

Calm the Chaos.3.To Rest

Matthew 8:23-27

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Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

So far in this "Calm the Chaos" message series, we've talked about some reasons why it's **spiritually** beneficial...even spiritually **necessary**...for **us** to do what **we** can to calm the chaos in our lives.

Two weeks ago, we talked about how important it is to choose to receive and develop within us the mind of Christ. We called it, "living by God's operating system," so that when the pressures of our world squeeze us, what comes out of us is not anxiety or worry or fear, but instead, love.

That's what came out of Jesus...even under pressure – even facing death – because, remember we said, He knew who He was, He knew where He was going, and He knew who was really in charge.

For that to happen in us requires an internal change that God makes...through His Spirit. It's a change He's willing to make...He wants to make, but it's one we must invite and welcome.

Inviting the Spirit to give us the mind of Christ...filling us with love...that is absolutely critical to live calm lives in a chaotic world.

We talked about that two weeks ago.

Last Sunday, we talked about the importance of doing what we can to quiet the noise in our lives...so we can hear and then follow the day to day direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit...as the Apostle Paul did in his life.

Through His Spirit, God does, today, very actively speak and lead...just as He led Paul to go here but not there and to say this but not that. And in that sort of specific guidance, God can bring great spiritual and practical benefit and blessing.

But if we want to hear His voice, we have to put ourselves in positions...to **listen**.

Those are things **we** can do...decisions **we** can make...to calm the chaos of life...and some good reasons to do so.

Pause

Today, I want to change gears a bit and talk, not about *our* efforts, but about *Jesus' power* and *ability* to calm the chaos in our lives, as this text that was read for us describes.

When we hear this report of Jesus' calming the storm, most of us likely also think of the account of Jonah from the Old Testament.

That was certainly true for Matthew's original readers...their minds went right to Jonah. They knew well the account of the man whom God told to go to the city of Nineveh, home to a sinful, brutal people, and to declare to them the message that they stand under God's condemnation.

But Jonah, not wanting to do this, decided to board a boat and travel in exactly the opposite direction.

Yet in his travel, God used a great storm at sea to turn him around and to, in the end, do as God asked.

Of course, Jesus is different from Jonah in that the storm, here, did not come because of Jesus' disobedience, as it did in Jonah's case.

And of course Jesus did not have to be thrown overboard, or even to call on any outside authority in order to calm the storm...the unavoidable message being Jesus is considerably greater than Jonah.

Just the same, there are many ways that these accounts, and even their main characters - Jesus and Jonah, are much alike.

Of course both Jesus and Jonah were sleeping and presumably unaware of the storm, so both needed to be awakened.

The storm in both accounts must have been very severe, since the experienced sailors and fishermen were both terrified. The word describing the storm here is used in other places to speak even of earthquakes.

Also, both Jonah and Jesus were directly tied to the storm's appearance.

Both knew what it would take to calm the storm.

Both put on a display the power of God for the others to see.

And both of these accounts send the message that God cares about redeeming all nations of people, not just the people of Israel.

The accounts are similar in all these ways.

But the *great* similarity...the great message of both of these accounts, is that the key to the calming of chaos...and even the greatest chaos – which, to a Jew was, without doubt, a raging sea – the key to calming even the most threatening chaos of life, is *faith in God*.

Neither those sailors who were on board the ship with Jonah, nor the disciples who were on board the boat with Jesus had enough faith in God to believe He could calm the chaos.

But *interestingly, both* Jonah *and* Jesus *did*.

Both Jonah and Jesus had complete confidence in God...to the point that they were both able to sleep...to rest peacefully...even in the midst of these great storms.

Now you say, "Well, that might be true for Jesus." But I don't know about that being true for Jonah."

Oh but it is true for Jonah...and here's why: do you remember why Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh?

It wasn't because he was afraid of the Ninevites...he wasn't afraid that they would reject him or beat him or even kill him.

It wasn't because he didn't believe God would be with him or protect him.

Jonah rejected God's mission for him, not because he thought it might **fail**. Jonah ran from God's mission because he **knew** it would **succeed**!

Jonah knew that, if God was sending him to do this, those people at Nineveh would indeed hear what he was saying and that they'd repent and, as compassionate and loving as God is, God would forgive them.

And Jonah didn't want the Ninevites to be forgiven.

Jonah didn't think they deserved forgiveness, because of the people they were and all the evil things they'd done.

You know, this is very much like God asking some Jew in Israel today...knowing they'd repent and knowing God would forgive them...to go and say to the leader of Hamas or Hezbollah, "God is displeased with you."

For someone who's suffered, directly, their hatred and abuse and destruction...Jonah wasn't ready to forgive.

Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh...but **not** because he thought God would **fail**.

Jonah didn't want to go because he **knew** God would **succeed**.

And that, friends, is faith.

There is a lack of love in Jonah, certainly, but no lack of faith. Jonah's is a tremendous, confident faith.

And because of that, Jonah knew why the storm had come and he knew what it would take to calm it. He knew God was in it...God was in charge of it...and...that God would do the right thing, no matter what.

Everything Jonah did was done in complete confidence in God, which is why Jonah could sleep in the boat...and in that way, he was exactly like Jesus.

The great **difference** between Jonah and Jesus, though, is that, where Jesus said to God, "**Yes, Father, I'll do whatever you ask, even if I don't agree or understand,**"

Jonah, on the other hand, was not willing...to agree with God...**on this one issue** of the Ninevites' redemption.

Now, after a little time and a heroic effort on God's part to change Jonah's mind, Jonah did go to Nineveh and say what God told him to say, and the Ninevites did repent and God extended His mercy to them.

All that Jonah thought would happen there did happen.

Yet we're left wondering if Jonah ever comes to see it as success. The book closes with God making His case to Jonah, but we never hear Jonah's response.

Choosing to love enough to forgive...that's another enormous way, of course, that Jesus and Jonah are different.

Here are two principles to consider as we come to the Lord's table today:

First, there will **always** be chaotic parts of life that **we cannot control**. In those times, peace and rest are still possible, but **only** through faith in God.

Nothing we can do in our own power...nothing but **faith** will allow us to rest in those moments.

Uncontrollable chaos is, at times, a way of life in our broken world...yet, even then, God gives us, rest.

Both Jesus and Jonah show us that.

Second, in the life of even a person of great faith...like Jonah...there exists the potential for even greater harm and chaos if we refuse God's guidance...if we know what we're do to, but we fail to do it, in even just one area. Even one instance of resistance, in an otherwise stellar life of faith, can make a big difference, not just in our lives, but in the lives of those around us.

Think about the upheaval...the additional chaos that Jonah's rejection of God's instruction caused.

And in contrast, look at how Jesus' consistent obedience led the disciples always closer and closer to faith, to redemption, to God, and to understanding God's purposes.

You see, Jesus completes the story...the life story...of Jonah. Jesus shows us that trust in God can be complete.

He demonstrates that there is grace and power to trust God, even when we don't understand or agree with Him completely.

Jesus invites us to an even greater faith...a faith beyond the faith of Jonah.

A faith in God that lets us rest in times of chaos...even in those times we don't understand and can't control.

Will you believe Jesus for that kind of faith today...faith that lets you rest in God, in His care, in His plan, in His great love for you, in spite of circumstance?

Closing Prayer: Holy Spirit, would you come and help us go beyond even the faith of Jonah...all the way to the faith of Jesus?

Help us trust you for that which we don't understand and even that with which we disagree, so that we can not just find rest for ourselves, but so we can be **examples** and even **providers** of rest to those around us.

As we come to Your table here today, if there is even one place where we are pushing back against you Father, would you show us that and help us to say 'yes' to you, so peace and rest would prevail there...so that in every way Your Kingdom would come and Your will would be done?

Communion:

Closing Song: 345 – Blessed Assurance

Benediction: Be assured...there is rest...we can find rest even in the midst of the chaos...the storms...that life can sometimes bring, but **only** through **faith** through believing in and trusting in the One who calms the storms. He invites us to Himself today...would you answer His invitation?