on verse

*3 For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;*

We need not be afraid of any difficulties or situation because GOD IS ON TOP OF THE SITUATION. HE IS IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION BECAUSE HE IS LORD OF ALL..AND GOD AND KING OF EVERYTHING, EVEN OUR DIFFICULTIES.

Psalm 29: 10 The Lord rules over the floodwaters. The LORD reigns as king forever.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE : Now we have to remember that Jesus did not immediately go to them even when He saw them struggling.

Notice again :

Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

Mark also said that shortly before dawn

Remember, they started rowing in the evening and now it's dawn. Jesus saw them from a distance it's only before dawn when Jesus went beside them.

Imagine that they were doing this the whole night...struggling!

There are times that our Lord does this. Now, it's not because He doesn't love them. In fact look at this story :

Biblical Illustration : Remember the story of Lazarus. He became sick and his sisters Mary and Martha sent word to Him, how did they relay the sickness?

John 11: 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

But in spite of this, what did Jesus do?

6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days,

Why would Jesus allow this? Doesn't He care?

Sometimes our Lord will allow this when we have no more strength of our own, when we have no more resources on our own, so that all of our hope and all of our reliance only goes to Him.

And that's the time God shows who He is.

Quote : Every problem is an opportunity to prove God's power. Every day we encounter countless golden opportunities, brilliantly disguised as insurmountable problems. – Charles Swindoll

Remember the story of the boy who was asked by his widowed mom to get bigas.

The boy got some rice but it was only good for one cup. The boy shouted to mother, "Nay, oh my, we only have one cup of rice left and that's it..." The mom said, "sigurado ka? (are you sure) and she said, "Try it again," but the boy just knocked the bottom of the container and it made a sound. The boy said, "Nay, wala na talaga... (there's really no more rice after this one cup). The mother said, "How did you know?" The boy replied, "I can hear now the sound of the bottom of the container. Then the mother replied to the boy, "Good." God also hears that sound.

I love how Eugene Peterson, paraphrased the Beatitudes.

Matthew 5: 3 "You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

4 "You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

Next week, let's see how the disciples reaction to Jesus' action.

S.G.D.

Note on walking on water... notice he multiplied the bread and the fish after praying...now he's walking on water after praying...Peter walked on water after asking Jesus (praying)... that's what happens when we pray, we get God's power in our life.

Note also look at this...

Matthew 8 : The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this?

After this walking on water incident, they now worship Him.