

## **Jesus Calms Storms After Making Waves** **based on Luke 12:41-51, David Jahnke, 2/5/17**

I went fishing only once in the ocean. We got on my friends' boat headed out 20 miles or so in the Gulf of Mexico. After a few minutes, the waves got bigger. I had experienced white caps on Minnesota lakes but they were nothing like this. Up a few feet and slamming down into the waves...over and over and then some little bits of quick chop and then up again and again. It was frankly a bit scary. And I turned to my friend and asked if it was always like this. And he said today was actually calmer than usual.

Periods of history like ours are a bit like this boat ride. Wave after wave and we get bounced around and hope that nothing really bad happens. Part of you wonders about the captain of the boat. Does he really know what he is doing? Does he really know where he is going?

We wonder about the captains of our nation but we might also wonder the same thing about the captain of all creation. Are you awake up there? Things are getting a little rocky here. I think the captain is wanting us to hear that it is actually calmer than it has been for humanity throughout most of history.

Do you remember when Jesus was out on the Sea of Galilee with the disciples when a storm came up? Jesus was sleeping through the whole thing. The disciples had to wake him up. "Do something Jesus!" And Jesus scolded them and calmed the storm.

All this reminds us that God is not only above every storm but in them as well. God calms things in His good time but he also makes waves. He shakes things up in order that his children might sense His judgment and turn back to his saving ways.

Jesus continuously made waves. Today's parable begins with Peter asking if the parables are about the disciples too. Jesus answers with a parable! One about leaders being given a charge to care and provide for those under their charge and a Lord who will hold them accountable. And any manager or slave who knows what is good and right but does not do so, their punishment will be severe. The unknowing-- the less educated and trained morally-- will receive a less severe punishment.

Many of the leaders of Jesus' day were naturally disgruntled about this. They thought they were basically righteous and just and doing a good job of keeping order. If things were a mess below them, it was because the people were not; they did not follow the law well enough. And the answer was a more strict and severe enforcement of the Law. Jesus suggests that spreading knowledge and mercy is more important; this was the charge of leaders.

We have the same dynamics at work today. And those blessed with the knowledge and success to become leaders best heed Jesus' Word. Business leaders and other professionals are not just responsible for their companies, customers and clients. Politicians are not just responsible for their wealthy and powerful donors and constituents. There is something deeper than making and enforcing laws that keep order in a way that benefits the sufficiently blessed but hurts or does little to help the less fortunate. Jesus did not accept this from the leaders of his day and His Spirit will not accept it now.

And I do not see this as a particularly partisan issue. The blue-collar base of President Trump's supporters along with Bernie Sanders' success point to a new populism. People are fed up with the rich getting richer while everyone else's incomes have been flat. Everyone is frustrated with corporations leaving the country and government failing to address their needs. People wanted someone to make waves and they knew that these candidates would do just that.

And now it's happening. Waves are being made both by President Trump and by those who are protesting against some of his measures. And the last thing Christians should do is panic or let fear take over. This is what the disciples did as Jesus slept through the storm and his response was, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" When we are governed by fear and anxiety, we only worsen the situation.

And because God is above and beyond and within every storm, our basic comfort and our primary job is to trust in God through it all. The rather controversial words of Jesus that he did not come to bring peace but rather division should actually be a profound comfort in times like these. It says that God, as a source of righteous division, is at work in powerful and dramatic ways. And we have to figure out how and then get on board!

We do not have to like the storm and, in fact, we should lament much of it and cry out to God to take care of things. This is what Job did as his life was crumbling all around him. And God came to him in the storm with no great rational explain-it-all answer but with a revelation that GOD WAS and IS and IS TO COME. He is the creator and redeemer of everything.

Most of you have heard a version of my testimony so forgive the redundancy. This same word came to me as my self-sufficient life and worldview were crumbling around me. I needed rational answers and resolution and what I got instead was a clear Word that "Everything that happened to you as of late is for the sake of this; that you would come to know me. You do not need a rational reason for what is happening. I am...the reason." The revelation of God was the reason for the storm in my life. And this very personal thing is happening now on a grander scale in world history. God is revealing himself, drawing clear lines and calling us to choose Him time and again.

He is dividing what he wants to divide. He is separating truth from the lies all around us. You have heard about the prevalence of fake news? You have noticed how so much “real news” itself is spectacle combined with talking heads? Friends, the truth of God is breaking through if we are willing to investigate and study and pray hard enough to wade through the mire.

When anger turns to hatred and violence, God draws the line and again and cries out “No!” God has absolutely nothing to do with the masked anarchists turning peaceful protests into fearful riots and God has absolutely nothing to do with lies being told about Muslims and Mexicans. God has everything to do with compassion and justice and the growing unity among the peoples of the earth which I saw on display in a wonderfully peaceful protest in Paterson the other night. Jews, Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, Latinos, African-Americans all standing together and lifting up Love as the essential answer to the world’s problems. How great it was to stand with the peoples of God and lift up together this foundational biblical truth!

Pay attention friends...hear the author of Hebrews who says, “The word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” The judgment here is regarding our hearts, not our heads. So where is your heart?

In this time of God’s revelation, we have a clear choice between what is of His Kingdom and what is not. And while it is true that God is with and for you, He is also with and for the world and all its peoples. So we need to choose wisely. We have to listen to Christ’s clarion call to live fearlessly and love lavishly and incessantly.

Because the division he is ultimately bringing is between those who are following him into the Kingdom of Heaven and those who are not; it’s about those who are encouraging others to head to the Kingdom through their love, hospitality, care and the sharing of their knowledge and resources...and those who are not. So allow Jesus to be your shepherd in every little and big decision...and you will enjoy the fruits of life in His perfect Kingdom, now and forevermore.

