

We live in a country where we have our fair share of storms. And in life each one of us will go through a few storms, storms with our health, storms with our relationships, storms with our circumstances, storms with our faith. Earlier this week I helped to lead an event in St Anne's Cathedral where we examined the troubles over the last 40 years in our country. But for me the most significant question that was raised was this – where is God when the storms come.

When a crisis comes into your life is God a good God or a bad God for allowing it to happen? When you pray during the storm do you see God as caring or uncaring based on how He answers? *Storms in life have the ability to bring to the surface what's really inside of you.* Storms will reveal to you whether you live by fear or by faith? Storms will reveal to you if your heart is full of trust or doubt.

So we are going to examine this a little further as we set it in the context of Jesus calming the storm. So briefly, here are 6 things that we learn from storms in life.

### Storms can be a test

It is during the storms of life you discover what you really believe. Storms have a way of revealing the truth about you. **Verse 35 says, As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake."** <sup>36</sup> **So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed).**

This had been a busy day and emotionally draining day for Jesus, and yet Jesus was not finished for the day – he had been shaping his disciples, and now he would give them a practical test to see how much they had really learned. After all, the hearing of God's Word is intended to produce faith (Romans 10:17) and faith must always be tested. It is not enough for us merely to learn a lesson or be able to repeat a teaching. We must be able to apply that lesson by faith, and that is one reason why God allows for trials, difficulties, and storms to come into our lives. Some storms are the tests and opportunities to demonstrate your trust in God.

### Storms can happen suddenly

**Number two, storms can happen suddenly.** Verse 37 says, **But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water.** Let's get a clear picture of what's happening here.

As I understand it, the geography around the Sea of Galilee, with mountains and the water being 700 feet below sea level makes it possible for storms to develop very quickly. Did Jesus know this storm was coming? Absolutely.

You see when a storm comes in life, a lot of the time we don't have time to prepare for it do we. That's the way life is. One moment you are doing fine and the next the bottom falls out. One phone call and you find yourself in the middle of storm. One doctor's visit and you are in a storm. One conversation and you are in a storm.

And because they are sudden, they will definitely reveal where our faith truly is. We have no time to think.

## Storms can cause you to doubt God

**Number three, storms can cause you to doubt God.** Verse 38 says, **Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re going to drown?”**

There is a fierce and violent storm occurring. The sea is being shaken. The hurricane like winds are blowing the boat all directions, the waves are crashing over into the boat, the boat is filling up with water, the disciples (who are experienced fishermen and know the sea) are yelling do this and do that. They are in a panic. They are thinking they are about to die... and where is Jesus? He is **“sleeping at the back of the boat... on a cushion.”**

So how do the disciples respond? They wake Jesus up asking whether he cares. It must have taken a lot for them to go to Jesus – after all a number of them are trained fishermen. And yet they have to go to a carpenter's son for help. They obviously felt powerless and were worried they were going to die. You know it's a very normal thing to wonder where God is in the middle of the storm. Thomas doubted, and yet I truly believe the exercise of examining where your faith really is in the middle of a storm is important. We will come back to this in a moment.

## Storms teach you about God

**Number four, storms can teach you about God.** Verse 39 says, **When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Silence! Be still!” Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm.**

I think this says a lot about the power of God in the middle of a storm, and how important it is to realise just how much he is in control. It is not for us to understand fully what God is doing, but there is a reassurance to know that whatever happens he is in control. Without Jesus uttering the command to stop the wind, the disciples would not have realised just how powerful he was.

And therefore for each one of us when you are in the middle of a storm, it is there that God can demonstrate who He is. We begin to see him clearly through what he reveals to us as important in life, where our dependency and reliance is.

## Storms teach you about yourself

**Number five, storms can teach you about yourself.** Verse 40 says, **Then he asked them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”**

The disciples' concerns about drowning were normal and reasonable. However how they had addressed Jesus says more about their faith than anything. They address him as teacher, not as Lord. They asked, **“Teacher, don’t you care...?”** So their understanding of Him was not where it needed to be and instead of asking, “Lord, can you help us?”, they questioned His love and concern for them. This is the temptation when we become afraid. Because of the storm in our life we see God as less than He is and we doubt His love and care for us. The disciples' fear blinded them to who Jesus really was. In the storms of life we learn more about who we think Jesus is – is he the life raft that we pull out when things are really tough, or is he the

friend and companion that walks with us every day through the sunny days but also through the storms.

## Storms will stretch your faith

**Finally number six, storms will stretch your faith. Verse 41 says, **The disciples were absolutely terrified. “Who is this man?” they asked each other. “Even the wind and waves obey him!”** Up to this point, the disciples knew Jesus was special and unique and that God was working through Him. However, this event started a real shift in their thinking about who Jesus really is. He wasn't like the prophets of old. There was something different about him. Their faith was being stretched. For each of us, do we realise in the middle of a storm just all that Jesus wants to do? Jesus was not just saving these men from a storm – he was wanting them to have more faith for the future. For us as we face the storm, can we ask ourselves the question what all does God want to do in this and beyond this.**

## Conclusion

Here is the reality. You are either headed into a storm, in the middle of a storm, and coming out of one. We've all had the recent storm of COVID, but we all must learn from our storms. God is teaching us something about Himself, and about us. See the storms of life as an opportunity for God to display who He is.

For me, more than anything, when you come out of the storm let's make sure we are not the same person that walked in. That's what the storm is all about.