

# WHEN JESUS DOESN'T CARE-?

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I've changed the sermon for today given the week we had with the hurricane. I thought about titling the sermon "Jesus versus Milton." The text is about Jesus commanding the wind and the waves. Can you see Jesus face to face with Milton? He can order a cease and desist on a Cat 1. How about a Cat 5? But the title I chose for this sermon is "When Jesus Doesn't Care-?"

I love power stories. When I was a teenager in Saint Louis I remember a "Power Team" came to town. The show had them doing feats with barbells and tearing phone books apart with their bare hands. (Do you remember phone books?) If only we had such power over sin in our lives and world. Because we don't, we pray.

I think we like the power stories of the Bible. Who doesn't like David versus Goliath? A runt with no military armament facing down a humongous fighting machine and winning! We cannot be like David. Cannot. But we have a David in Jesus who has the power to tear the phone books of our sin, to slingshot down our Goliaths of sin. Thanks be to God.

Sermon: We like the power teams of St. Louis and the feats of David. There is a problem, however, with power stories. One you and I both know.

Let's pray.

As we come to the text this morning, remember the incident happened because of God, it was recorded because of God, it was preserved because of God, it was translated because of

God, and it is now preached because of God. And all of this is that he might bring to us his spirit, wisdom, grace and strength. Listen carefully then to God's great word. It is for you.

*\*“As is.” How else would they get him? Well, he might have gotten dressed up or spruced up or rested up or prayed up. To be asleep in a boat being swamped is to be exhausted. Sometimes Denise and I will go to a neighborhood haunt, and we will say, “I’m going ‘as is.’” Sometimes we have an important task or conversation, and we say, “We’re too tired to manage this conversation right now; better to do it after a good night’s sleep.” Here we have Jesus in the midstream of the ordinary, even exhausted, as-is life. Jesus didn't change his tunic into a captain-of-the-wind-and-wave suit. The power we get from Jesus is just his as is power. His is huge power but there is no grunt, nothing contrived. I say to you, “Admire his power over nature but also the nature of his power. As is power.”*

*\*Jesus speaks. There is no incantation. There is no, “Give me a second.” There is no fist making gesticulation. He doesn't say anything lengthy. He says simply, “Still and stay still.” I have known wiggly, energetic, frantic dogs where I wanted to say, “Still and stay still,” and it would happen instantly. I apparently don’t have that power because the wiggling continued. I have held a fussy baby and wanted the crying to stop, but alas, despite my soothing whispers, fuss, fuss, fuss. Now the right person on the other hand, momma, when I handed the baby over, she whispered love and the baby stilled and stayed still and fell asleep. Jesus's power is like he's speaking, not to a category 5 hurricane where he has to puff out his chest and make loud his words, he merely speaks as if to calm a dog or soothe a baby. The storm is to him a dog, a baby. Admire his power.*

*\*He doesn't call on a higher power to diminish the wind and waves because he himself is the higher power.*

*\*When Jesus says, "Still and stay still," how long does it take for the still to come? There is a great calm meaning it was instantaneous and pervasive. No, "Give it 5 minutes and I think we'll have a break in the weather." Promptly everything wind and waves stopped.*

*\*The result is that the disciples, who had been terrified by the storm, are now more terrified by the Jesus who stopped the storm. It's quite a thing to ponder being terrified by something and then being more terrified by the one who ended that something. "I'm not sure what I was thinking when I woke you up, maybe that you'd help bail. But whatever it was I was thinking, it wasn't this. We've entered a scary territory with you doing this, Jesus."<sup>1</sup>*

*End of reading: The word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth and from his fullness have we all received grace upon grace upon grace upon grace. Hallelujah. Amen.*

What's the problem with the power? The disciples woke him with, "Don't you care? We are drowning. Don't you care?" And our answer to them is that Jesus of course did care because he vanquished the storm and saved their lives. Need

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1. Another kind of disturbance that was calmed had to do with demons in a man. When Jesus brought peace, the townspeople were afraid and asked him to leave. We like and expect to be coddled with God's power. Have you ever been scared by his power? It wouldn't be a bad experience to have with God. My experience with water power is a story I could tell at this point. Summary – I was told about the power of water and then I was tossed about like a ragdoll within an inch of losing my life. I went from knowing water to being scared of water.

meets Jesus and everything turns out for the better. Here's the problem -- you have needs, even drowning needs, and there is not an observable display of Jesus power. I prayed and prayed and my son still overdosed. I prayed and prayed and my cancer wasn't cured. I prayed and prayed and that job I needed didn't come through. I prayed and prayed and that bill didn't go away.

I had a neighbor who in one of the past stacked bags of soil in front of his front door to guard it against the wind. It did the job and was more easily used at the house afterwards than sand. Today, when you feel the water of doubt rising on whether Jesus cares for you because your prayer isn't being answered or when the wind of questions is thrashing through your trees of faith because your problem is still in front of you and when you feel the gusts of frustration trying to breach the doors of your belief because the water is over your head, here are five bags of biblical thoughts to stack in front of your soul.

The first bag I am naming "99%." It reminds me of the boy who did not speak. He was a normal infant in all ways and a normal toddler in all ways and a normal preschooler in all ways. But he didn't ever speak. Not once. The pediatrician and the speech therapists and the psychologists could not account for this. One day as they were driving along, having been resigned to his silence for quite some time already, the parents handed him an open-face peanut butter toast. It fell between the seats and landed face down. Suddenly and clearly they heard, "That's terrible." The parents were amazed and asked him, "Why after all of this time do you speak." He said, "Well, everything's been fine until now." 99% of the time everything is fine. The storm of evil is near constantly held in check. But in the 1% of the time when God chooses to operate differently, we flounder. We forget that most of the time

God is upholding us and solving problems that we don't even know that we have. Try, and I know in the storm it is hard, ... try to not forget in the day of the storm that most of our days have been without storm, that our race with its sin warrants nothing but storm and yet we are blessed precisely because God cares. As someone said, remember in the dark what you have seen in the light. (Remember in the gale what you know from the calm.)

The second bag I'm going to call "character." I find that I default think that if God loved us there would be no Melvin or Helene. That he would say, "Be still," to our money problems, our back problems, our I've-got-a-failing-grade problems, our ornery neighbor problems, our marital problems, our adult child problems, our alcoholic sister problems. And if God has the power, why doesn't he take care of them? Who needs problems? Take care of them lock, stock, and barrel. All of them. Right? Here's a thought.

Some of the ultra-wealthy, like Bill and Melinda Gates, have said that they are not going to bequeath all of their wealth to their children because answering all of their problems with money would adversely affect their character. How would we ever acquire the qualities of courage without danger, charity without meagerness, of patience without adversity, of perseverance without friction, of peacemaking without conflict, of prudence without limitations. If God loves us, he would not solve all of our problems. He withholds power precisely because he does care for us.

The next bag I'm going to call, "With us." Denise operated a Chik-fil-A and was keenly committed to there being no job that she should not step into and take care of. No, "I'm the operator and shouldn't have to do that." Jesus did not have to

be in the boat with his disciples out on the open sea. But he chose to be with them in their boat. Whatever we are going through, Jesus has not exempted himself from it or left us. He has been tempted and suffered in all ways like us. He has cried out, "Help," with no apparent answer. He didn't have to but he has ... Because he cares.

The fourth bag I'm going to call, "Priority One." Of all the storms of life which do you want Jesus to most address with his complete handling and resolution? It's not that everyone gets one and only one miraculous effort of Jesus. It's not as if you were taking brownies from a tray and your mother says, "Jeff, only one." But let's say that there was one that you could have, that it was guaranteed, that he would take care of. Of all the lives storms which would you say?

What those in Jesus day often said was, "What we would like the power of the Messiah to drive out the Romans." That's the bad storm. In any casual sweep of history, it will tell us that empires, as massive as they are and as long as they may have stood, they all come and go. But the most persistent pernicious havoc-wreaking, soul-diminishing storm of life is that which is unleashed by sin with the consequences of death.

On Easter morning Jesus went into our cross-shaped boat, went into the storm of our sin and death, and evidenced his "Be Still" power, as our resurrected captain. He answers many of our lesser prayers but he is already and fully answered, with power, our greatest need for salvation from sin and death

In Matthew 12 Jesus says one greater than Jonah is here and this is fascinating because Jonah was *in a boat with* others and a storm came up. They quelled the storm by throwing him overboard where he was swallowed up by Leviathan. I wonder

if Jesus did not still the ultimate storm when we, as a race, threw him overboard onto a cross where he was entombed by our storm of sin and the evil. Then raised victorious.

The fifth bag is faith. Jesus says to the disciples, “Where is your faith?” That is a good rendering that many commentators give us on Jesus’ question to the disciples. Here's his question – where is your faith and why aren't you using it? I gave you the hammer of faith. Have you left it at home in the toolbox? I gave it to you to use it. And when you study each and every one of these bags – and rehearse them -- namely that God 99% of the time is handling your storms whether you know it or not, that because he loves us he doesn't remove every problem, that he is with us in our problems, that he has conquered our biggest threat ... this is using our faith.

Dear ones, use your faith. And look, if you cannot, hear this – HE IS FAITHFUL. Amen and amen.

*If you would like to talk with someone about this message  
or your spiritual life, or to have someone pray with you,  
the pastors and elders of the church would welcome your call.  
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