

The Tempest is Raging!

The Rev. Dr. Katherine L. Ward

We find the disciples full of worry, doubt and fear. They are in a boat which is being tossed about in a storm in the normally placid Sea of Galilee. The sea is only 14 miles long and 8 miles wide at the most, but it could whip up a storm in a hurry. It is known for sudden storms. Yet, the Sea of Galilee has nothing on life which can also whip up a storm in a minute. One minute, there is smooth sailing, and out of the blue, here comes the storm. Some storms are worse than others, but when you're the one it's raining on, it's a major storm to you. What's a minor squall to one person is a Katrina to another. For David, it was a giant named Goliath and an army of Philistines. For us, it's sometimes turbulence in our relationships, or conflict and controversy in our churches around issues of authority, sexuality, cultural diversity. Sometimes it's war, hunger and despair in our cities and in our world. Actually, the whole world today looks like a troubled sea. On every side, things look dangerous: The Dylan Roofs of the world walk into sanctuaries and kill people; Isis recruits Americans to plot against their own country; sideshows on our public streets; murder rapidly replacing baseball as the

national pastime; safety and security in our homes and our streets are rapidly disappearing; floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, avalanches, and shark attacks appear in surprising places; suicide bombings in the Middle East is a daily occurrence; homelessness and hunger are minor issues; and corporate America is making the decision that the customer is not always right, after all. What do we do? We feel we have nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, nowhere to find peace.

We could cry out as the disciples did. "Master, the tempest is raging The billows are tossing high. The sky is o'er shadowed with blackness No shelter or help is nigh. Don't you care that we perish? How can you lie there asleep When each moment so madly is threatening A grave in the angry deep?" But it would be more advantageous to acknowledge Jesus' presence in the boat with us and to trust in His love and care. He has the power to make the winds and the waves obey His will. All He has to say is "peace, be still." He can conquer the storm-tossed sea, or demon, evil man or whatever may be. No water can swallow the ship where lies The Master of ocean and earth and skies. They all shall sweetly obey His will . . . Peace be still, peace be still. [James Cleveland] Jesus

can speak those words and rebuke the winds, whether they are on the Sea of Galilee or in our lives. The result is a great calm. Our faith and trust in God and our ability to wait on God, to be still and know that God is God can accomplish that same calm.

When life's storms push us to the limit, when the winds of change blow out of control, when the waters of chaos slap us up side our heads, when our knowledge and expertise is no longer useful, that's the time to stand on our faith. It is not the time to be desperate or to lose hope. It is not the time to let our fear of the unknown get the best of us. Yes, the unknown is scary. A lump in the breast, West Nile Virus, Bird Flu, ebola, North Korea's antics are all very frightening. But, if we stand fast and remember the good things in life and the power of God to overcome anything, we will weather the storm. Jesus can handle the unexpected and we can learn that life can still be good despite the fact that it might be painful and difficult. We have to give the answer I always give when people inquire about my life: "I can't complain. It doesn't do any good, anyhow. I can use that breath on my dying bed and live a few minutes longer." Bitterness, negativity and complaining only compounds misery. I have never understood why people

think that misery is not a part of life. If there were no misery, no chaos, no storms, we would not know what joy, calm and peace were.

Paul tells us that “if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away, see, everything has become new! God’s new creation is inside of each one of us, waiting to show itself to the world. When God’s kingdom comes, there will be no more storms. Until then, we have to deal with the squalls. Jesus rebuked the storm, but he did not promise that there would never be another. Evil, tragedy and crises will come to each of us. It’s not IF, but WHEN, for into each life some rain must fall. I know that some of us say that too much is falling in ours. Rain or no rain, God cares. God loves. God will take care of us and will be with us, even to the end of the ages. Earth has no sorrows that heaven cannot heal.

God is love which has many voices, sometimes harsh, sometimes loving and soothing, but always compassionate. Even when it disciplines, there is no mistaking the love in it. Don’t question God’s authority or God’s motive. Commit to God and do your part to alleviate your own pain and misery. Then, wait upon the Lord to rescue you and bring you to safe harbor and praise God with all your heart for whatever is done

for you.

Don't throw everything to the wind the minute a crisis hits your life. Don't blame God. Don't release your anger at God, feeling that God does not care because you don't see the help God is giving you. Have confidence in God's care. Control your fear. Stand on your faith and your relationship with God will sustain you. Even if God is exhausted, God is present and still hears us and addresses all of us with "Peace, be still." We should reciprocate and greet each other, friend or foe, that way. If we make "Peace, be still" our motto, our relationship with God will blossom as we become God's new creation. We will avoid the principal handicaps to relationship: relying on knowledge about God rather than experience of God, waiting until all is lost before honoring the relationship with God, dumping God at the first sign of hard times, accusing God of not caring, even though God is right there listening to us, speaking to us, loving and caring for us and rejoicing in our presence and companionship.

Perhaps it is time for us to get healed from those handicaps and to enter or renew our relationship with God. Scary, fearful, new? Maybe so. But listen: He is saying "Peace, be still!" Respond, and the terror will be over. The elements will

sweetly rest; Earth's sun in the calm lake will be mirrored And heaven will be within your breast. You can then ask Him never to leave you alone any more. With joy you shall make the blest harbor

And rest on the blissful shore relying on faith, hope and love, last on . . . but the greatest of these is love. Love is the key. With that in mind, leave here today with Stevie Wonder's words ringing in your ears: Love's in need of love today. Don't delay. Send yours in right away. Hate's goin' round Breaking many hearts. Stop it, please, before it's gone too far.

When the tempest rages and the storms of life seek to destroy you, stand tall as David did. Knowing that God was a very present help in time of trouble, he proclaimed that he came in God's name and struck down the giant with a lowly sling shot. David's faith and trust in God helped him to conquer Goliath. Yours can take you through any storm. Don't forget. Jesus is right there in the boat. Wake him up!

Amen.

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