

Stormy Voyages: Then and Now

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[Mark 6:45-53] Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. 46 And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. 47 Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. 48 Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. 49 And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; 50 for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." 51 Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. 52 For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened. 53 When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there.

In today's world, we journey in spiritual darkness amid stormy and turbulent events, much like the stormy voyages that the disciples of Jesus experienced twice in the Sea of Galilee. Lord Jesus wished to teach some important lessons to His disciples through the two voyages. I believe those lessons apply to us today also.

The first lesson was that Jesus wanted His disciples to see and believe that He is the God of Creation, who can control even the waves and winds of the sea. The first voyage was not long after He had chosen the twelve disciples. And they did not have firm faith in the identity of their Teacher. After the first stormy voyage, however, they came to marvel at the supernatural power of their Teacher and wondered, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him? [Matt 8:27]" Their faith started to grow as a result. After the second stormy voyage, they came to worship Him as the Son of God.

[Matt 14: 33] Then those who were in the boat [a]came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

If any of you do not yet believe in Jesus Christ or your faith in His identity is not firm, I encourage you to believe Him as the Son of God and the Savior of this world, not as a powerful teacher or a wise man who lived 2,000 years ago. He is God the Son who came to this world as a human to save you and me.

The second voyage, described above, occurred after He taught the crowd and fed over 5,000 people afterward miraculously in the hills of today's western Golan Heights. After Herod beheaded John the Baptist, Jesus left the west coast of Galilee and journeyed to the northeast area of the Sea of Galilee, which is only 4~5 miles from Capernaum, a distance less than 30 minutes of automobile travel in today's travel mode or a couple of hours of walking. The crowd ate the bread and fish that Jesus miraculously multiplied to feed them that afternoon. And they wanted to make Him their king. He knew of their intent, told the disciples to return to the western shore by boat, and went into the hills to pray alone.

The second lesson from this stormy voyage is that Jesus was praying for His disciples while they were toiling through the entire night over a short distance, which could have been covered in a couple of hours in a fair-weather situation. When we are going through hopelessly dark experiences today, seeing the evil forces wielding their powers in full swing, we sometimes wonder if God is in control. Some cry out in despair, "Where are you, God?" But, just as Lord Jesus was praying for His disciples alone in the hills while they were struggling with the storm in the sea, He is looking down to our situations from His glorious place in Heaven and interceding on our behalf as our High Priest.

[Hebrews 4: 14-16] Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Lord Jesus appeared before them walking on the waves during the darkest and toughest period of their voyage. They did not recognize Him at first and thought He was a ghost. Today, Lord Jesus is not with us physically.

Let us remember, however, that the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of Christ, is with us. Therefore, we need not despair but be confident of His care and concern for us. He said to His disciples, *“Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid [v. 50].”* He is saying the same to us today, *“Be of good cheer! I am with you; do not be afraid.”* Let our hearts be cheered as we confidently wait for His second coming in patience and be faithful with our mission.

Brothers and sisters in Christ! The darkness has only begun and will last for a while before His return. The evil forces of Satan have taken over the powers of many nations of the world, robbing our freedoms, harassing religious liberties, and making the people become sick and die using advanced biomedical technologies. The fourth watch the disciples struggled in started about four o’clock in the morning, the darkest period before the sunrise. We have entered such a dark period, perhaps the darkest period in human history. However, let us be comforted by the hymn, *“Light after Darkness.”*

1. *Light after darkness, gain after loss, strength after weakness, crown after cross, sweet after bitter, hope after fears, home after wandering, praise after tears*
2. *Sheaves after sowing, sun after rain, sight after mystery, peace after pain, joy after sorrow, calm after blast, rest after weariness, sweet rest at last.*

The third lesson is that Lord Jesus calmed the winds and the waves just as He came aboard the boat. And they reached their destination shore shortly. To us also, as this dark period comes to an end, Lord Jesus will return to the world and take us Christians to the glorious wedding ceremony prepared in Heaven. I believe that he intended to leave lessons for the disciples of all ages to come in the future including us today to endure the stormy experiences of life, holding onto the true faith, until the return of our Savior and King Jesus, just as His disciples did in the Sea of Galilee.

Let us remember our High Priest is praying for us and our struggles amidst the darkness in the world today will soon be over. Let the words of our Lord, *“Be of good cheer! I am with you; do not be afraid”* be of comfort and strength to our hearts as we confidently stride forward holding onto the true faith and belief in God’s saving plan and power. Amen.

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