



Jesus In the Midst of the Storm

One of the greatest challenges to all of us is to be able to recognize Jesus in the middle of a storm. Recognizing Jesus in the midst of the storms of life was even a problem for the disciples. They walked with Jesus. They talked with Jesus. They ate with Jesus, but they still had trouble recognizing Jesus in the storms of life.

Matthew 14:24-25 is a very familiar Bible story of one of Jesus' miracles. Jesus came to the disciples in the middle of a storm and He was walking on the water. Remember, prior to this miracle, Jesus had become very popular with the crowd. Jesus had just fed thousands of people with only a few loaves and fish.

Jesus had become so popular with the crowd that the religious leaders viewed Him as a threat. His persecution began right in the middle of His popularity. King Herod had just beheaded John the Baptist for a belly dance and when Jesus heard of John the Baptist's death, He went away to be alone with His Father to, presumably, grieve over John's death.

It was at this precise moment that Jesus told His disciples, "get in the boat and meet me on the other side of the Lake of Galilee". With a clear, direct command from the Master, the disciples got into the boat to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. When the disciples got in that boat, the water probably was probably like glass. There was no sign of wind or a storm. The storm was totally unexpected.

We face a lot of unexpected storms and unpredictable circumstances in our lives. We may begin a day full of joy and hope with the sun is shining and WHAM, a storm comes rolling in.

The disciples lived with Jesus. They ate with Jesus. They knew Jesus intimately. Still, in the middle of the storm, they failed to recognize Him. It's the same with us.

It is easy to sense the presence of God in church.

It is easy to sense the presence of God in prayer and praise.

It is easy to sense the presence of God in answered prayers.

It is easy to sense the presence of God when you are serving Him.

It is easy but:

What rolls in when you are at home alone at night?

What about the darkest moments in your family's life?

What about the financial future that looks like it is in jeopardy?

What about when you lost your dearest and your nearest?

What about the fear that grips you like a vice?

What about the darkest and dreariest time of your life?

What about the times when the waves are ten feet high and your ship is about to capsize?



Do you recognize Jesus then? The disciples didn't. Two thousand years later, every one of us does the exact same thing.

The disciples were wrapped up with the tossing waves and the howling winds. They were heard the thunder and saw the lightning flashing in the sky. They were squinting through the pelting rain and then they saw Jesus and they thought He was a ghost.

The disciples were about to learn a tough lesson. It was possibly their hardest and yet greatest lesson. They knew that Jesus could meet their needs. They saw Him feed multitudes. They saw Him pay taxes with money out of the mouth of a fish. They saw Him heal the sick. They saw Him exercise power over the devil. They heard Him speak words of life, but they had not learned to recognize Him in the middle of the storm.

What about you? For a long time we have been taking from God's hand but when the storm hits, we can't see Him. We don't recognize Him. We take forgiveness for our sins. We take provision for our needs and even our wants. We take blessing after blessing from His hand. We take multiplying investments. We take safety and we take security. We take love and we take ministry from His hand but when the storm rolls in, we find it difficult to recognize Jesus and we think He's a ghost.

Let's look at Matthew 14:25-27, "And in the 4th watch of the night Jesus came to them walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified saying, 'it's a ghost.' And they cried in fear. But immediately He spoke to them, saying, 'Take heart it's I, fear not.'"

What is fear? Fear is the destructive force that plagues us every time we're down. Fear is the demon that harasses and oppresses us in difficult times. Fear is the attacking enemy that has no power over us. Fear is the spirit that has no authority over us.

The problem with all of us is the same as problem was with the disciples. They expected Jesus in the blessings. They expected Jesus in the miracles. They expected Jesus in the successes. They expected Jesus in the abundance. They expected Jesus in the happy times. They expected Jesus in the good times. They did not expect Him in the middle of the storm.

Deep down most people wish that He would be there but we wonder what happened to Him. Deep down we ask for Him, but we don't seem to recognize Him.

Why is it important to recognize Jesus in the middle of the storm? I have heard preachers say, "It's OK to express your doubt. Doubt all you want, God will understand."

It's OK to confess your doubt to the Lord, but it's not good to live in your doubt because it is not of God. The reason why it is so important to recognize Jesus in the midst of the storm is because in God there is no fear. God has no fear because He controls the past, the present, and the future. Neither should His children!

Be sure to know the difference between ghosts and God. If you're unable to distinguish between ghosts and God, you need to ask the Lord to show you the difference.

When the storm came upon the disciples it came quickly and unexpectedly. They did not give a thought to the fact that Jesus was watching them on top of the mountain. They did not give a thought to the fact that Jesus was always near. They probably thought that this ghost was Satan and he was coming to destroy them. They probably questioned Jesus' command to them to go to the other side. Did we hear Him right? I wonder if He's angry with us.



They probably asked, “Why is this happening to us when we have given everything to follow Him? Why is that happening to me?”

They probably wondered where Jesus was when they needed Him the most. They probably asked the question, “*If God Is In Control, Why is My Life Such a Mess?*” That is the name of my biography by the way.

When you are in the middle of the storm, it is easy to mistake Jesus for a ghost. Ghosts are imaginary. Ghosts are unreal. Ghosts in our lives are those wild imaginations that make our storms greater than they really are. Ghosts in our lives are the distorted reality that makes our problems seem so much larger than they are. The one ghost in our lives that most often attacks us is the ghost of doubting the promises of God.

Think with me in terms of this incident. Not one of the disciples said, “Wait minute guys! Jesus said to meet Him on the other side.” None of them said, “Wait a minute, Jesus did not say that our ministry is over. Jesus did not say that we have fulfilled our mission. Jesus did not say that He will not see us again. He said I’ll meet you on the other side. No storm will stop Him. He always keeps His Word.” Not one of them said that.

The Lord was teaching them to recognize Him in the middle of thunder and lightning, to see Him in the middle of pelting rains, to believe in His promises in the middle of anger and frustration.

Notice one thing in this passage. It says that Jesus came in the fourth watch of the night. The 4th watch is just before dawn. It’s the worst possible time. It’s the time when all hope begins to fade.

That is when Jesus came because Jesus knew that only in the most desperate hour are His children ready to know and trust Him. Jesus knew that until the full fury of the storm engulfed them, they were not ready to recognize Him. Jesus knew that only when they had reached the limit of their endurance would they be ready to invite Him into their ship.

Isn’t that what happens with us? We think we can do things and God doesn’t move when we think we can do things. He waits until we declare bankruptcy and say, “We have no strength of our own. We have no brilliance of our own. We have no intelligence of our. We have no ability of our own.” No wonder the Lord Jesus said to Paul, “It is when you are weak that you are strong.”

Those who love the Lord Jesus must learn to recognize Him in the middle of the storm.

Those who love Jesus must learn to distinguish between ghosts and God.

Ghosts of fear are not of God

Ghosts of doubt are not of God

Ghosts of anxiety are not of God

Ghosts of denial are not of God

Ghosts of indifference are not of God

Ghosts of unbelief are not of God.

I have another word from the Lord to those of you who turn to Him only in times of trouble and then you ignore Him in the times of calm. I have a word from the Lord for those



who seek Him only when they are desperate and then they forget all about Him in the good times.

God will answer your prayers.
God will come to your aid.
God will endow you with His peace.
God wants you to see His love and His mercy and His grace.

God wants His love, His mercy and His grace to be yours because He wants a permanent relationship with you. Not only in the times of trouble. God answers your prayer and the prayers of those who only remember Him in times of trouble.

He wants His mercy and grace to woo you to Himself. If you keep coming to God only in times of trouble and then you run away from Him in the good times, He's not the King of your life. God's mercy to you, God's grace to you, God answering of your prayers will serve as witnesses against you in the Day of Judgment.

The Bible tells us that if this kind of cheap repentance persists, their judgment will be far greater than any storm in life. God wants to get your attention. God is speaking to you in the midst of the storm. God is saying to you: *Do not misinterpret My patience as weakness. Do not confuse My mercy as a lack of concern for the way you live your life. Do not mistake My love by taking it for granted.*

There was a woman who was driving on the expressway at night. She looked in her rearview mirror and she noticed a big truck right behind her. She began to speed because she thought she could get away from the truck and the more she sped, the more the truck would speed. And the faster she went, the faster the truck followed her.

At that point she became terrified and anxious. She exited from the freeway. The truck did the same thing. She drove into the main street hoping that she would lose him somewhere in that traffic. The truck driver ran red lights in order to keep up with her. Reaching the point of absolute panic, the woman whipped her car into a service station and she bolted out of her car, screaming for help.

The truck driver with the same speed sprang out of his truck toward her car. He opened the back door and he yanked out a man who was hiding in the backseat. The woman was running from the wrong person. Being high up in the truck, he could see that there was a man hiding in the back seat that she could not see.

She was running from the wrong person.

If you are running away from God, you are running from the wrong Person.
God is pursuing you because He loves you.
God is pursuing you because He is watching over you.
God is pursuing you because He wants you to trust Him. He wants you to receive salvation from His hand. He wants you to receive eternal life from His hand. Don't run from the wrong person. Don't confuse ghosts with God.