

Oregon City United Methodist Church
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Series: Simon and Garfunkel
Sermon: Bridge Over Troubled Water

Matthew 8:23-27

Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

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.

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

Sermon:

It's three a.m. The kids are in bed. And you wake up because one of them is crying. You have normal ears, there is nothing wrong with your ears. And you know that there is nothing wrong with your spouses ears as well. And you are pretty sure that they hear the crying as well. And so it becomes a game. Whoever moves first has the automatic obligation to check out what monsters are in the closet this time. This time you will not lose. You lie there, stiff as a board, but not too stiff, otherwise you give away your intentions. Scared to breathe, scared not to breathe. Finally, your spouse has to scratch their leg and you have won. Now they have to get up and chase away the monsters. They come back to bed 20 minutes later and "accidentally" wake you back up again with an elbow in the ribs. Not that we have ever played this game before. The top three mysteries of the world are this: Bermuda Triangle, Big Foot, and how men can notice the slightest change in the sound of a car's engine, but be totally oblivious to the cry of a thirsty child at 3 a.m.

We have that type of story in our scripture this morning. And isn't it even more amazing that Jesus is sleeping in the midst of something much louder than a baby's whine? The Bible says he was in a boat when a "furious" storm arose. Not just any storm, mind you. The Amplified Bible calls it "a storm of hurricane proportion." Let's look at what happened. The disciples are in a boat at night on the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is 700 feet below sea level. Just 30 miles to the north is Mount Hermon which is nearly 10,000 feet tall. There is a great contrast in elevations just thirty miles apart. The cool air from the mountains often collides with the warm air from the sea and can cause fierce storms in the valley. The sailors in the boat with Jesus were experienced fishermen. They had survived many of these storms. Apparently this one was the worst they had seen. The boat is about to be swamped. They cannot bail out the water as fast as it is coming in. The waves are about to tip over the boat. The wind is screaming through the mast and boards. Waves are pounding, and start to fill the boat. You can imagine the cracks of lightning and the sonic booms of thunder. It's pitch black. And what's Jesus doing? Sleeping. You can rest assured that the disciples aren't. They're doing something very constructive. They're going "AHHHHHH!" They're petrified. The last thing they can do is sleep. They're the ones up with the cranky child, the cranky storm. You can imagine them scurrying all over the boat in the midst of the watery mess they find themselves in. Patching holes, caulking between the boards, bailing water, looking out for rocks, looking up in hopes of a clearing sky - all the while crying to one another, "Oh, it's just terrible, TERRIBLE."

After a while, their fear turns to anger - just as a parent, after being up hours with the sleepless child, could be angry with the still-sleeping spouse. And I can just imagine what they're thinking: Jesus got us into this mess, and now he's just sleeping! If he hadn't said, "Let's take a boat ride," we wouldn't be here, about to become fish food. If he hadn't said, "Let's take a boat ride," we could be in a dry house, playing 7-card Hebrew

Hold'em in the back room. Or whatever they did in their spare time. How dare he sleep. This whole thing was his idea anyway. And they think, "You know, we ought to wake him up. He has no right to drown peacefully. He ought to be as terrified as we are, before we die. He ought to wake up and go ""AHHHHH!"" along with us. And so they wake him up. "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" By the way, how many times have we've said that? You're a nice person. You live a good life. You go to church. You believe in God.

And still, a storm with gale-force winds blows in out of nowhere. **Unfair**, painful things happen to you - perhaps out of no fault of your own. **Unfair**, painful things happen to you - perhaps because you did the right thing. You listened to Jesus, got into his boat, and now it's about to sink. At first you think you can deal with the storm. You bail out the water. You patch the holes. You think you can wait it out. But you look up, and the sky only grows darker. And you finally think, "Hey, I believe in Jesus. I'm in his boat, after all. He invited me to go sailing with him. He ought to be awake with me. He ought to know my fright, and make me feel safe and cozy. Keep people alive. Take away the pain. Right the wrongs." But this doesn't always happen. And after a while, the same words are on your lips as they were on the disciples: "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" So - WHY is Jesus sleeping? I think we find the answer in how he responded to the panicked disciples. After he's awakened, he stills the storm. It's interesting how he says it "Quiet, Be still!" just like you'd say to an unruly child. The disciples couldn't quiet the crying child. But when Jesus wakes up, with just a few words, the winds die and the sea calms. And he turns to his drenched, gasping followers and says the most interesting thing. It's puzzling, and it's fascinating. He doesn't say, "Whew, that was close!" No, he says, "Why are you so afraid? Do you *still* have no faith?" Look closely at his response.

"Do you *STILL* have no faith?" He was assuming that they knew him by that time. After all, by the time they set foot in that boat they had seen Jesus heal people with everything from fevers and leprosy to paralysis and insanity. They had heard him teach: he'd opened up life to them in new ways, and had shown them fresh glimpses of God's face. They had seen him stand up to mean-spirited religious authorities, and put them in their place. And now, in the boat, after he calms the storm, he turns to them surprised. It's almost like he had said, "*You should know me by now. You should know me well enough to know that simply being with me is enough. Whether I'm awake or asleep, you'll be safe from the deep. I won't let you down, I won't let you drown.*"

You know, I wonder. One of my favorite passages of scripture to read, especially during trying times or at funerals comes from John's Gospel, chapter 14: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; do not your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." At the end of the chapter, Jesus tells his disciples, "Rise, let us go hence."

And ever since you believed in Jesus, everything was wonderful and rosy. In the years that followed, your parents never died. you were always in perfect health. You never had doubts about your job. Your marriage was perfect, your children were angels, you never experienced loss. You had money, you were never on a battlefield, seeing unimaginable horror. You were never diagnosed with something that a pill, shot, or procedure couldn't cure. You were never subjected to peer pressure. Ever since you believed in Jesus, the world had been fair, full of mercy, full of blessings, You were never subjected to unjust rules and regulations, powerless to do anything about them. You were never tempted to isolate yourself from higher causes out of fear of the consequences.

Of course, all of that is a lie. We believers suffer the same disasters of unbelievers. We have loss, we have divorce, we have stress. We have worry. We have all these things. But we have one more thing that they don't have. We have hope. This morning, we can bear testimony this morning to the power of Jesus. You've been through all that and more, and you can testify: Jesus NEVER abandons those who take boat rides with him. He NEVER jumps out of the boat and walks across the water to shore. The one story we have of Jesus walking on the water, he comes from the shore to the boat. I don't know what storm you might be enduring right now. I don't know what storm might blow in tomorrow. But Jesus stays in the boat with you, making sure the storm

passes. He is our bridge over troubled water - not only that, he takes care of the troubled water.

With a crying child, it is a very selfish thing to do to wait for the other to go and chase away the fears and the tears. At times, I have been selfish. But praise be to God, that when I cry out to Him, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit don't pretend not to hear, hoping that someone else will come to the rescue. But they come. The miracle is not that Jesus calmed some waves 2,000 years ago, but that he calms the waves in our life, telling us, Peace I leave with you, I give to you my peace. So when the tough times come, as they surely will, we will have the faith to ride it out, not sink, and continue our walk with faith with the one who can control the storms. If you do not know Jesus as Lord of your life, you are at the mercy of the storms. If you believe that he will prevent the storms from coming into your life, you will be disillusioned. They are going to come. But if you trust that God loves you and is more powerful than the storm, you will be able to weather the storms that come into your life with peace. Amen.