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³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"
³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.
⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"
⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

When Storms Come, Remember Who's in your Boat

1. The all-powerful Son of God
2. Your loving Savior

Life is stormy. I don't have to tell you that. Most of you have been on earth a little longer than I have, and you've weathered more storms than I have. You've seen tough financial times, illnesses, loved ones die, sadness, physical and emotional pain. You can probably even think of a storm you're going through right now.

Life is stormy, but it shouldn't surprise you. God never promised that the sailing would be smooth. In fact, he said the opposite, didn't he? "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." That's God putting up a sign for you that says, "Caution: Rough Waters Ahead."

The question I want you to think about this morning is this: When storms come – when hardships pop up in your lives – how do you respond? In fear and doubt, or in faith? Does our reaction to life's problems always show a firm trust in God's promises, or is that trust sometimes lacking?

It was for the disciples in the gospel lesson this morning. When that storm hit on the Sea of Galilee, they reacted almost as if they had forgotten who was in the boat with them – Jesus, the all-powerful Son of God and their loving Savior.

And so, this morning, Jesus wants your trust. When storms come, no matter how hopeless the situation seems, he wants you to remember that he's in your boat, and he asks you to trust his power and love.

1. The all-powerful Son of God

It had already been a long day for Jesus and his disciples. Crowds had followed him out to the Sea of Galilee, and he had been curing diseases and driving out demons. So many people came that he had to teach from a boat so they could all see and hear him. Mark tells us, ³⁵ **That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."** ³⁶ **Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.** ³⁷ **A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.**

Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishermen, so they had probably been through storms before. I wonder if they thought they could handle it at first. They knew how to use a boat. But once the waves started breaking over the sides, and the boat started to sink under the weight of the water, even they started to panic.

You know, the first time I read through this, I really sympathized with the disciples. I bet you did, too. Have you ever been out on the open water when a storm comes up? I have, and it's not

fun. There's nowhere you can hide from the wind, waves, and lightning. You're completely exposed. Like me, I bet you were thinking to yourself, "Who wouldn't be scared in their situation?"

But maybe that tells us something about ourselves. Fear, worry, anxiety...maybe they've become so ingrained in our lives that we've lost sight of the fact that they're sinful. They show a lack of trust in God.

The truth is that these disciples really didn't have any reason to be afraid. Did they forget who was in the boat with them? Jesus - the all-powerful Son of God! They knew this. Just a few hours earlier, Jesus had shown them his divine power, healing diseases and driving out demons. Even the demons cried out, "You are the Son of God!" The disciples knew Jesus was perfectly able to rescue them.

Not only that, but they had Jesus' promises to cling to. He had told them they would be fishers of men, that they would preach the gospel in his name to the world. To keep that promise, he couldn't let them die in this storm.

So what happened? They focused on what they saw with their eyes – giant waves, gusts of wind, a boat seconds away from sinking – and they lost sight of what they knew by faith. And when that happened, their trust in Jesus' power and promises faltered.

Doesn't the same thing happen to us? When storms come, we don't have any reason to be afraid, either. We know that Jesus is with us. He promised us that: "Surely, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." We know that, as the ascended Son of God, all things are under his control. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," he said. There's no storm too big for him to still. And he will still every storm, once it's served his purpose for our lives.

We trust those things are true. But sometimes what we're going through challenges that trust. It could be a stack of bills on the kitchen counter that we have no idea how we're going to pay. It could be constant pain we're feeling, and the medicine doesn't help anymore. Whatever the problem, we focus on what we see with our eyes, and lose sight of what we know by faith. The problem gets bigger and bigger in our minds, and Jesus' power and promises get smaller and smaller. Our trust falters. We get scared. We worry. We feel overwhelmed.

Look how Jesus reacted in this storm. **Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion.** How could he sleep in a situation like this? Sure, he was tired. But he could sleep peacefully because he wasn't scared or worried. He trusted his heavenly Father perfectly – not just during this storm, but every moment of his life on earth. That's part of his work of saving you, isn't it? He trusted God perfectly in your place. His trust never faltered, even when he carried out the rest of his saving work for you: As he suffered on the cross for all of your sins. Because of what Christ did, your sins of fear and worry have been taken away; and not only that, but his perfect trust has been credited to your account. That's what God sees when he looks at you.

II. He's your loving Savior

When you see Jesus sleeping, that's what you see: Perfect trust. Jesus, your righteousness. But when the disciples saw Jesus asleep in the stern, they jumped to a different conclusion. Listen to what happened next: **The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"**

After the situation was completely out of their control, they did go to Jesus for help. But even their request was more like an accusation. What's at the heart of their question? Aren't they doubting Jesus' love for them? "Jesus, how can you be sleeping? Why haven't you done anything yet? Do our lives even matter to you?"

Look how Jesus lovingly and patiently responds. ³⁹ **He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.** ⁴⁰ **He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"** They still didn't understand who Jesus was, did they? Of course he loved them! He had come to earth to save them and everyone else from sin.

And even after he rescued them, they didn't trust his love. How would you expect them to respond? Bow down and worship him? Hug him, and thank him for saving them? But no, ⁴¹ **They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"**

It's easy for us to shake our heads and say, "Those disciples..." But we're sometimes just as hard-headed. Think back to the tough times you've been through, the suffering and pain you've experienced. Haven't you ever found yourself asking questions like, "Why, God? Why me? Why now?" Aren't those questions sometimes accusations, just like the disciples made? We're doubting God's love. Aren't we saying, "God, are you asleep up there? Don't you care what happens to me? Don't you love me?"

God's already given you your answer to those questions. The answer is Jesus. "For God so loved the world" – that's you – "that he gave his one and only Son..." Jesus set aside his throne in heaven and became a human being *for you*. He submitted to all of God's commands perfectly *for you*. He let sinful men accuse him of crimes he didn't commit, put up with their mocking and spitting and beating *for you*. He suffered hell on the cross *for you*. He did it all to calm your biggest storm – the sin and guilt that would have led to eternal death.

That's who's in your boat: Your Savior, who loved you that much. How could you ever doubt his love for you in your everyday life? How could you ever think that he'd let anything happen to you that isn't for your eternal good?

That's true even of suffering. God allowed that storm on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus didn't calm it until the last minute. Why? To draw his disciples closer to him, to teach them to trust him as their only help and their only Savior. The disciples didn't understand it right away, but think a few years down the road, when they were being persecuted and thrown in prison, beaten and even executed. Whatever hardship they faced, don't you think they could look back at that day on the Sea of Galilee and say, "Jesus is in control. He's the Son of God, and he loves me. He'll see me through this."

He does the same thing for you. He allows tough financial times like the ones we're facing right now. Why? Isn't he teaching you to rely on him as the true giver of all we have? He allows a loved one to die. Why? Isn't he reminding you of your sure hope of eternal life in Christ? He allows you to be sick. Why? Isn't he telling you, "I am the Great Physician of your body and soul; trust in me"?

And even if you don't understand the "why," trust that God knows best. He knows you better than you know yourself. Nothing that happens to you is pointless; Jesus is working through it all bring you to heaven with him someday.

As long as we're on earth, we can be sure we'll face more storms. And as much as we struggle, our trust will never be perfect. Fear and worry will pop up in our lives again and again. Jesus knows that. In his patient love for us, he tells us what to do when that happens. "Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you." Go to him in prayer. Don't wait until the situation gets out of your control, like the disciples did. Do it at the first gust of wind. Confess to him your fears and your worries; don't hide them. He can read your heart. Ask him to strengthen your trust in him. Lay your problems at his nail-pierced feet, and leave them there. Trust that, in his love, he'll do what's best for you. Amen.