

Men's Sunday

Matthew 8:23–27 “And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. [24] And behold, **there arose a great storm** on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. [25] And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” [26] And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. [27] And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?””

- I've often thought how very blessed I have been by God in life. No major trauma growing up. Well taken care of. An intact family to raise me. I am very blessed. No “great storms” of life.
- When I went to war in Iraq, I had many close calls with death, but as 23 year old unmarried man I did not fear the impact that my death would have on others.
- Shortly after I returned from Iraq, at age 24, my Mom died at 50 from a rare cancer. It was just a few weeks before Brittney and I married - It was so hard, especially for my dad and younger siblings, but God was so gracious through it all.
- Then 20 years of relative ease. Sure there were the regular struggles of relationships, work, and life. But again, no major trauma.
- Then in November 2022 a “great storm” of life arose. I started feeling rough, limping and having a hard time breathing. I soon found out I have pulmonary embolisms with many blood clots across both of my lungs. These embolisms had broken off from over 2 feet of DVT clots in my left leg.
- While it could've been so much worse, it was still so hard. It was frustrating to have no clear medical answers. To have weird pains in my back, neck, armpits, chest, abdomen. Yet, as I'm still fond of saying - “I'm still kicking.” God was so gracious to heal me enough that my pain was tolerable and for me to regain my abilities and exercise again.

- Just when we felt my storm was clearing, a storm arose for Brittney in November of 2023. She started having weird neck pains, headaches, and hearing her heartbeat in her ears. We soon found out that her right carotid artery torn.
- *A few weeks later - another storm* - all four arteries leading to her brain were affected: torn, misshapen, pseudo-aneurysms, blockages. One major artery to the brain was 100% blocked, another 63% blocked, and one 70%. Doctors inserted 4 stents into her carotid and vertebral arteries, from her neck & spine to provide blood flow into her brain.
- *A few weeks later - another storm* - Brittney had a brain bleed stroke. A life flight to Louisville later she was stable but the brain damage was so heartbreaking to witness. She could not name simple objects like a phone or a TV. She could not remember her birthdate or address. She could not add 2+2. She could not feed, dress, walk independently, or care for herself.
- *Now, a few month later* - while the storm feels like it has passed, dark clouds remain overhead. While her arteries and brain are healing, she has (for unknown reason) has an incurable lifelong condition that makes her blood vessels fragile. So much uncertainty. Looming darkness. It feels like we are just waiting for the next storm.
- The doctors didn't have answers to many of Brittney or my questions. What about God? Would He answer our questions? In the midst of our storms, why does it feel like He is asleep? Why does it feel like He is unaware?
- **IS IT ME?** Questioning, Self-Examining, Wondering, Confessing, Praying.
- “Is it I, Lord?” - disciples around the Last Supper table at Passover after He says one of them will betray Him (Matt 26:20-21)
- Is there sin in my causing this storm? Is this God's discipline? Is it my fault? Could I have done something better?
- *So many questions in the midst of the storm*

- **WHY ME? WHY US? WHY NOW?** Frustrated, Confused - from strength to weakness, why so much pain, time & energy wasted, suffering, the medicines, the appointments, the limitations, the real likelihood of shorter lifespans, the uncertainty of each day - Another blood clot? Another torn artery? Another stroke? More brain damage? Death?
- Is this God's testing? - like God testing Abraham?
- Is Satan attacking? - like Satan attacking Job?
- "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." (Genesis 50:20)
- Is m faith too small - like the disciples in the boat with Jesus - Is Jesus questioning me, saying "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" (Matt 8:26)
- Can we say - and mean it - like Job "The Lord gives & the Lord takes away.... Shall we accept good from the Lord and not evil?" (Job 1:21 & 2:10)
- Can we finish - no matter the outcome - by saying - an meaning it "Blessed be the name of the Lord"
- *So many questions in the midst of the storm*
- **HOW WILL WE _____?** Take all of the next steps...
- like Abraham, "not knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8) move forward to follow God's plan? without knowing exactly where we'll land
- Sadness. Fear. Loneliness. Worry. So many emotions.
- How will Brittney go on without me?
- How will I go on without her?
- How will our girls go on me? Without her? Without both of us?
- Will we choose - to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7)
- Will we, like the apostles, say "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5)
- Will we refuse to be anxious about tomorrow, remembering "Sufficient is the day for its trouble" (Matt 6:34)
- *So many questions in the midst of the storm*

- **HELP ME. HELP HER. HELP THEM.**
- Feel so helpless. Take all of the medicines. Get to all of the specialists. But still long-term, so much uncertainty.
- Calling out in desperation. But storms keep arising. The dark clouds of suffering still loom overhead.
- Will we, like the father of a tormented, suffering son say "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)
- Will we remember that no-one, "by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" (Matt 6:27) To My life? To Brittney's life? To our daughter's lives?
- Will I say with confidence, "Is anything too hard for the Lord"(Gen 18:14)
- *So many questions in the midst of the storm*
- **I TRUST YOU**
- I can be so self-focused. I can try to be so independent. To trust in my strength, abilities, intellect.
- I can so easily forget the presence and power of our Creator.
- Will I marvel, like the disciples in the boat with Jesus, "that even the winds and the sea obey Him" (Matt 8:27)
- Will it be said of my, "I know that you fear God" (Genesis 22:12) "You have not withheld your _____" (wife, self, daughters) Will I trust God? Even in the midst of the storm?
- *So many questions in the midst of the storm*
- **I THANK YOU**
- I see - Isaac Given (Gen 21) then Isaac Offered back (Gen 22)
- I see - The Lord provides - male lamb, ram, a better sacrifice - Jesus - I know "The Lord has blessed him [and me] in every way" (Gen 24:1)
- Will I thank God? Even in the midst of the storm? Even if my questions are not fully answered this side of Heaven?
- **MAKE THE MOST** - Every Day is a Gift
- Moriah - "to see", "to provide" - on the 3rd day
- Abraham - going up the Mt Moriah says "will go over there and worship and come again to you" (Gen 22:5)