



“He Will Be Present”

Matthew 14:22-33

Idea: Jesus is Lord over the storm.

Intro: Over the last seven to ten days, the Carolinas & Virginia have felt the fury of Hurricane Florence. The storm flooded everything in its path and spawned destructive tornadoes. Thirty-two people lost their lives. The damage is estimated to be between 30-50 billion dollars.

Hurricane Florence reminded us that storms are a natural part of life. Hurricanes form every year. The storm was also a reminder of how helpless we are in the midst of a storm. Thankfully, scientists can predict the direction and strength of a storm, giving citizens a few days to prepare. But science can do nothing to dissipate or redirect a storm. The storms will come, so it is our responsibility to be ready.

It’s been said that in life you are either coming out of a storm, in one, or headed toward one soon. It’s here that the Bible gives us hope: Jesus is Lord over the storm. Is there a storm slamming into your life today? Have you just come out of a storm? Perhaps, it seems that things are great right now and

life couldn't be better. Forgive me for being the bearer of bad news, but things will change for you some day.

This month we've been studying the subject of trust. No matter what is going on in our lives and families, through this series, we are learning that God can always be trusted. He will empower, provide, protect, and be present in your life. We have seen in Noah how God empowers us to do what He has called us to do. We have seen through Abraham and Isaac how God provides everything required to do what He has called us to do. And we have seen in Moses how God protects us as we follow Him. Today, we will learn from Peter and the disciples that God is always present with us in the midst of the storms of life. We can trust Him. We must trust Him.

Read Matthew 14:22-33.

Inquiry: As a result of the storm, the disciples worshiped Jesus as the Son of God. This is the first time they addressed Him in this way. There are many things we can glean from Matthew 14, but there is one over-arching truth that springs off the page, and it is this: Our worship of Christ is a reflection of our trust in Christ. We could also say it this way: "What we believe about Jesus will determine everything about how we worship Jesus."

If we believe Jesus is a good man who did good things for us, then we will honor Him as we honor good men who do things for us. But if we believe Jesus is the majestic, glorious, universal King over all creation, then that belief will be evident in the way we sing to Him, the way we pray to Him, and the way we worship Him. Our goal, then, in reading Matthew 14 is to believe in Jesus more deeply, and as a result, to grow in our worship of Him.

In chapter 13, Jesus told eight different parables to describe what the kingdom of heaven is like. The first parable was about a sower and the four kinds of soil representing the human heart in response to the gospel. This parable is especially

relevant for Matthew 13:53-14:36, for here we see examples of the various heart conditions described by Jesus. The hard heart that rejects the gospel is evident in the people of Nazareth (13:53-58) and in Herod (14:1-12). The superficial heart that believes in Jesus as long as He provides food can be found among the large crowds who ate the loaves and fish (14:13-21). There is no real root to the faith of such people, as is evidenced by their later abandoning of Jesus (John 6:22-71). Though we don't specifically see the divided heart, we know that lurking in the midst of the disciples is Judas, a man who saw everything Jesus did yet still rejected Him. Underneath the surface, the ways and wealth of this world choked out the faith of this imposter. Finally, the receptive heart represented by the good soil was evident in the disciples as they rose to new heights in their faith (14:33). They learned Jesus could and should be trusted at all times because He would always be present in their lives...during the good as well as the bad times of life.

This life lesson was learned alone in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had just fed the five thousand men along with their families. In that desolate place He was able to provide much from very little (14:17-20). The crowd immediately believed in Jesus so much so they intended to make Him their king (John 6:15). Jesus withdrew from them up the mountainside and sent the disciples to the other side of the lake by boat. That evening as they rowed a strong wind came against them in the middle of the lake. The waves became furious, and they rowed painfully (Mark 6:48).

A lot of times life feels like this. You set out to do what Jesus told you to do. You are striving to walk in His will for your life. All of a sudden, you find yourself in the middle of the sea with a strong wind blowing against you. The waves of life are slamming against your life, and Jesus seems to be nowhere in sight. Does this sound familiar? Have you experienced this in your life? It is here that you need to remember and believe that God can be trusted. He will be and is always present. There are three things about the Lord we need to know.

1. The Lord graciously sees you in your trouble.

(Mark 6:48)

Jesus was the One who sent the disciples away in the boat. It was probably between 7 and 9pm when they left. Later, we learn that Jesus comes to them on the water in the fourth watch of the night, which is sometime between three and six o'clock in the morning. This means the disciples were in the boat by themselves for at least six hours while Jesus was on the mountainside. I bet to the disciples it felt like days rather than hours.

What was Jesus doing while they struggled against the storm? According to the gospel writers, He was praying (Matt 14:23; Mark 6:46). What was He praying about? I believe Jesus was praying for the disciples in the boat. He was praying for their faith to be increased. He was praying they would learn to trust in Him rather than fear their circumstances. He was praying for their safety and well being.

Jesus saw them from the mountain, and He sees you today from the throne of heaven. In His grace Jesus watches over you. He sees your struggles, pain, and disappointments. He doesn't have to see the storms in your life. There is no one obligating Jesus to watch over you, but in grace He obligates Himself. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus watches over His sheep. He loves you. He cares for you. He sees you in your trouble, and He is praying for you today (Heb 7:25).

If Jesus loves me, cares about me, and sees my struggles, then why does He not take them away? God's ways are higher than our ways (Is 55:9). Who can know that mind of God? That is a big question, but I do believe we can say that one reason for the struggles in life is to teach us that God can be trusted...that He is

present in the storm. The Lord sees you in your trouble.

2. The Lord sovereignly walks with you in your trouble.
(Matt 14:26, 29)

Surely, the disciples thought they were lost and without hope. Jesus was nowhere to be seen. He had sent them off in the boat and went away in the opposite direction. Now the waves are slamming against their boat. They are taking on water. The boat is beginning to sink.

As they were despairing, they looked up and Jesus was there. He physically came to them. He walked with them in the storm.

What a comfort it is to know that someone is walking through the storm with you. This past Monday, when the reports of tornado activity in our area were going out, how did you feel? I bet you immediately thought about your family. If you were alone, you immediately wished that someone else were present as you took shelter. If you are a child of God, Jesus was present. He walked with you in that storm (Dan 3:25; 6:22).

Psalm 46:1 describes God as *“our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”* Jesus was always present with His disciples. As they struggled against the wind, Jesus was walking with the disciples in prayer on the mountain. Today, Jesus is interceding for you (Rom 8:34). He is praying for your circumstances. More than anything He is praying for you to trust Him in your circumstances. And just as Jesus physically walked in the storm with the disciples, He walks in your storms today.

3. The Lord powerfully calms you in your trouble.
(Matt 14:27, 32)

I think many times we read this story and surmise that Jesus will calm the storm in our lives if we trust Him. Indeed, Jesus did calm the storm when He got into the boat, but I believe He did so because the lesson was over. I believe the greater miracle was not calming the storm on the sea; it was calming the storm of the heart. The disciples were fearful.

When Jesus came walking on the water, they thought He was a ghost. But Jesus said, "*Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.*" In essence He echoed the words spoken to Moses from the burning bush... "*I Am*" (Ex 3:14).

The disciples believed. They trusted the words of Jesus as exemplified by Peter their spokesman. He said, "*Lord, if (better translated as 'since') it is you, command me to come to you on the water*" (vs. 28). How could a man who was terrified by the raging waves one minute step out of the boat onto them the next minute? The answer is Jesus. He calmed the storm in Peter by His presence. Peter and the disciples remembered that Jesus has power over the storms (Matt 8:23-27).

A Faithful Response:

- See the Lord in your trouble. (Matt 14:26)

One of the great and resounding promises of Scripture is that God will never leave or forsake His people (Gen 28:15; Deut 31:6; Josh 1:5). Don't forget this promise. If you are a child of God, He has not and will not abandon you. It may seem that He is nowhere in sight. It may seem like God has forsaken you. But He has not. See the Lord in your trouble. He is walking on the storm waves that are slamming against you. Look to Him.

- Trust the Lord in your trouble. (Matt 14:29)

The Lord is greater than the struggles in your life. He can powerfully calm the storm within you even while you walk through difficult days. All you need to do is keep your eyes upon Jesus (Matt 14:29-30). Don't look at your circumstances. Don't worry about your surroundings. Don't concern yourself with things you cannot change. Look to Jesus. Trust in Him. Allow Him to calm you in the midst of your storm.

Conclusion: Florence has come and gone. She left a path of destruction that will take months to clean up and rebuild. Many wonder where God is when a storm like that hits the coast. They wonder why a good God would allow such devastation to take place. The answer to the first question is easy to answer. God was present. The answer to the second is not so easy to answer. We probably will never know why He allows the storms. But we can trust that regardless of the storms, God is good and He will be present in the lives of His children when the storms come.

The disciples worshiped Jesus in the midst of their storm. The soil of their hearts was fertile. The gospel was able to take root and produce spiritual fruit. The same cannot be said of the hard hearts of those in Nazareth and Herod. There was no lasting spiritual fruit from the five thousand who ate the fish and loaves. And there was no faith in Judas who betrayed Jesus. How is the soil of your heart today? Is it hard? Is it shallow? It is full of worldly weeds that choke out the gospel? Or is the soil of your heart good and fertile? Is it producing spiritual fruit? Are you learning to worship Jesus more and more even in your troubles?