

**THEME: The Way: Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus**  
***“Even the Storms Obey Him”***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber – based on a sermon series by Adam Hamilton  
March 9-10, 2013 at First United Methodist Church - Durango

**Mark 4:35-41**

*35 As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s cross to the other side of the lake.” 36 So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). 37 But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. 38 Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re going to drown?”*

*39 When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the water, “Silence! Be still!” Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. 40 Then he asked them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”*

*41 The disciples were absolutely terrified. “Who is this man?” they asked each other. “Even the wind and waves obey him!”*

**VIDEO      Sermon Starter – Even the Storms Obey Him**

**SLIDE      Even the Storms Obey Him**

I want to invite you to take out of your bulletin your Message Notes and your Meditation Moments. There is a place for you to take notes and there are pens and pencils in the pew pockets in front of you and I hope you will take some time to write anything down that you want to remember from today's message. If you are watching at home or online I invite you to take out a piece of paper and something to write with and then you can download this resource off our website later. You also will find daily Scripture readings and questions to think about throughout the week. I really want to encourage you during this season of Lent, which is the 40 days and 7 Sundays before Easter, to make this a daily discipline. You are going to read several stories that take place on the Sea of Galilee where Jesus is ministering to people. You may have heard some of the stories before and my hope is that God will speak in a fresh way in your life this week.

Today we continue in a series of sermons during this season of Let where we are Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus, in which we are looking at historical

background, archeological findings, and stories of the faith to retrace the footsteps of Jesus from his baptism and temptation in the desert to his crucifixion and resurrection. Along the way we will meet the people he loved and healed, the enemies he made, listen to the parables he taught and see some of the roads he traveled. We are looking at what these stories in the Holy Land teach us about who Jesus is and who he calls us to be. Finally, we are looking each week at what it means to walk with Jesus in our daily lives.

Today we are going to focus on the Sea of Galilee which was a very important place in the life of Jesus. All we know of the life of Jesus is about three years of public ministry, along with a couple of stories from his childhood. We know that he spent most of those three years in and around the Lake. How many of you enjoy going to a Lake where there is nice water? My guess is that most of us enjoy the lake or being along the ocean because there is something captivating about water for us. I grew up most of my younger years in the San Francisco Bay Area and I spent many weekends on the ocean in Santa Cruz down south or up north in an area called Stinson Beach. Other than the mountain tops, there is nowhere that I feel closer to God than when I am walking along the beach on the ocean.

Most years we take our staff on a retreat and we sometimes go up to Electra Lake. I have spent time up there at someone else's cabin on my own and there is a sense of peace that you get as you sit along the edge of the water. My guess is that many of you have experienced this at different times and it seems to be that this was the same for Jesus. When Jesus chose to settle down and have a home base for his ministry he chose a town on the edge of the Sea of Galilee. You have a map in your bulletin but let's zoom in on the North section of that map as you take a look at the video screen.

**VIDEO      Map of Sea of Galilee**

**VIDEO      Google image of Sea of Galilee**

First, you will see as we zoom in on the map the Sea of Galilee the town of Capernaum at the top of the map which is where Jesus settled. My guess is that he chose a seaside village because of his love of the water. You will notice the town of Nazareth on this map which was the hometown of Jesus off to the left and my guess is that he visited the Sea of Galilee as a child. The Jordan River flows

into the Sea of Galilee and then out of the Sea of Galilee down into the Dead Sea which is the southern section of the country known as the Judea.

We also have a Google image of the Sea of Galilee so you can get an idea of the size of this body of water. The Sea of Galilee is 13 miles from North to South and is 7-8 miles East to West at its widest. It is the lowest freshwater body of water on our planet and is 700 miles below sea level. You will notice in this image that it is in the shape of a harp, at least that is how people understood it in ancient times. They didn't have an idea of it being in the shape of South America or Africa, but instead sought in the shape of that musical instrument that they used in worship called a harp.

**SLIDE        Sea of Galilee = Lake of Gennesaret = “harp” (Sea of Galilee Satellite View as background)**

It was also called the Sea of Galilee because it is a beautiful body of water in the region of the Galilee which is the northern part of the Holy Land. It also was called the Sea of Tiberius which was the Roman name for the body of water named after the Emperor Tiberius.

**SLIDE        Sea of Galilee fishing boat (picture)**

43 times we hear the word boat mentioned in the Gospels as it relates to the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was in and out of boats, fishing with his disciples, preaching from the deck of a boat and crossing the Sea of Galilee to minister to people on the different sides of the Lake. Today we are going to focus on three of these gospel stories which focus on Jesus on the Sea of Galilee.

The first story is in Luke 5 and if you have your Bible you might want to turn to that. Here we find Jesus calling his first disciples. Jesus is teaching by the Sea of Galilee. People have already heard about him because he has been healing the sick, casting out demons and they know he teaches with authority. A crowd of a few hundred has gathered around and as they gathered they pressed in upon him. Everybody wants to hear him and he had no amplification so they found themselves crowding closer so they could listen carefully. He is being backed up into the water and he recognizes that he has to do something because pretty soon the water will be too deep.

It is in the morning and he notices that there are two fishing boats just off of the shore. Fishermen do fish all night long on the Sea of Galilee and the crew of these two boats had been doing just that. Do you know why they fish at night

instead of during the day? Fish can see the nets during the daytime and so they fish at night.

**SLIDE      Fishing on the Sea of Galilee (picture)**

You see on the video screen a picture of a fishing boat on the Sea of Galilee with two fishermen setting out in the evening getting ready to cast out their nets. Today they use flares which they set off to attract the fish and then they motor around in their boat with their nets and pull in the fish to the boat. They repeat this all night long and this is how fishing was done in the day of Jesus as well, minus the flares.

As Jesus looked over on the shore there were two fishing boats sitting there. Peter and Andrew were in one and James and John were in the other. They had been fishing all night long and they caught nothing. It is a very discouraging thing when you have caught nothing after you have been fishing all night. It's one thing if you are doing it for fun and probably not such a big deal, but if this is what you do for a living than it is downright annoying and might mean you don't get to eat that day if you don't catch anything. My guess is that they were not in a very good mood as they came back to shore that morning.

The Scriptures tell us that they had cleaned their nets and now they were mending them. Jesus then comes along and he climbs into Simon Peter's boat and he says, "Simon, would you mind pushing back from shore just a little bit so I can teach these people from your boat?"

If I were Simon Peter I might say something like, "Are you kidding me? I've been fishing all day long and now I'm cleaning up for the day and this is a time when I go to bed. And you want me to push you out to shore so you can talk to all these people, most of whom I don't even know? What kind of clown are you?"

But Simon Peter agrees and he pushes his boat back out away from the shore and continues to work on his nets while Jesus is talking to all the people who have gathered around along the edge of the seashore. The water would then have a natural effect of amplifying his voice. The days before sound systems people knew where to stand so others could hear them. Have you ever been on the water in a boat and sat still and you can hear people on the shore talking and it sounds very clear? I was at Havilland Lake this last summer and we have an inflatable kayak that I was sitting in it out on the lake and there was a family on the edge of the shore. The father and his teenage son got into an argument and I

could hear every word, plain as day as I sat in my kayak trying to take in some peace and quiet. I won't tell you which family I heard! This is a good reason to be quiet when you are on the edge of the water or in a boat and you don't want anyone else around the Lake to hear you. Jesus is taking advantage of this natural amplification while he is teaching.

When Jesus is done teaching he blesses the people and sends them away and tells them he will see them later on in the day. He then turns to Simon Peter and says, "Simon, let's go fishing."

I imagine Simon saying, "Uh, excuse me, but its daytime. The fish can see the nets. Don't you know that? By the way, what do you know about fishing? I have been fishing all my along and I haven't caught a single fish tonight and I'm exhausted. I don't want to go back out fishing again, especially with someone who doesn't know what they're doing. I think I'm pretty happy just enjoying being on the shore and fixing my nets and I'll go out again tomorrow night."

We don't know if that is what went through his mind, but I imagine it was something like that. We do know that what he says to Jesus at one point is finally, "My Lord, I have fished all night and I didn't catch anything." You can imagine that he is saying it in a way that he is hoping Jesus will respond, "Okay, we'll just go out tonight when you are scheduled to go fishing."

But Jesus just stands there. Finally Peter says, "Okay, because you say so I will go out and fish." You can hear the reluctance in his, "because you say so," line. It is almost like he's dreading it but because Jesus says so he will go ahead and give it a try.

Peter and Andrew push the boat out a bit farther off the shore where there is deep water. The Sea of Galilee is only 150 feet deep at its deepest point and it's about 60 feet deep when you get 100 yards offshore. To pacify Jesus, Simon and Peter put their nets over the edge of the boat. They then watch and they are astounded. Have you ever seen a large school of fish you the water? You can see the water ripple and there is dancing just below the surface. They see this movement all around the net and they are amazed. Pretty soon they realize that there are too many fish out there for them to haul them all in by themselves. It is too much for them and so they shout out to the other fisherman on the shore and yell out, "James and John, come and help us."

James and John take one in the net while Peter and Andrew take the other and as they begin to pull in the net and they are almost overwhelmed. They put as many fish into one boat as they can and then the boats are both nearly filled with fish and seemed to be close to sinking when Simon looks at Jesus and all of a sudden he is terrified. Why is he terrified?

Peter can't figure out how this could happen. He's thinking to himself, "There is no fisherman alive who causes fish to jump into the nets in the middle of the day like this. Who is this man?"

Peter falls on his knees next to Jesus and says, "Please leave me, because I am a sinful man. I'm too sinful to be around you."

This story begs a few questions. First, what do you think Simon Peter was like? Do you think he was seminary educated and graduated from the top of his class at Princeton Theological Seminary? The reality is that he probably hadn't gone to school but instead learned the trade of fishing from his father. My guess is that he was a salt of the earth kind of person. At least seven of the disciples seem to be fisherman and so many of them were probably like Simon Peter.

I would love for you to meet a fisherman from the Sea of Galilee and so let's take a listen to this interview with Yayiri who has been fishing that body of water for 30 years. As you listen, imagine that Simon Peter might have been very much like this man.

**VIDEO**      **Yayiri the Fisherman**

**SLIDE**      **Fishing on the Sea of Galilee (picture)**

This is the kind of person that Jesus called to be his disciple. Jesus intentionally chose 12 pretty ordinary people to be his followers. Nobody would've looked at this group and thought that they were extraordinary in any way. Those are the kind of people that Jesus chooses.

Jesus chooses people like you and he says, "I can use you. I can use what you do. I can use your heart if you will follow me."

I think it is important to notice that Peter was somewhat of a reluctant disciple. He didn't want to go back out in the water. Jesus would have let him off the hook if he had chosen not to go out and going to deep water that day, but can you imagine what Peter would've missed out on in his life had he not said, "Okay Lord, I'll go out to the deep water"?

Not only would Peter have missed out on the biggest catch of fish that he ever would have received, but he would've missed out on the calling Christ of his life to devote the rest of his life to fishing for people. It all came down to that one moment for Simon Peter where Jesus said to them, "Let's go out into the deep water and fish."

I want to encourage you not to miss the moments when Christ calls you. We are very much like the people that we read about in the Scriptures. Almost always when God calls someone and they feel that nudge to do something, they come up with 1 million different reasons and excuses as to why they shouldn't do it. We do the same thing in our lives don't we? I do that and I'm guessing that you do it to. It's time to teach Vacation Bible School and we need people to sign up. We make the announcement and about half of the people that we need signed up in the first week or so and everybody else is saying in their head, "Well, somebody else will do that."

We give the announcement a few more times and then finally after five different announcements you get the hint and you say, "I think God means me. God can't possibly want me to teach vacation Bible school. I don't know what to do with kids and I don't know how to do this or do that." We think of all kinds of reasons not to do it but then finally we recognize that God can use anyone who has a willing heart.

I think this is how God works. God nudges us until we finally realize we need to say "yes." We might say "no" at first but when we finally say "yes" we can discover what we were made for and in the midst of being used by God we get to see something miraculous happen. Peter would've missed the miraculous and the adventure of a lifetime if he hadn't been willing to go out on that boat which was something he had done hundreds of times but this time it would be different.

**Notice that it was in the midst of doing something ordinary in which something extraordinary happened for Simon Peter.**

The response of Simon Peter is also an interesting part of this story. I'm thinking that if I were a fisherman and I hadn't caught a thing all night I go out in the boat and we catch so many fish at the boat is almost sinking that I would be doing a dance. I would be excited figuring out how much money we were going to make off of all the fish and thinking about how this haul of fish could change my career. But Simon doesn't do that. They pull in the fish and instead he goes to Jesus and he falls on his knees and he says,

**SLIDE**        ***"Jesus, you need to leave now—I'm too much of a sinner to be around you."***

Why this Simon say this? Simon Peter sees the glory of God in his own boat. He realized that no mere fisherman could do what just happened. The only one who could do this with God and he is now witnessed the miracle that has taken place. Suddenly, he feels the way that any of us would feel when we are in the presence of God. He becomes acutely aware of how imperfect that he is and how many times he has fallen short. He does what any of us would do and recognizes that we need grace and we have a bit of fear about what might happen next. "Please leave. I am a sinful man."

Another interesting part of this story is recognizing that the backdrop is found in the Old Testament in Isaiah 6:5-8. Isaiah the prophet has been taken up to the throne room of God. He sees God high and lifted up and he sees the glory of the Lord in the throne room and he has the same feeling of Simon Peter when he cries out in dramatic fashion:

**SLIDE**        ***"It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven's Armies." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7 He touched my lips with it and said, "See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven." 8 Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" I said, "Here I am. Send me."***

Isaiah is terrified and God reassures him. God cleanses Isaiah and then he sends him out to devote the rest of his life to preaching the word of God.

Simon Peter gives a similar response to Jesus when he falls down on his knees. We see what happens next in Luke 5: 10-11.

**SLIDE**        ***Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" 11 And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.***

Throughout this sermon series and indeed whenever he read the gospel we are meant to ask two questions. **Who is Jesus?** It is clear to Simon Peter that God is at work through Jesus in profound ways that he doesn't fully understand. You

are meant to read these stories and ask, "Who is this man?" We see Jesus in this story and it is meant to give us a picture of who Jesus is and what he is going to be about.

**SLIDE            What does this mean for my life?**

But we also are meant to ask another question. In this story we are meant to see that all of us are called to be fishers of people. We are called to cast out the nets and draw people into the kingdom of God. Every single one of us are meant to do this by our witness, by our words, by our love for other people, by our invitation for them to come in worship and by sharing our faith personally with others. We are all called to be fishers of people.

Let's look at two more stories that happen with Jesus on the Sea of Galilee which are parallel. We heard it from Mark's gospel as we began the sermon today and it is repeated both in Matthew and Luke's gospel. The background for this is that Jesus has been healing the sick all day in the town of Capernaum and he is exhausted. It is night time and they had already had dinner and as the sun is going down Jesus turns to his disciples and says, "We need to cross over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee."

Jesus gets the boat and they get in the boat with him. Since he is tired from a full day of healing people he decides to go to sleep. The disciples are used to taking the boat out at night because they were fishermen and they would typically fish at night. So they get in the boat and begin to cross over the Sea of Galilee to the other side. The boat that Jesus was in with his disciples was probably about 27 feet long. We know that because in 1986 there was a serious drought in the area of the Galilee and the Sea of Galilee water levels receded. The lake floor was now a mighty mess and you could walk along and see what had been on the bottom of the floor of the Lake. You know how this works because it happens every year here at Lemon Reservoir and Vallecito Reservoir. This last year I remember finding an old speaker that had fallen off a boat as well as many other interesting objects after the water receded at the reservoir.

People who were walking in the area of the Sea of Galilee found something sticking up out of the mud. They discovered that it was an old boat but they were not sure how old. They use a special process to dig out the boat remains. They cleaned it and carefully preserved it at a cost of a great deal of money. They were able to carbon date the wood to between 50 BC and 50 A.D.

**SLIDE Galilee boat (picture)**

This boat was from the time of Jesus which you see in this picture on the video screen. In the background you can see several images on the wall and one of them is a **mosaic** from the first century which was found in a nearby village that depicts what boats look like in the first century.

**SLIDE Sea of Galilee boat mosaic (picture)**

**SLIDE Galilee boat 2 (picture)**

Here's another image of that archaeological find that tells us the boat was 27 feet long, 4 feet deep and 8 feet across. You could hold approximately 12 to 15 men.

**SLIDE Galilee boat replica (picture)**

You can see a replica of this boat outside of the museum which houses that boat dated to the time of Jesus. It was made from 10 different types of wood and when they found the wood which was on the spine of the boat which is the bottom section, they discovered it is from the same kind of tree which was used to create the crown of thorns used to place on Jesus.

In the back of this boat there would've been a place for someone to crawl under the deck and have a place to sleep. There was a cushion there which was kept for the captain and Jesus took that cushion and laid down to get some sleep in the boat as across the water. If you were going straight across from east to west it would take about two hours to cross the Sea of Galilee but it could take longer depending on where you are sailing and the winds of the day. Jesus goes to sleep as they are sailing the darkness.

Have you ever fallen asleep on a boat? If the water is fairly calm then it can be a very relaxing thing. When we had taken our inflatable kayaks out on the reservoir in the summer and I get a chance just to stretch out on top of one of them I can fall asleep pretty easily as the water gently moves me to and fro. Can you feel that as I'm describing it? Don't fall asleep!

Jesus is sleeping in the back of the boat and in the middle of the night, out of the darkness when they are in a section of the Lake that might be 100 feet deep or more, a terrible storm comes up. These happen frequently on the Sea of Galilee. Fishermen have described being in squalls where waves are 8 to 12 feet

high and coming over the top of their boat and it is terrifying, especially in the middle of the night.

This is where the disciples find themselves and they too are terrified, but Jesus is sleeping! Finally, the disciples looked at each other and wondered Jesus is just going to stay asleep let them all perish or what! One of them goes back to wake Jesus up from his slumber and frantically tells him, "Jesus, we are going to drown! Don't you care?"

Jesus looks at them and says, "Don't you get it yet? Do you see me cast out the demons and they had to flee? Did you see me open the eyes of the blind? Didn't you see that the lame could walk after I touched them? Do you really think we are going to drown out here? Why are you so afraid? I am in the boat with you and it will be okay."

Just to make sure that they understood, Jesus cries out, "Quiet! Be still."

Suddenly, the wind died instantly and the waves calmed. They are astounded and listen again to what they say. Remember that the gospel stories are meant to tell us who Jesus is, and that is exactly what the disciples ask.

**SLIDE**      ***41 The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "Even the wind and waves obey him!"***

They are starting to get it because anyone who studies their Bible which is the Hebrew Bible or are Old Testament knows that there is only one person who controls the wind and the waves. There is only one force which controls the natural elements. The Psalms and other parts of the Old Testament refer to this as we see in Psalm 89:9.

**SLIDE**      ***You rule the oceans. You subdue their storm-tossed waves.***

They are beginning to figure out that the man who is in the boat with them is something they don't fully comprehend but he seems to be God in their midst.

Matthew begins his gospel, before he goes into the birth narrative of Jesus, with this bold text from Isaiah.

**SLIDE**      ***They will call him Immanuel, which means "God is with us."***

The idea that we find in the Gospels that the God who is the ruler of the universe has chosen to reveal himself and show himself to us by becoming like us, in human flesh. He was born to a peasant couple and was a carpenter's son. Now

we see him as a fishermen crossing the Sea of Galilee and calming the storms. We are meant to recognize that God has come in our midst that we might know who God is and we might know God's will for our lives. This is what the disciples are beginning to see and is beginning to dawn upon them that this is no ordinary man. God has come to us in this man Jesus Christ.

As Christians we try to explain this and we always fall a little bit short. We use analogies like the Trinity and we talk about God the Creator and Jesus the Christ and the Holy Spirit. We sometimes talk about this like water and how H<sub>2</sub>O can be ice and steam and liquid. It is one substance but in three different forms. Saint Patrick who we'll remember this next week used this Shamrock with its three leaves to talk about this concept of God as three in one. The reality is that our little 3 pounds of gray matter can't fully comprehend the fact that somehow, something of the essence of God was placed in mortal flesh and when we look at Jesus we see God. This is what Jesus is pointing to in every one of these stories.

Jesus is also pointing to the role that he would play in our lives. The reality is that all of us walk through or sail through storms in life, don't we? We all have periods of time where the seas get rough and the waves are threatening to capsize our boat. Sometimes we can figure out how we are going to make it through and it is terrifying. What these stories tell us is that Christ is already in the boat with us. Jesus will sail with us if we will let him.

The promise is not that he is going to make everything all better and it certainly is not a promise that we will never have rough seas. The promise is that no matter what you go through and wherever you are, no matter how terrified you might feel, God will be with you. Jesus says through this story, "I will be with you. I will take care of you, one way or the other. The worst thing in your life will never be the last thing in your life. Don't be afraid."

Bill Brunson is a United Methodist pastor and a District Superintendent. The stormiest time in his life happened when he was 24 years old, had been married for two years, had a six-month old daughter and was in seminary at Candler School of Theology. He was pastoring two small churches as he worked on his Masters degree. They were in the midst of tumultuous seas having been newly married with the baby in the home and trying to finish school all while serving two churches. One day Bill's wife said to them, "Honey, I don't feel very good."

They went to the doctor discovered she had leukemia in a form that doesn't respond to treatment. For the next two years, while he was in seminary and trying to raise their daughter, his wife was in and out of the hospital constantly. They would start to think that things were looking better and then things would take a turn for the worst. He never imagined the stormy seas would be this rough and they would literally make them sick. It was terrifying and almost more than they could bear.

Two years into her diagnosis, just before Easter, Bill's wife passed away. The doctors had told them several months prior to this that she wasn't going to get better and so they decided to use any experimental treatments they had that might help other people after she passed. They wanted the doctors to try anything that might help others later on and so that is how they lived out the last few months of her life. They did experimental treatments on her which wouldn't help her but might help somebody else later on down the road.

After she passed away, Bill was getting ready to graduate from seminary and his daughter was two and half years old. Bill said, "I felt overwhelmed. Every single morning I would pray, 'Lord, please be with me in the ship because the storms are about to take me under.' I would literally feel him speak to me and every day when I didn't think I could go on I would feel him say to me, 'We can do this together.' Finally, years later I found that we had survived and I found comfort in knowing that my wife was at rest from the storms as well. The storms had passed and Jesus had been with us all along."

Jesus is still in the boat if you will allow him to be there when you are traveling through the stormy seas of life. Really, what's the alternative? The alternative is for you to do by yourself. You will be in the middle of the lake and in the midst of the darkness with no life preservers and storm waves 10 feet high that feel overwhelming. Can you do that by yourself? Do you want to do that by yourself?

Or don't you want to know that the one who commanded the wind and the waves is still in your boat with you. That is what these stories teach us. So when you are walking in the footsteps of Jesus today what that means is that every single day you invite Jesus into your boat once more, to be the captain of your ship and to journey with you wherever life takes you.

One last story that we need to take in is similar to the one we just read and is found in Matthew 14, and is in Mark and John's gospel as well. This is a story where Jesus has been healing the sick and casting out demons in Bethsaida. Nighttime comes and he tells the disciples to go out on a ship ahead of him and then Jesus will meet you them there the next day. Jesus then goes up on a mountain to pray, much like we learned about last week in terms of how Jesus like to go have quiet time away from others. The disciples asked Jesus how he is going to get across the lake but Jesus tells them not to worry and just to go on ahead.

They go on ahead of him and again it is nighttime and some storms arise. They are rowing against the wind because the sails have been taken in and the Gospels tell us it is 3 AM, or the fourth watch of the night, and they are exhausted from rowing the boat. From where Jesus is on land he can see his disciples and they are straining at the oars. Have you ever felt like you were straining against the oars in life? It was so hard and you can't figure out how to keep going—that is how it was for the disciples.

Jesus then comes to them in the boat. Jesus is not in the boat and they know it and that is what makes this story terrifying for them because its 3 AM in the middle of the Sea of Galilee and Jesus is nowhere to be found. Where is he when you need him? But then Jesus comes walking out towards them on the water. He comes close enough to check on them and see how they are doing and he is almost going to pass by because he knows they are going to be okay, but then they see him. They cry out in fear because it looks like a ghost and as they yell Jesus says this to them.

**SLIDE**        ***27 But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!"***

I love that Jesus is standing on the water in the midst of the wind blowing and the waves surrounding them, Jesus tells them to take courage and not to be afraid. Notice that last line uses an important phrase that we find in the Hebrew Bible and several places, "I am." Jesus says, "Don't be afraid. Take courage. I am here."

Let me remind you that Moses was in the wilderness may be 1400 years before this story and he came across a burning Bush. When he saw that burning bush Moses heard a voice from the bush and it said, "Moses, take off your shoes

because you are standing on holy ground. I have a mission for you and you are going to go back to Pharaoh and tell him to let my people the Israelites go free from slavery."

Moses then said, "Okay, what is your name? Who shall I tell them sent me?"

God says, "My name is I AM." In Hebrew that word is Yahweh and sometimes translated as Jehovah.

Jesus is standing on the water doing what no human being is supposed to be able to do and says, "Take courage. Don't be afraid. 'I AM' is here."

Simon Peter is always doing the interesting things in this group of disciples and so he says, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water."

I'm sorry, but if I'm Simon I'm telling Jesus, "Would you please just get in the boat and do the thing you did before and make the wind stop!" Instead, Peter asks this insane question but Jesus simply says, "Yes, come."

Peter keeps his eyes on Jesus and he steps out of the boat. He finds he can stand on the water when his eyes are fixed on Jesus. But a strong wind comes up and what does he do? He looks down. Didn't they teach you that about being up on heights? "Don't look down!"

But that's exactly what Peter does and he becomes terrified. He begins to sink and he shouts out, "Save me, Lord!"

Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said and he chides him a bit. "Why did you doubt me?"

I loved what happens next. Jesus climbs back in the boat with them. Can I tell you that Jesus will climb in the boat with you, even if you are in the middle of the storm and you feel like you have no faith? All you need to do is invite Jesus and he climbs in with you.

When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. This time they have figured it out and here's what the gospels tell us.

**SLIDE**      ***Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.***

"Lord I'm a sinful man and I don't know who you are so please leave. Who is this man that he controls the winds and the waves? We know who you are now. Truly, you really are the son of God!"

Let me remind you that we learned in the Scriptures that it is only God who walks on water. Psalm 77:19 reads this way.

**SLIDE        *19 Your road led through the sea, your pathway through the mighty waters—***

Job 9:8 says this.

**SLIDE        *8 He alone has spread out the heavens and marches on the waves of the sea.***

This is exactly what we see in this story from Matthew gospel. The Scriptures drive home this point over and over again. When you were in the midst of the storm, if you will focus on Jesus Christ who is coming to meet you in the storm, you will find the peace to make it through those moments in life. The moment you start focusing on the storm and not on God then you will find it to be overwhelming and terrifying. You will not be sure if you can make it. It is when Peter cries out, "Lord, save me," that Jesus reaches out and saves us again.

I received an e-mail this last week from a church member who has been struggling with cancer and cancer surgeries in the past year. She wrote and she told me that,

*"Throughout this whole experience of dealing with cancer I have experienced Jesus calming presence through all of the loving people that he has put around me, and how much they work at reminding me that Jesus is present with me. The waters can be calmed. When I go in for my next surgery I know that I will be wrapped in my prayer shawl, knowing that church members, friends and family will be praying for me. Many have written notes and stopped by to give me words of encouragement. I received a text from someone I don't even know if the church who told me they would be praying for me in the days ahead. They are the hands and the face of Jesus and I have learned so much about God's love as the recipient of all of this. Knowing they are praying for me and feeling Christ's love and presence through them has been the only thing that makes the calm and brings the peace in the storm. It's like riding a wave of prayer. I can physically feel it as life calms down around me in the midst of prayer."*

Have you invited Jesus to be in the boat with you? Have you invited Jesus to be the captain of your ship? In the end, that is what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. If you haven't done that and you are facing the storms of life all by yourself in the darkness, you are missing out on what Christ wants to be for you.

Do you know what this part of the church is that you are sitting in today? It is an old Latin term and we call it the "nave."

**SLIDE        Nave = "navice" or "ship"**

You are sitting in the ship when you gather for worship. Christ is the captain of this ship and we gather here to have him calm the wind and the waves. Every week you were sent back out in your own ship with the presence of Christ going with you on the journey that Christ calls you to.

This is an old hymn written by a British pastor in 1860 for sailors in his own congregation as they went out to sea. It's now called, "The Navy Hymn."

*Eternal Father, Strong to save,  
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,  
Who bid'st the mighty Ocean deep  
Its own appointed limits keep;  
O hear us when we cry to thee,  
for those in peril on the sea.*

*O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard  
And hushed their raging at Thy word,  
Who walked'st on the foaming deep,  
and calm amidst its rage didst sleep;  
Oh hear us when we cry to Thee  
For those in peril on the sea!*

*Most Holy spirit! Who didst brood  
Upon the chaos dark and rude,  
And bid its angry tumult cease,  
And give, for wild confusion, peace;  
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee  
For those in peril on the sea!*

We are all on the sea sometimes our lives and sometimes in peril. We cry out to him today.

**SLIDE          Prayer**

I would like to invite you to bow your heads with me if you would and ask that you pause for a moment. Quietly, in your own words, you might say something like this, *"Jesus, please step into my boat. Guide me and lead me. Captain my ship and calm for me the wind and the waves."*

*Oh Lord, for those in the midst of the stormiest seas right now, I pray that they might sense as they come to church sitting in this nave, in this ship, they might hear your words to them, "It is I. Don't be afraid."*

*Help them oh God, to fix their eyes on you no matter what storms may come. Help them to find in you their peace that passes all understanding.*

*Help us O God to be fishers of people, in your holy name. Amen.*

## “Even the Storms Obey Him”

### Theme: The Way: Walking In the Footsteps of Jesus

Scripture: Mark 4:35-41

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:

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**Meditation Moments for Monday, March 11** – Read **Luke 5:1-12**– Jesus made Capernaum, on the Sea of Galilee's shoreline, the center of his ministry. It made sense that most of his followers came from that area. But his vision always reached farther than any one location. He asked the first disciples to “push into the deep water,” pointing toward the ultimate task he had for them. “Fishing for people” would push them into the deep waters of a whole world filled with suffering and spiritual hunger.

- Jesus was a rabbi, a teacher. Peter caught fish for a living. After using Peter's boat as a moveable pulpit, Jesus startled him by saying in verse 4; “Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch.” Though this didn't make sense to Peter, he agreed because Jesus asked. What might Jesus be calling you to today that is more than the “usual” or “sensible”? Are you open to saying, “Because you ask Lord, I'll do it”?
- When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, “Leave me, Lord, for I'm a sinner!” When did you realize, “God is God—and I'm not”? Did you feel any fear, as Peter seems to have in this passage? Did you take in Jesus' reassurance: “Don't be afraid”? How has realizing who God is, who you are, and who God wants to be in your life changed things for you?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, you want to open my eyes to the wonders you wish to work in and through me. But like Peter, I'm afraid. Empower me today to choose trust over fear, to open myself to you and your invigorating love. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 12** – Read **Matthew 17:24-27**– All Jewish men paid a yearly tax for the Temple's costs such as furnishings, special clothing and rituals. Roman emperors and their families, like most monarchs, never paid taxes they levied on others. Jesus had a similar relationship with the Temple—he called it “my Father's house” (Luke 2:49). As he did with his baptism, Jesus let the “status” point pass (see Philippians 2:5-6). He paid the Temple tax in a way that gave Peter, and later Christians, a valuable model of trust in God's sustaining power and of good citizenship.

- When the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, Rome forced Jews to pay the Temple tax anyway—to a pagan temple in Rome! This included the Jewish Christians for whom Matthew probably wrote his gospel. Refusing would have caused more cruelty and persecution, with no positive effect on Rome's attitude. Peter, maybe recalling this story, urged Christians to “honor the Emperor” (see 1 Peter 2:13-17) if they didn't have to give up their faith in doing so. Does Jesus' example in paying that tax say anything to us today? In what parts of life can you live out your Christian convictions and “honor the Emperor”?

**Prayer:** *Lord God, you are my king above all human rulers. Your banner is mine, above all human emblems. Help me live as a*

*good citizen who honors you by the way I live. Amen.*

**Wednesday, March 13** – Read **Mark 6:33-52** – In Galilee, it was hard for Jesus and his disciples to find privacy. Though often called a “sea,” the body of water in Galilee is a relatively small lake of about 120 square miles. By contrast, Lake Michigan covers 22,400 square miles. Jesus caringly used his power to feed a large crowd in a remote place. Even after seeing that, the disciples still didn’t seem to think Jesus could help them when the weather on the lake turned against them.

- Facing a hungry crowd, the disciples said, “Send them away so that they can go...buy something to eat for themselves.” Jesus used the situation to open their eyes and said, “You give them something to eat.” They then saw his power make the impossible possible. God often *works through people, with God’s power enabling them to be and do more than they could otherwise. When have you done this kind of “teaming up” with God? What were the results to others you served, and in you?*
- They’d *helped Jesus feed the crowd, yet the disciples were terrified to see him walking on water (verse 50). Despite what they’d seen, their thoughts were limited to the “normalcies” of daily life. Mark said, “They hadn’t understood about the loaves” (verse 52). In what parts of your life do you find it hard to trust that God’s power can make any real difference? What keeps you from “understanding about the loaves”?*

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, you said those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled. Please fill the hungry places in my soul that only you can fill. Amen.*

**Thursday, March 14** – Read **Matthew 14:22-33** – *Matthew’s story sounded almost exactly like the one we read in Mark yesterday—until Peter spoke up. He showed that mix of faith and doubt most of us wrestle with at times: “Lord, if it’s you, order me to come to you on the water.” Next thing he knew, he was striding across the water! It worked until he let the wind distract him and his fear took over. “As he began to sink, he shouted, ‘Lord, rescue me!’” And Jesus did.*

- *The story starts with a sense of urgency: “Right then, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat” (verse 22). Many scholars believe it was to avoid a move to forcibly declare Jesus a military leader and king (see John 6:15). What issues or situations do you face that require you to take urgent action in order to stay in tune with God’s will for you?*
- *When Jesus said, “It’s me”, he was using the same words in Greek as the “I Am,” God’s Old Testament name (see Exodus 3:14). Scholar Myron Augsberger writes that, “The primary meaning is that Jesus as Lord of creation can be present in the lives of people in this material world.” In what parts of your life do you need Christ’s comforting, calming presence today? How confident are you that he can and will be with you?*

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, at times I’m riding high, walking toward you in faith! At times my fears distract me and take my eyes off you. Remind me that your love and salvation are always in reach, even when I feel as though I’m sinking. Amen.*

**Friday, March 15** – Read **Mark 4:35-41**– *This passage evoked the famous Old Testament story of Jonah (see Jonah 1-2). In each, a storm blew, while the main character slept. But Jonah was running from God, while Jesus slept in peace and trust. The disciples asked, “Don’t you care that we’re drowning?” Jesus (being God in the flesh) calmed the storm. They were amazed. Only God could calm the sea’s stormy chaos (see Jeremiah 5:22). This miracle further revealed and affirmed Jesus’ identity as Messiah.*

- *Think of one major life “storm” you’ve experienced. How did you make it through that experience? Did you have a sense Jesus was “in the boat” with you to guide, comfort, and help bring you peace? How has that experience impacted your relationship with God, and shaped the person you are today?*
- *Our world has experienced many “storms” (e.g. the New York Hurricane, Kansas Tornadoes, the Haiti earthquake, the tsunami in Japan, Hurricane Katrina and the terrorist attacks of 9/11/01). Have you seen any way that God brought peace, and calm in the midst of such disasters and their aftermath? If so, list ways you’ve seen or still see God at work for good in these situations.*

**Prayer:** *Lord of all, thank you for your faithful presence in my life, and for walking with me through life’s storms. May I trust in you and your saving grace more each day. Amen.*

**Saturday, March 16** – Read **Mark 5:1-20** – Mark said that right after calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus went to its eastern shore where mainly Gentiles lived. He found himself facing a man whose life was torn apart by terrible inner storms. Jesus healed the man, cast out his demons, and brought calm and peace to his storm-tossed life. When the transformed man sought a mission, Jesus told him to, “Go home to your own people and tell them what the Lord has done for you and how he has shown you mercy.” As *The New Interpreter’s Bible* puts it, the man became Jesus’ “first Gentile missionary.”

- Where do you most need wholeness, healing and hope in place of inner or outer “storms”? In what ways, directly or through human instruments, do you believe Jesus’ power is available for you? What abilities and possessions is God calling you to put at his disposal, so that you can become a channel of blessing to others facing life’s storms? How could a deeper involvement in God’s healing mission bring new freedom and purpose to your life?

**Prayer:** *God, please use me as your hands and feet in this world to offer your grace, healing and transformation to those who are hurting. Amen.*

**Family Activity:** Create a timeline to identify the times when you trusted Jesus most deeply as individuals and as a family. Together, name some events or times when you felt Jesus very near. Attach several sheets of paper together horizontally. Draw a horizontal line down the middle of the paper. Ask each person to use a different color of marker to place his/her events or time on the timeline. Think of someone else who would benefit from hearing your stories of Jesus’ trustworthiness and commit to sharing them! If you and your family are new to faith, begin a timeline and continue adding to it as you grow in God! Celebrate Jesus and the trust we can freely place in him.