

## SMALL BOATS ON GREAT OCEANS

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, August 27, 2006



**Mark 4:35-41**

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side" and, leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" and they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

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We grew up with this story, didn't we? As a child, the story left me with only one message. In my mind, it had ONLY to do with **how powerful Jesus was** that he could perform this type of miracle and nothing more! A tale of long ago, and, **I might add**, a little tough to believe in the year 2006. During these days we are able to spot Hurricane Ernesto churning in the ocean still several days away. So, my modern mind says, glad I didn't live 2000 ago when big storms still came unexpectedly! That is about it! You see ~ that is the problem, **I was taught to believe this story in the literal sense and nothing more. I missed the boat, all those years.**

You see, in the story, when the disciples finally decided to wake Jesus up, **they were already in a state of near panic.** How could he be so calm? Naturally, as most people would do, their first thoughts were that he did not really care for them and their safety! Today we understand better! **They had something very important to realize** - They needed to understand how to deal with fear and panic. Soon afterwards, they were to be confronted with new fears and sorrows - but this time with a real difference -- Jesus was already preparing them for the storms ahead -- soon they would be underway to Jerusalem - where the shadow of the cross was already looming! **We are told that we have nothing to fear but fear itself - this is how they learned the lesson!**

Nowadays, most people, if they can choose, prefer to travel by air. Yet, many people are still uncomfortable about flying. There are some excellent stories about these nervous people.

For instance, a woman was flying with her infant daughter. When they landed, they were met in the waiting area by her granddad, who took the baby while she proceeded to the baggage claim area. Standing there alone waiting to claim her baggage, **she was absentmindedly still holding the baby's pacifier.** She noticed a flight attendant staring at her--then at the pacifier, then back at her. Finally the flight attendant spoke. **"Excuse me, Miss—was this your first flight?"**

The disciples asked, **"Teacher ~ do you not care that we are perishing?"** Many of us have asked the same question at some time in our lives. When we encounter our personal storms on our life's heavy seas? Does God really care or is God asleep in the stern of our boats?

We all go through storms at some time or another. Many personal relationships end in a storm. A certain couple was celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. She told the secret of their long and happy marriage. "On our wedding day," she said, "I decided to make a list of **five faults** which, for the sake of our marriage, I would overlook in my new husband." Of course, everyone wanted her to tell some of those faults. She replied, "To tell you the truth, I never did get around to listing them. Whenever my husband did something, though, that made me hopping mad, I would say to myself, '**Lucky for him that's one of the five!**'"

Storms are raging in many lives. It could be that you came to church today in the hope to hear the same reassuring voice that the followers of Jesus heard amidst the storm that they were in! **Peace! Be still and fear no more!** For instance, the loss of a loved one can be a terrible storm with devastating effects. Research on the mortality rate of 4,500 people within six months of their spouse's deaths, brought to light that, *compared with other people the same age*, these people had a mortality rate 40 percent higher. What greater storm can we go through than the loss of a loved one? Some of you are experiencing that same deep hurt. The loss of a loved one is a dreadful storm.

Life – storms take on many different forms. There is someone in Church today, somewhere – facing financial ruin in uncertain times. **For some the dollars are too few for the road ahead that can be a very long one!** Many cannot make the ends meet anymore.

Others have enough money, **but are suffering because of their personal failures. Not having lived up to the standards that they have set for themselves! They are facing a sense of living in vain. Somewhere, their self-esteem and self-respect were fractured and the winds are howling over their hands.** Whatever the storm – many are distressed at the fact that the Master seems to be asleep.

The terrible part is that the master seems to be asleep. "Why doesn't God intervene?" they cry out in distress. That is the difficult question, is it not? Where is God in my distress? **Do you not care that we perish?** Do my grieves and heartaches matter? That is the question. Is there anyone there who sees and understands? **Teacher, do you not care that we perish?**

The bible is telling us today. Yes! God cares deeply. **When the storms of life are raging, he does care.** When it seems you cannot hold on a moment longer, he does care. When the waters threaten to engulf, he does care. That is the backbone of the Christian message. Ours is a caring God! The disciples rouse Jesus from his sleep, and he speaks to the wind and the waves, "Peace! Be still!" The wind then ceases and there is a great calm. Then he turns to the disciples and asks, "**Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?**"

The central question in our faith life **is not how many storms we must pass through! Is not** how fierce the storm is. The question is whether we have faith and conviction that can help us weather every storm that comes our way. We all know that bad things happen to all people - good or bad. **There is no magic wand that will safeguard some people from raging storms and others not.** The storms will come and you and I are not going to avoid them. However, hear the Gospel! - There is a difference. When the Storms rage, we have the Master on board. As one of God's People you can say: "**I am standing on a rock. And although I am trembling on the Rock, The Rock won't tremble under me!**"

**Do you believe** in a God who loves you and has promised never to forsake you - and be with you – even as you enter the valley of death? **Do you believe** that however dark the clouds may be, behind those clouds, the sun still shines? **Do you believe** that beyond every cross, there is a Living Christ? If you do, you can weather the storm, however severe.

Do you have a faith of your own? If you do not, today is the day to take possession of that faith for yourself. You cannot rely on the faith of others: "God has no grandchildren." You cannot inherit the faith of your parents or anyone else. It is a personal thing. It calls for a personal decision. Lord. I will follow you - from this day on!

The fisher folk of Brittany have the tradition to utter a simple prayer every time when they launch their boats upon the deep: "Keep me. O God ~ your sea is so great and my boat is so small. It might be your golden day today. It might be time for you to allow your faith to discover that God is in the boat after all!

Fear no longer, my friend. Hear the voice of the Gospel. Listen to the sound of God's voice rising above your storm: "Peace, be still." That voice is saying, "Peace. Be still." I am with you to the end.

**AMEN**