

Sessions – Storm

<http://www.myfishbites.com/sessions-storm.php>

Intro

In the Winter of 2013-2014, the UK was hit by a number of very bad storms blown into the UK because the 'Gulf Stream' was stopped in a certain place and kept sending low pressure weather systems in bringing high winds and huge amounts of rain and heavy waves.

The Bible has a bit to say about bad weather and storms. Jonah was in the centre of a bad storm when he disobeyed God and ended up inside a whale (!) The Israelites passed through the Red Sea when God made a way through for them. Then Paul in the New Testament was on a ship that smashed into pieces in rough seas and storms (Acts 27). Then Mark 4 records how Jesus told another storm to 'be calm' and it was calm! While the disciples had been worried in the storm, Jesus was asleep!

But in this session we're going to look at a famous incident in the Bible that's found in Matthew 14 - when Jesus and then Peter walked on the water. This happened just after Jesus fed 5000 men miraculously with 2 fish and 5 loaves (there were thousands of women and children there too). We'll read this from both Matthew, Mark and John as it helps us get a good picture of what happened!

Matthew 14.22-31

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. 'It's a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.' ... 'Lord, if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.' ... 'Come,' he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came towards Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?' And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

Mark 6.45-51

Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.' Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

John 6.16-21

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. But he said to them, 'It is I; don't be afraid.' Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

Youtube Clip - 'A Perfect Storm'

(Warning, some offensive language in the comments below this video on its youtube page)

Direct Link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9Tdw5nG4dQ>

Storm Images

Click for a [buzzfeed.com](#) link to the storms that battered the UK with some dramatic pictures.

Or why not put together a quick PowerPoint with some images...



Or use our PowerPoint - [click here to download](#)

Activity - Questions and Answers

Write down some of the serious issues in the world at the moment...

What kinds of things do you think would make a difference?

If you want to, then write down some of the issues you, your family or friends face.

What can you do to help?



Or use our PDF - [click here to download](#)

The Sea

The Sea of Galilee is 21km long and 13km wide. It seems that the disciples were going from the West of the Lake perhaps from near Tiberias - and across to Capernaum (north of the Lake). However, they didn't make it to Capernaum but to a place called Gennesaret (a bit more north-west), which means the boat the disciples were in probably didn't travel even 10km in a whole night!

That means they had a serious wind and rough seas. Jesus saw they were battling against the waves when he came down from the mountain! He could probably still see them when maybe he expected they'd have made it across by then! They were struggling against the elements, just as Britain struggled against the elements in the 2014 winter.

When the disciples had rowed about 3-4 miles (5-6km), they saw Jesus coming towards them walking on the water and were terrified (wouldn't you be?!) They thought it was a ghost (it sounds like a scene out of Pirates of the Caribbean!) We find out from the Bible that this happened just before dawn.

The disciples set out in the evening and just before dawn they had gone just 3-4 miles. I reckon this would mean a wind against them of at least 30-45mph (depending on how fast they were rowing). Walking in 30mph is tough - imagine rowing against this with the waves crashing over you and fighting against you! It's the kind of weather you just wouldn't go out in. In fact the Bible tells us that Jesus made his disciples get in the boat and go on ahead of him. Maybe they took a look at the wind and didn't want to go!

It's the same with us isn't it sometimes? God tells us to do something, or we read something we don't like in the Bible and we're reluctant to do what Jesus tells us! But when he tells us to do something we should do it - just like the disciples did.

There are all kinds of storms in our lives and in the lives of friends and families but the good news comes from Isaiah 43.1-2:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

The good news is that we go **through** the difficult times and we come out the other side! We don't have to stay in our problems. We can seek God and ask him to help us through and change our attitude so that we see things as opportunities not difficulties. We can thank God even in our troubles, knowing that we will go through and that one day we'll be with him in the most awesome place you can't imagine!! Heaven!

Go Through

Why not make a 'prayer tunnel' where you line people up opposite each other (leaving a metre or so of space in between) and get the group to stretch out their hands inwards (so everyone's hands are facing each other). Then one by one get people to slowly walk down the centre while everyone prays for them.

Back to the Storm Talk

In one harbour in Cornwall in winter 2014, one single storm sunk at least 6 big boats in the harbour. In Dawlish in Devon, the storm left a railway line hanging in the air and a huge hole in the road. It's often the same for us. We see lots of bad things going on and the storms crashing around us and we can get worried or fearful. But God says things like 'don't be afraid' 365 times in the Bible - that's one for each day of the year (except leap years when you can remember all 365 of the promises!) If Jesus tells you to do something he will be there for you and help you, even when you get a bit nervous. Don't ever let fear (which is not from God) steal what God's put inside you to do and the life he died to give you!

Jesus told the disciples they had ceased to believe him. The Bible tells us that despite seeing the amazing 'feeding of the 5000', the disciples' hearts were hard. Our hearts should never be hard to Jesus - we should always thank him, obey him and be grateful for all he does for us!

And here's the final incredible thing - Jesus walked on the water and then for just a bit of time, so did Peter (before he took his eyes off Jesus and start not to believe). The storm made absolutely no difference to Jesus or Peter walking on the water. It was like it wasn't there. But when Peter called out to Jesus (and when the disciples cried out for help), Jesus immediately helped them. He responded to them,

got in the boat and told them not to be afraid as it was him, Jesus. I can imagine the disciples were so happy to see him! We read that the wind immediately died down and immediately they were at the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

The amazing thing is that Jesus does miracles. Before he walked on water, He fed the 5000 (more like 20,000 with the women and children) with 5 loaves and 2 fish. Then we read in Mark 6 that after the disciples arrived at the other side of Galilee, people ran to bring their sick to Jesus and every single person that even touched his cloak was healed completely!

We serve a God who is very much alive and he does things that go beyond our understanding (see Isaiah 55.8-9). Jesus has not changed! He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13.5). The Bible tells us that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is on the inside of us (Ephesians 1.18-20). This is the power of Jesus in your life and in the life of other people and that is why there is nothing too big, nothing too impossible for God to do. We can pray for people, we can ask God to step in, we can pray for people and see them healed. We can ask God to do miracles and do the impossible. I've seen amazing things happen and know that Jesus is very alive and very able to do great things if we ask, believe and trust him.

Challenge

1. What impossible things would you like to ask Jesus to do in your life, in the world, for other people? They have to line up with the character of God as we find it in the Bible. But ask God. Get into groups now and just ask God and tell him that you believe and receive his answers to prayer (Mark 11.24).
2. For further reading, check out the book by Pastor Surprise Sithole (from Africa) and his awe-inspiring book, *"Voice in the Night: The True Story Of A Man And The Miracles That Are Changing Africa."*