

The Rev. Dr. Katherine L. Ward
Storm Sunday

September 25, 2016

Jesus Has The Power

For the prelude, you were treated to a rendition of *Autumn Leaves* by the Stabe Wilson Ensemble, a reminder that we live on a planet that has seasons, in a world that has been created by a magnificent, all powerful God. God has ordered the world so that in Autumn leaves fall and temperatures cool. Winter brings a chill and in some areas snow, ice and rain. Spring then steps in with a little warmer weather. Seeds take root, flowers grow and Summer follows with increased temperatures. In some areas, there may be heat waves, droughts, or forest fires and an increase in outdoor recreational activities. Just think, though, how all of this was put together. We humans rarely think of what God has done with this environment, this universe. It is hard for us to realize that God stepped out in space and created this universe. As our OT lesson says, God looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. We are not wise enough to understand. The wisdom lies with God. We just weather the weather. Whether the weather be fine, Whether the weather be not, Whether the weather be cold, Whether the weather be hot, We'll weather the weather, Whatever the whether, Whether we like it or not [~Author unknown]

Today is Storm Sunday and we are acknowledging the power of the storm. We are also realizing that the power behind the forces of nature lie with God. The psalm describes it thus: The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord thunders over the mighty waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is majestic.

Storms are always around. Snowstorms, rainstorms, windstorms, sandstorms, and firestorms. Some are fierce and others are small. You have to deal with each one separately, but you need to keep an eye on whats brewing for tomorrow." [Maria V.Snyder]

Weather is a great metaphor for life — sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad, and there's nothing much you can do about it but carry an

umbrella or choose to dance in the rain! ~Terri For the man sound in body and serene of mind there is no such thing as bad weather; every day has its beauty, and storms which whip the blood do but make it pulse more vigorously. ~George Gissing. John Muir said that the substance of the winds is too thin for human eyes, their written language is too difficult for human minds, and their spoken language mostly too faint for the ears.

Our gospel lesson describes an incident which started when Jesus suggested that He and the disciples cross over to the opposite side of the 14 miles long, 8 miles wide sea surrounded by mountains. Winds funneling down the hills sometimes create sudden, violent storms. It was one of those unexpected storms that hit that evening and it was so powerful it frightened even those experienced fishermen. Yet, I remind you that the Lord Jesus actually led them into it.

I can imagine what that was like because I come from an area which is still known for hurricanes. I was born in NOLA and grew up on the Westbank in a little town named Gretna, in the specific area called McDonoghville. I can't remember a year when there wasn't at least one hurricane. We children loved it because we could wade in the water even though we sometimes cut our feet on broken glass. We also loved the fact that so few of us went to school and that meant fun was there for the taking. When I remember those times, I can actually feel the violent winds and see the tin roofs flying off of houses. I'm surprised no one was decapitated. The big one came in 2005. Hurricane Katrina, the eleventh storm and fifth hurricane of that season was the costliest, deadliest in the history of the U. S. At least 1,245 people died and total property damage was estimated at \$108 billion.

When I visit New Orleans, I realize that many people never returned. Eventually, one of the things you may not realize is that there was a lot of collateral damage. My friend Verna's sister was tired of the flooding, the evacuations, etc. so when she was sent to Houston, she searched for a house there, found one; then came back to the hotel, lay on the bed and died. My adopted niece, Miguel suffers from sickle cell anemia and the evacuation created a burden for her to continue her life

style in the manner to which she had become accustomed, Then, there were lingering problems, the scams, the lack of help for those who were not familiar with the governmental forms, etc. There is still much to be done. I sometimes wonder if the city will ever really recover.

Storms of various kinds are commonplace today: snow storms, avalanches, shark attacks, tsunami's. They have no language and don't belong to any specific country. Weather is real and can't be changed by wishing it away.

Storms don't just occur in the atmosphere. They occur in our lives. Into each life some rain must fall. Troubling situations strike us all and we must react appropriately when they do. They strike believers who have Christ in their boat and those whose boats are absent Christ. No one is exempt from trials. Here are a few life storms: turbulence in relationships; [Lena Horne sings *Stormy Weather*] political chaos; violence in the city; war, hunger, despair, homelessness in cities/world, unarmed people of color being shot down with too much consistency, violence in the streets of Charlotte, Wisconsin and other places; Isis recruiting Americans to plot against their own country.

Actually, the whole world looks much like that storm on the Sea of Galilee. It's no wonder that worry, doubt and fear envelop us just as they enveloped the disciples. We want to cry out: Master, the tempest is raging The billows are tossing high! Don't you care that we perish? Wake up!

Jesus responds: "The winds and the waves shall obey my will" "peace be still". Jesus is The Master of ocean and earth and skies. He is our only hope. He has the power. He is in the boat with us, although sleeping (only incident in the bible which mentions Jesus sleeping). All we have to do is awaken him. Make Jesus your first option when the storms of life threaten you. He's always there. We can count on his promise never to desert us nor forsake us. So, affirm that He is Lord of all. Don't underestimate His power. I tell you, if you live with Christ when the sun is shining, it will come naturally that your trust and faith is there when the storm arrives. Storms should force us to trust in the Lord of the storm.

Nothing is too difficult for the living God. Not a breath of wind or a drop of water can defy His sovereign will. The better we know Him, the better we can trust the fully human, fully divine Jesus in our trials. It's not about our own happiness, but about the glorifying of God at all times. You see, sometimes Jesus doesn't calm the storm. Sometimes the boat does sink, even if we're trusting in Jesus. Remember, John was beheaded, James was put to death. Jesus Himself was crucified. So prepare for the sinking. If the miracle doesn't happen, trust in the Lord as you go under.

Trust in Him Now. He's your only hope for heaven. Trust Him every day in the small problems you face. Then, whether He instantly calms the storm or whether your boat sinks, you will know peace that the world can't know, the peace that comes from trusting in Jesus, the Lord of the storm.

And while we walk this transitory life, remember that the way is not easy. In fact, it is tough. My friend, Frank Sinatra says that "You can be riding high in April and shot down in May . . . But your faith can help you change that tune and you'll be back on top in June. Don't let life get you down 'Cause this fine old world keeps spinnin' around. Whether you are a puppet, a pauper, a pirate, A poet, a pawn or a king; whether you're up or down or over and out, know one thing: Each time you find myself flat on your face Just pick yourself up and get back in the race."

When the winds of change blow out of control, and the waters of chaos rise up to the roof, seek the one who is a very present help in the time of trouble, the one who is obeyed even by the winds and try to find peace and calm. Trust God, have faith, wait on God, know that God is God and that God will help you endure the storm.

Never give up. Never lose hope, stand tall, stand on your faith. Put your confidence in God during difficult times. A major storm occurred in my life over three years ago when doctors at Kaiser Hospital told me I would die within the year. I could not just accept their word because I know that the ultimate doctor is the one who can calm the angry winds

with three words; I did not let worry, doubt or fear overtake me. I promptly went to UCFS and Stanford for second opinions and am doing fine under the care of doctors who are not concentrating on when I will die but work hard to keep me alive and well as long as they can. My heavenly Father will do the rest. You see, no storm can shake my inmost calm since Christ is Lord of Heaven and earth, So I sing today. I try to keep in tune with Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth at all times. Each year, I report to you that I live life to the fullest. I'm getting slower, but I still get by. I'm still kicking, although not quite as high. My birthday theme, also from the chairman of the board, is the same: "I'm gonna live till I die! I'm gonna laugh 'stead of cry, I'm gonna take the town and turn it upside down, I'm gonna live until I die. People say "you're certainly not shy!" That's because I reach for the sky. Ain't gonna miss a thing, I'm gonna have my fling, I'm gonna live until I die.

I'm gonna dance, gonna fly, I'll take a chance riding high, Before my number's up, I'm gonna fill my cup, I'm gonna live, live, live, until I die! and I'll be walking on the sunny side of the street. I long ago left my worries on the doorstep and found that Life can be so sweet On the sunny side of the street. I used to walk in the shade With those blues on parade, But I'm not afraid Because this rover crossed over.. And if I never had a cent I'd be rich as Rockefeller With gold dust at my feet On the sunny side of the street

That is why I thank the Lord of the Storm, the Lord of the universe for every blessing, for none are ever small. Often those the world call tiny are the largest of all. I thank God, for every trial, for that's how I learned to grow, And in my darkest moments your love I truly came to know. I ask for forgiveness when I falter and in self-pity I complain, I don't want to overlook the rainbow when my life is full of rain. I ask for help so I can live victorious and in God's will to stay For then, and only then will I find that brighter day. [from Meditation book] *Amen.*

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