

**Mark 4:35-41**  
**What to do with the storms of our lives**  
June 23, 2024



One moment everything is calm and peaceful and the next everything is chaos and danger. Life is too often like that.

The day starts out as a beautiful, calm summer's afternoon. The disciples have the best intention in the world when they take Jesus out for a sail to get him away from all the people who have been crowding him. As they laze away on the sea under a cloudless blue sky, Jesus falls asleep, tired out from all the emotional and physical demands of the huge crowds of people. Then, out of that clear blue sky, a storm blows up out of nowhere. Suddenly they are plunged into a new and terrifying reality. The quiet relaxation is torn from them and they find themselves plummeted into the worst storm they've ever known. And they aren't ready for it. They have no time to prepare, no time to notice that the wind is rising.

To go from clear blue sky to the middle of the worst storm you've ever known in the time it takes to blink, leads to terrible shock and panic. Inconceivably, that day on the waters, Jesus sleeps through it all. Through the entire maelstrom and the mayhem, through the terrible danger and the terrifying, panicky fear, Jesus lies on his cushions blissfully asleep, completely unaware of anything that is going on around him. Little wonder the disciples are frustrated and angry. Little wonder they shake him awake with "Don't you care? Don't you care at all?"

The story is a familiar and much loved one for us. In all likelihood, we are drawn to this story because it is a metaphor of what is often our own life experience and circumstance. Indeed, we can all relate and identify with this story. Maybe we've just had a restorative nap or have just returned home from a lovely river cruise with no WIFI. We turn on the television. It happens to be on the news channel and suddenly into the midst of our quiet we hear of mass shootings; the latest on the wars in the Ukraine and the Middle East; the desperate existence of the Palestinians and indeed refugees around the world; so many "out of control" wild fires, ravaging floods and mud slides; the continuing state of COVID 19 and RSV, measles and small pox; terrorism and the potential for another cold war ...

And on the home front, we are confronted with health issues – our own and those of loved ones. And why is the Bank of Canada considering postponing any announcements about interest rate changes for a month?

Unfortunately, the list goes on. So what do we do? How do we keep moving forward, or moving at all? Will our spirits get crushed under the storm. When we are being tossed about by life's pressures, when reality of danger is made too real for us through the daily reports of news, when God seems to be asleep – how do we cope?

The psalmist says that the Lord has never forsaken those who seek him, who trust him. Despite the daily assault of bad news, the cross reminds us in an ultimate, eternal way that God is not asleep. All evidence to the contrary, there is no cause for despair in life. The waves may and do beat against the boat, but the boat is not going to go down. It isn't going down because Jesus is in the boat.

Jesus is peace in the storms of anxiety. He teaches us of, shows us a Father whose hand will never cause his child a needless tear; a Father whose love is a place beyond which we nor those we love can never drift.

In Isaiah, we hear God's promises:

"I will save you ... when you pass through deep waters you will not drown; ... through fire you will not be burned. I will save you. ... I will give up whole nations to save your life because you are precious to me, and I love you and I give you honour."

In Christ, we see love and salvation in human flesh, dying on the cross for our sins, rising from death for our salvation.

Some years ago, Tim Allen, comedian and star of the show *Home Improvement* was being interviewed. Allen, who is a recovering addict, talked about his life, his struggles, and his beliefs. At one point, he was asked what he thought God would say to him when he got to heaven. Allen paused for a moment, and then said, "I told you there was nothing to be afraid of."

In one of his books, Elie Wiesel relates a story of one Israel of Rishim, a Hasidic master. In the tales of this learned rabbi, one motif recurs over and over: that of a traveller lost in a thick wood during a storm. It is dark and the traveller is afraid. Danger seems to lurk behind every tree. Suddenly, lightning shatters the silence. The fool, says the rabbi, looks at the lightning. But the wise man looks at the road suddenly illuminated before him.

God neither slumbers, neither sleeps. God cares! That's why God gave us Jesus – not only to speak to us, to teach us, to ask us to believe and trust in God. God gave us Jesus to model an unshakeable trust in the One who is actively present in his life, and in our lives, as well. That's why Jesus can confidently "go across" the waters, taking his ministry and message into even hostile territory. That's why Jesus can see those seeds that God has planted in the disciples, and us, struggling to take root even in unreceptive soil. That's why Jesus can sleep, peacefully and soundly, in the back of the boat while the storm rages. And that's why Jesus asks, and we can almost hear the wonder in his voice, 'Why are you afraid?'