

Robert Fulghum has this list of things he confessed to his children once they were adults: I used the wok once to change the oil in the car. ***I used the kitchen-sink sponge to clean my shoes. ***Sometimes I said the coffee I made was decaf when it wasn't. ***Yes, it was me who ate all the chocolate chips. ***I deliberately left price tags on presents sometimes. Even raised them. ***I always took a private cut of the money Grandma sent for Christmas. ***I lied when I said you looked beautiful when you were a teenager. ***When I did the cooking, what I said wasn't left-overs often was. ***Remember when all the old, white underwear turned pink in the wash? It wasn't an accident. ***I know who took money out of my wallet. ***But I know you know who took money out of the piggy banks. ***At times I said I missed you when, in fact, I was glad to be alone for a while. ***The hamsters didn't die from old age. (SECOND THOUGHTS FROM A SECRET LIFE, p. 13-14) HAPPY FATHER'S DAY TO ALL OF YOU WHO KNOW THAT BLESSING! We will have a special blessing for you at the end of Mass.

First, a little background on this gospel text. Understanding the Old Testament images of raging waters is important to unlocking this text. The power to control the seas and subdue storms belongs to God (see Ps 89:8-9; Ps 93:3-4). Controlling the seas also reminds us of God's divine action in the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus. Storms are also used as metaphors for evil forces active in the world, evil forces from which only God can save (Ps 69:1-2, 14-15)

Throughout the Old Testament, sleep is also an important image. The gift of being able to sleep untroubled and peacefully is the sign that one can trust in God's power (Proverbs 3:23-26).

These 2 Old Testament images powerfully overlap with Jesus' sleeping as the storm rages around the frightened disciples. His faith in God's power to keep Him safe remains strong, unlike the panicked disciples. They have little faith. Their faith is so different from Jesus' untroubled faith that they mistake it for careless indifference – an interesting contrast that will come later in Mark's gospel when the disciples sleep in the garden of Gethsemane, with careless indifference to what is about to happen to Jesus.

Unlike most of Mark's miracle stories, which feature a plea for deliverance or help, this miracle occurs only after they accuse Jesus of being indifferent. The disciples use the words humans often use to address God when terrified or suffering "Do you not care?" Then Jesus "woke up" the text says. It is the same word used for "arose" on Easter morning – which may be a significant fore-word to the end of this gospel. (adapted from HOMILETICS ONLINE, p. 6 of 20 June 2021 installment)

Jesus "rebukes" the wind with a twofold command "Silence! Be still!" This means Jesus doesn't just calm the storm – He TAMES it, overpowers it by rebuking the wind and ordering silence. We are reminded that He did the same thing, using the same verbs, back in Capernaum with the evil spirits at the beginning of this Gospel (Mk 1:25)

The Sea of Galilee separated the peoples of one shore from those on the other side. The sea provided sustenance for Galileans and generated resources for Galileans and Rome and kept Jews and Gentiles apart. It is important to note that Jesus crisscrosses the sea a number of times in Mark's Gospel. He will be constrained by neither nature nor our borders. When we find Him working along various borders, time and again we will see Him go to the 'other side.'

When this episode ends and Jesus gets to the other side (Mk 5:1), He will not leave His disciples. He will stick with them, even though they have found it difficult to comprehend and follow Him. Jesus keeps

beckoning His disciples to risk, to let down their guard, to come on and join Him in the boat, showing that He will deliver them from destruction if need be (Mk 1:16-20; 2:14-15; 3:14).

“Who is this?” our text asks. This is Jesus, Lord of all, who leads us into the storm and saves us from perishing. Jesus does indeed care for us – but not always in the way we want. (Adapted from PULPIT RESOURCE, April-June 2021, p. 36-37)

The applications of this text to our lives are many. Second – everyone goes through storms in life. EVERYONE. No matter how old, wealthy, or holy and faithful. Or NOT holy or faithful. One storm may be a problem marriage. The American Institute of Stress has a tool called the Holmes-Rahe Stress Inventory that ranks certain life events in terms of their negative impact on a person’s life. “Death of a spouse” ranks as the most stressful life event in the inventory, with divorce and marital separation as the second and third most stressful life events anyone can face.

A healthy marriage is vitally important to most people’s sense of identity, security and well-being. When a marriage falls apart, the partners can go through the same stages of grief as someone whose spouse has died.

Author and speaker Laura Petherbridge refers to divorce as the “soul deep accuser.” After her husband had an affair and ended their marriage, Laura contemplated suicide. She says she knew she could not survive such pain without God, yet she felt such shame that she wanted to hide from Him too. She felt unworthy to come to God for help when she most desperately needed to be assured of His love. As she writes, “....rejection hauntingly whispers, ‘You are a loser. You are unlovable. You are a failure. You deserve to be alone. Life is over. You will never be loved again.’”

A number of you know this pain. But most marriages face a storm of some kind over the years. Some marriages don’t make it through the storm, and the wreckage can be devastating.

The loss of a loved one is also a terrible storm with devastating effects. William Sloane Coffin was a very popular and influential pastor whose son Alex died in a car accident. He says that he received lots of cards and phone calls and visits from friends and church members and fellow pastors. And most of them had no idea how to comfort him. He said the least helpful people were his fellow pastors. They quoted the Bible to him a lot. But they didn’t understand his grief. As he said, “...the depth of my grief made those words unreal.”

The worst part is that Jesus seems to be asleep. Why doesn’t He intervene? we cry out in our distress. Where is God? Do you not care that we perish?

Reynolds Price, in his book LETTER TO A MAN ON FIRE tells of getting a letter from a young man named Jim who had just been diagnosed with cancer. Price had survived his own bout with cancer a few years earlier, and Jim was writing to him because he knew Price would understand his fear and his questions. Jim wrote, “I want to believe in a God who cares....because I may meet Him sooner than I had expected. I think I am at the point where I can accept the existence of God....but I can’t yet believe God cares about me.”

“I want to believe in a God who cares about me.” That’s the issue we will all wrestle with sometime in our lives. And if God does care about us, why does He let the storm happen? I believe we can see the answer in today’s lesson.

So, third and finally, the story in Mark's Gospel is an affirmation – YES, Jesus does care. When the storms of life are raging, He does care. When it seems we cannot hold on a moment longer, He does care. When the waters threaten to engulf, He does care.

Remember this: Jesus had all the power in heaven and earth available to Him. He chose to empty Himself of His power and take on the life of an average man. He chose to endure hardship. He chose to endure oppression from the Roman government and rejection from the religious establishment and His own family. He chose to be hungry, to be lonely, to be poor, to be abandoned and betrayed by His closest friends. He chose to suffer wrongful arrest and torture and humiliation and death. Jesus chose to place Himself into every imaginable storm because He had faith that God was using these storms for a greater purpose, for the salvation of the world. Jesus chose to place Himself into every imaginable storm because He knew God was with Him every step of the way. That's how He could face down every storm without fear.

The central question in life is not how many storms we must pass through. The question is how we respond. All of us will encounter storms. Sometimes it will seem as if God has forsaken us. It is at such times that we need to remember this story.

A few years ago, a woman named Chastity Patterson lost her father. After his death, Chastity continued to send daily text messages to his old phone number. She just wanted to feel like he was still there, still sharing the ups and downs of her daily life. It was her way of dealing with a storm of grief. For 4 years, she sent daily text updates to her father's old phone number. And then one day, she got a reply.

Just before the 4th anniversary of Chastity's father's death, she received this text from his old number: "My name is Brad and I lost my daughter in a car wreck August 2014 and your messages have kept me alive. When you text me, I know it's a message from God." Brad texted that he was proud of how Chastity had managed the challenges in her life over the last 4 years. Chastity posted their text exchange to social media to show her friends and family "that there is a God and it might take 4 years, but He shows up right on time!"

That's what the disciples learned from their struggles in the storm: there is a God and He shows up right on time. We are invited to believe in a God who loves us and has promised to never forsake us. We are invited to believe that however dark the clouds may be, behind those clouds, the sun still shines. We are invited to believe that beyond every cross, there is an empty tomb. This is how we can weather the storm, however severe. May God open our eyes to His ever-faithful, ever-loving presence. Amen. (adapted from DYNAMIC PREACHING, May-August 2021, p. 40-41)