

**“Jesus in the Storm:  
Trusting God in the Middle of a Pandemic”**  
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**(Mt. 8:23-27)**

**Introduction.**

What a crazy year we have lived through in this pandemic. It is different from anything we’ve experienced in our lifetimes, and it’s taken a toll on all of us. During the past 12 months, have you discovered there been times when you experienced a lack of motivation? Or have there been occasions when it took double or triple the time for you to accomplish a basic task? Welcome to the late stage of the pandemic. Many of us feeling a little burned-out and not as productive as we normally are.

For some of us, the pandemic has left us reeling from a loss of health, a loss of income, or a loss of a loved one. And though our circumstances vary, the mood is often similar. Margaret Wehrenberg, who is an expert on anxiety, said that when people are under a long period of chronic, unpredictable stress, they tend to develop what is known as behavioral *anhedonia*, which is a reduced ability simply to take pleasure in activities.

How have you tried to cope with the challenges of the past year? Some are turning to alcohol, and others have turned to food to try and manage. I’ve heard friends talk about their Covid-15, referring to the 15 extra pounds they’ve put on during the pandemic. Others have tried to find purposeful meaning and create pockets of joy by writing letters and emails, exchanging gifts, and even adopting pets. I understand the humane society is now out of pets because all of them have been claimed and adopted.

What does the Bible have to say about how to cope when you’re in the storm of a pandemic? This passage in the gospel of Matthew is extremely helpful as we seek to look to God to help us cope with all we’ve endured.

**I. We Are in the Boat Together.**

In Matthew 8 we learn that Jesus got into a boat, and His disciples followed Him. They were all in the boat together. I think that’s an important point to remember. We’re not alone as we’ve had to live through this pandemic. Even though we’ve had to isolate a great deal because of the need to social distance, and our experiences and emotions have varied greatly from person to person, nevertheless we’ve all endured it together. We’re all in the same boat. There is something about living through a global crisis that is a great leveling experience, and there are aspects of it that are common to everyone.

During this time, I think it’s important not to judge another person’s experience or to assume anything about them and how they have tried to cope with the challenges. It’s easy to become critical and assign motives to someone else’s actions, but we need to be careful we don’t do that. You don’t have a complete picture of what another person is going through or

how the pandemic has affected them, so give them the benefit of the doubt. Listen deeply to each other and realize we are still a community, and we're all trying to follow Jesus together the best we can. We're in this boat together.

## **II. Jesus Is With Us.**

The text tells us that when Jesus and His disciples got in the boat, suddenly, a violent storm erupted, and waves began to crash against the boat, splashing over the sides. The geographic location of the Sea of Galilee makes it particularly susceptible to sudden and violent storms like this one because it is situated in a basin surrounded by mountains. While the storm began to swamp the boat, Jesus was asleep in the stern, and the disciples became so alarmed at the situation that they woke Him up and cried out, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

At this Jesus rebuked the wind, and He spoke to the waves. The result was that the storm died down immediately, and it became completely calm. The sovereign Lord of the universe spoke, and His creation immediately responded. The result is that the disciples were amazed, and they asked each other, "What kind of man is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him?!"

This story reminds us that with the power of Jesus, *there is no need for us to be afraid*. Whenever storms come our way and we feel like we're going to sink, it's encouraging to know that whatever happens, Jesus is with us, and He will see us through. There is no need to be fearful when Christ is with you in the boat, and He will be with you in whatever storm you have to go through today and in the future.

## **III. Jesus Invites Us to Deeper Trust.**

Notice that Jesus not only rebuked the wind and the waves; He also rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith. The great question that comes to us in moments like these is, *Can I trust Jesus?* It's natural to be fearful in the middle of a pandemic and wonder when life is going to get easier. And it's normal to be worried about the future. But can I give my emotions to Jesus and seek to develop a deeper trust in Him? Can I yield my life to Christ and grow in my dependence on Him?

"Why were you so afraid?" That's what Jesus asked the disciples, and He's asking you the same question today. Jesus also asks you:

- Where do you find your security?
- Where does your joy come from?
- Do you trust Me with your children?
- For your income?
- For your future?

How is the Lord using the pandemic to invite you to trust Him more in this season of life?

## **Conclusion.**

William Cowper lived in England in the 1700s, and he composed many hymns we still sung today. During one particularly dark period of his life, he battled heavy and persistent clouds of depression, and they choked out all hope in his life. He actually made several attempts at taking his life, but they all failed. Then he started reading the Bible. And by reading Scripture

Cowper met the God of storms, and he found peace in the midst of his difficult life.<sup>1</sup> He wrote the following words to summarize Christ's dealings with him:

God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.  
Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill;  
He treasures up His bright designs,  
And works His sovereign will.<sup>2</sup>

Where is the turbulence of life threatening you today? In what ways does it feel like Jesus has fallen asleep in your boat, and you wonder why He isn't doing anything? Call out to Jesus and ask Him to save you, and learn to trust Christ by faith, even in the middle of your storm. It doesn't mean that God will always take the storm away. I suspect we've got many more months ahead of us in which we'll be dealing with this pandemic. Sometimes God will simply reassure us that He is with us in the storm. As someone has said, "Sometimes God calms the storm, and sometimes He simply calms His child." But you can trust Jesus to be with you, and He will see you through. You can count on it. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, p.133.

<sup>2</sup> William Cowper, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," 1773.