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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“SOMETIMES, THE STORM”

Luke 8:22-25

☑ Last Monday, May 20, a tornado touched down in Oklahoma. At first the twister was weak but it quickly picked up strength. By the time it hit the town of Moore it was a mile across and had 200 mile-per-hour winds.

The tornado ripped a 20 mile swath through the south suburbs of Oklahoma City. The material damage is estimated at \$2 billion.

Twenty-four people were killed, and hundreds more were injured. The affected communities had between 16 and 36 minutes advance warning; if they hadn't, the list of casualties would have been longer.

How many people along the path of that storm thought, as they fell asleep on Sunday night, “Tomorrow my home will be demolished”? How many said, “My child is going to die tomorrow afternoon”? No one did.

☑ Sometimes it happens that way. You are going about your business, serving God and loving your neighbor when, Bam! A tornado strikes with little notice and your world is suddenly, shockingly turned upside down: the boss gives you three hours to clear out your desk and turn over the keys; the biopsy comes back positive and you're told you've got six months at the outside; your child runs away and falls prey to drug pushers and pimps; your wife deserts you for a secret lover.

○ {Job 27:20} Terror overtakes you **“like a flood; a tempest snatches [you] away in the night. The... wind carries [you] off, and [you are] gone... It hurls itself against [you] without mercy as [you flee] headlong from its power.”**

☑ Sometimes it is more like a hurricane. You feel the storm brewing and there is time to batten down the hatches – but when it makes landfall it packs a titanic wallop, and it just keeps coming.

○ {Job 9:17} **“Wave after wave”** inundates you: work is horrible but there is no other job; you are diagnosed with a condition that will sap your strength and inflict pain for the rest of your life; your child spirals down into a mental illness for which there is no quick, easy fix; your husband is addicted to his work, his hobbies, his pornography.

○ {Prov 1:27} **“Calamity overtakes you.”** Exhaustion, loneliness and misery **“overwhelm you.”** How long before you lose your grip? How long before you drown in despair?

■ Please turn with me to Luke 8:22-25.

“One day Jesus [says] to his disciples, ‘Let us go over to the other side of the lake.’” This **“lake”** is the freshwater Sea of Galilee.

“So they [get] into a boat and set out. As they [sail], [Jesus falls] asleep. A squall [comes] down on the lake, so that the boat [is] being swamped, and they [are] in great danger.”

“The disciples... [wake] him, saying, “Master, Master, we’re going to drown!”

He [gets] up and [rebukes] the wind and the raging waters; the storm [subsides], and all [is] calm. “Where is your faith?” he [asks]...

In fear and amazement they [ask] one another, “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.”

✈ 1st Observation: These are the apostles.

{Mk 3:13} The Messiah has specially **“appointed”** these men to **“be with him.”** They hear all his public teachings, and have private conversations with him. They witness the miracles that we will read about, and dozens more besides. They observe the Lord interact with friends, strangers, and enemies. They walk alongside him on the road and sit with him around the campfire. They eat, laugh, worship, pray, and sleep in close proximity to him. They see him when he is weary and energized, hungry and filled, sweaty and refreshed, calm and angry, happy and sad. They are closer to Jesus than anyone else.

{Mt 10:1; 28:19} Not only so, he has ordained this small group **“to preach”** the Gospel of the Kingdom and to **“drive out evil spirits and...heal every disease and sickness,”** and at his ascension to his Father he will commission them to **“go and make disciples of all nations.”** After he departs these men will be his hands, his feet, and his voice on earth. They are his “Plan A” –

and there is no “Plan B.” If they drown, the future drowns with them.

★ Consider this: 1) God exempts no one from the storms of life; 2) when God allows a storm to batter us we are in excellent company.

✈ 2nd Observation: This is a perilous storm.

○ {Mt 8:24; Mk 4:37} Luke speaks of **“raging waters.”** Matthew says the storm is **“furious”** and **“the waves [sweep] over the boat.”** Mark adds that the vessel is nearly swamped, filled almost to the point of sinking.

The apostles are battling a gale at least, and possibly a violent storm. That is an 11 on the Beaufort Scale, with devastating winds, exceptionally high waves, very large patches of foam, very large amounts of spray, and severely reduced visibility.

☑ I have never sailed in a storm like that, but Pastor Robert Munger has. I quote:

Being assaulted by winds and walls of waves and a wildly tossing sea was like being run over by a train in a dark tunnel.... everything I saw brought on physical terror. The lights of the ship reflected only a few feet out over the water. Each wave became visible only as it reared to crash. More than once, I thought, “What if I were washed overboard while making my rounds? No one would even know. I would be lost forever in a violent, angry sea.” Almost as terrifying as drowning was the fear of falling into

darkness and death all alone. No one to see. No one to hear. No one to report.”

★ Consider this: God sometimes shelters his people from the worst; yet, in his perfect wisdom and goodness he sometimes allows us to bear the brunt of it.

✎ 3rd Observation: God is present in the storm.

{Mk 4:38} Trapped in the ferocious squall on a rinky-dink fishing boat that is about to sink, the Twelve feel abandoned and without help. They shake Jesus awake: **“Master, Master, we’re going to drown!”** In Mark’s account they ask, **“Don’t you care if we drown?”**

The implied accusation is a load of rubbish. Of course Jesus cares!

But storms mess with our heads, don’t they?! They deafen our ears to the voice of the Living God and render us insensitive to his touch. They cause us to question his care and doubt his capacity to help.

In Luke chapter 8 God the Son is physically present to the Twelve. He is literally with them in the flesh on that boat.

{Ro 8:38-39} We do not yet share that experience.

Even so, **“I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

★ Consider this: even when God does not remove us from the storm, God is with us in the storm.

✎ 4th Observation: God reveals himself in the storm.

The Twelve have had front row seats for the cleansing of lepers, the mending of paralytics, the healing of the sick, the miraculous catching of fish, the liberation of the demonized, and the raising of the dead. They have heard Christ’s superb teaching and observed his incredible wisdom. They have taken note of his supernatural insight into the minds and hearts of the people around him.

And still, when their Master calms the storm they ask, with **“fear and amazement,”** **“Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.”**

Let us resist the temptation to judge these men harshly. Sure, they have the advantage of seeing these events first-hand – but here in Luke 8, that is their only advantage; unlike us, they are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit who convicts us regarding spiritual things, they do not have the New Testament which instructs us about Jesus, and they do not have the accumulated testimony of the Saints. I would say they are doing rather well.

What matters is this: this terrible storm is a crucial turning point for the disciples. It compels them to cry out to Jesus, and it provides the right conditions for their eyes to be opened.

★ Consider this: sometimes, the storm is the essential means by which God makes himself known and persuades us of our need for him.

One day Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we’re going to drown!”

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. “Where is your faith?” he asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement they asked one another, “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.”

Luke 8:22-25 is the word of the Lord.