



grow. pray. study.

May 12, 2024 *In a Boat, at Night, Battered by the Storm*

Scripture: Matthew 14:22-33 (CEB)

Boats: routine transportation in Galilee

MONDAY 5.13.24 John 6:23-25, Matthew 9:1, 13:2

In inland Leawood, Kansas, “the lake” or “the boat” most often brings up mental images of relaxation and fun in a resort-type atmosphere. In Jesus’ day, for most of the people who lived in Galilee, “lake” and “boat” were matter of fact daily realities about “work” more than relaxation. Today, most of us “jump in the car” without thinking that’s anything very exotic. For most Galileans, “getting in the boat” was less a special event than a practical way to get around.

- One big difference in the boats that sailed on Galilee from most of today’s small craft: the boats on Galilee had no motors. In ideal conditions, they might have had sails, but often oars were the only source of moving the boat through waves or currents. ([Click here](#) for information and pictures of an actual boat from Jesus’ day recovered from the Sea of Galilee.) In what ways can you make your “ordinary” means of transportation available for Jesus’ kingdom?
- Boats in Galilee were small, so they could be a controlled space. Matthew 13:2 (like [Luke 5:1-3](#)) showed Jesus using a boat as a teaching platform. It gave him space from a gathered crowd yet was close enough that people could hear him clearly. At times the boat was a personal refuge: ““In the Gospels, Jesus frequently enters a boat on the Sea of Galilee in order to escape the crowds ([Mk 3:9, 4:1](#)).” * Even Jesus sometimes needed a “safe” space. What are yours?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I sometimes forget that your life was not like a movie filled with constant intense scenes. Thank you for being with me on my “ordinary” days as well as the more dramatic ones.
Amen.

* Article “Boat” in Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III, general editors, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998, p. 102.

Jesus sleeping in the face of a storm

TUESDAY 5.14.24 Luke 8:22-25

Jesus' followers who'd fished Galilee for a living knew a lot about that landlocked lake. Its location fed stormy weather. "The valleys tend to funnel the winds down onto the Sea of Galilee causing violent storms. Winter storm winds reaching speeds of 75 mph have been measured in the hills of Galilee." * The disciples controlled the boat as long as they could. As the vessel started to fill with water and the storm remained relentless, they realized Jesus was the only one who could save them. And he did.

- As the disciples in their small wooden vessel battled the choppy sea and fierce winds, it was natural for them to feel frantic and afraid facing this situation beyond their control. On top of that, Jesus was asleep, seemingly unaware of their dire danger! Have you ever faced a storm—a time when your life was uncertain, scary, and out of your control? During this time, did you wonder at times if God was "asleep"? What helped you sense God's presence with you even then?
- [Hebrews 13:5](#) quoted [Deuteronomy 31:6](#)'s promise that God will never leave or forsake us. When the disciples woke Jesus, he demonstrated God's power by calming the storm in a way that led them to "awe and wonder." What are some stories, Bible passages, or past personal experiences that can strengthen your faith by reminding you that we serve an all loving, always present God? Can you trust that God never leaves us and always cares about what we are going through?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I'd always prefer that you calm the storms that blow into my life. But thank you, not only for the times you make things outside me better for but for always holding and calming me no matter what I'm facing. Amen.

* J. Carl Laney, article "Galilee" in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016

Master of the waters (even without a boat)

WEDNESDAY 5.15.24 Matthew 14:21-26

Herod had just executed John the Baptizer, and Jesus sought solitude as he dealt with his grief over John's death (cf. [Matthew 14:13](#)). The crowds followed him, though, and he ended up miraculously feeding over 5,000 people. He again went to be alone, while the disciples sailed to the other side of the lake. Due to another storm, he set out to rescue the disciples, "walking on the lake." Seeing a figure walking toward them on the water completely unnerved them.

- The story began with a sense of urgency: "**Right then**, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat" (verse 22). John's gospel said that after he fed 5,000 people, Jesus had to avoid a crowd eager to forcibly declare him a military leader and king (see [John 6:15](#)). Have you ever had to take urgent action to stay in tune with God's purposes for your life? Are you facing any pressures like that today?
- In Jesus' day, many Jews believed that the Sea of Galilee was so deep it held a portal to the "underworld." "On a popular level, many Gentiles and probably a number of Jews believed in ghosts, although such a belief technically contradicted mainstream Jewish views of the afterlife (heaven or hell and future resurrection)." * What fears, if any, do you deal with based on popular culture, even though they may not fit into your mind's grasp of Jesus' teachings?

Prayer: O God, keep me open to your presence in my world and my life. If you show yourself in an unexpected way, help me to welcome you with joy rather than with fear. Amen.

* NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (Kindle Locations 220067-220068). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

When faith and fear battle

THURSDAY 5.16.24 Matthew 14:27-34, Psalm 107:26-31

“Literally, Jesus says, ‘I am’;... the activity in the context supports an allusion to Jesus’ deity (cf. [Exodus 3:14](#), where the same Greek phrase used in...the pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT, is used here also).” * Peter showed his very human mix of faith and doubt: “Lord, if it’s you, order me to come to you on the water.” It worked—he was striding across the water! Then he noticed the strong wind, fear took over, and he lost focus on Jesus.

- Psalm 107:26-31’s picture of God quieting a storm on the sea had particular power for the Hebrew people, for whom the sea’s tumult was a symbol of fearful chaos only God could tame (cf. [Psalm 74:13-17](#), [Psalm 89:9-12](#)). Our world still faces many “storms” (e.g. war in Ukraine, repeated mass shootings, untreatable illnesses). Have you seen God bring peace in any way during such storms and their aftermath? If so, list ways you’ve seen or still see God work for good in tragic situations.
- Identify one big life “storm” you’ve personally had to live through. Did you want Jesus to just make the problem(s) go away? Did you have any sense Jesus was with you even if the storm itself continued? Scott Krippayne sang, “Sometimes He calms the storm, And other times He calms His child.” ** In which of those ways has Jesus most often supported you in life’s storms? When have you had the privilege of helping to share Jesus’ calm with someone else amid a storm?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, at times I’m riding high, walking toward you in faith! At times my fears distract me and take my eyes off you. Remind me that your love and salvation are always in reach, even when I feel as though I’m sinking. Amen.

* NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (p. 8448). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

** Lyric from “Sometimes He Calms the Storm.” Songwriters: Benton Kevin Stokes, Tony W. Wood © Universal Music Publishing Group, Capitol Christian Music Group.

Jesus encountered human “storms,” too

FRIDAY 5.17.24 John 10:22-33, 37-39

John described the behavior of Jesus’ foes in aggressive, storm-like language, writing that they “circled around him.” (That was not a unique happening—cf. [Luke 4:16-29](#)). They asked a serious-enough question: “If you are the Christ (Greek for “anointed one,” i.e. the Messiah), tell us plainly.” The problem was that they’d already settled on a negative answer. When Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (verse 30), they picked up stones with the intention of stoning him to death!

- What made the question Jesus’ circling opponents asked (“How long will you test our patience? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly”) ring hollow? Were Jesus’ claims about himself evasive or fuzzy, or were they just so big that his enemies refused to grapple with them? Do you believe Jesus was more than a good teacher and wise man; that he was all he claimed to be?
- Jesus challenged his enemies: “If I don’t do the works of my Father, don’t believe me. But if I do them, and you don’t believe me, believe the works so that you can know and recognize that the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (verses 38-39). Jesus said we can tell the difference between false and true prophets by the kind of fruit they bear ([Matthew 7:16-20](#)). What kind of “fruit” could the people see in Jesus’ own life? Do you assess others by whether they speak and think as you do, or by the kind of fruit you see their life bearing?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I want to bear fruit that honors and glorifies you. Plant the seed of your word in my heart, and grow it into a life that nourishes life in others. Amen.

Jesus: the eternal God who gives peace in even the worst storms

SATURDAY 5.18.24 Psalm 89:8-9, John 14:27, 16:33

We don't always think of it this way (much religious imagery over centuries has softened it), but Jesus faced the most horrible "storm" possible. The Roman Empire executed him in a degrading, painful, humiliating way (cf. [Luke 22:44](#), [Mark 15:16-20](#), [John 19:1-7](#), [Luke 23:35-38](#)). We may know Mark 15:34 said that on the cross, Jesus quoted [Psalm 22:1](#): "Jesus cried out with a loud shout, 'Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani,' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you left me?'" But that same [Psalm 22](#) ended in triumph: "Future descendants will serve him; generations to come will be told about my Lord. They will proclaim God's righteousness to those not yet born, telling them what God has done." On the eve of that awful execution, Jesus said his peace had "conquered the world." Even in that "storm," a hardened Roman centurion could see that peace: "When the centurion, who stood facing Jesus, saw how he died, he said, 'This man was certainly God's Son'" (Mark 15:39).

- Madeleine l'Engle said many resist Christianity because it is "too wild and free for the timid. How many of us really want life, life more abundant.... life which does not promise the absence of pain, or love which is not vulnerable and open to hurt?" * Scholar Alister McGrath said in Jesus' death we see that God doesn't always stop storms right away yet is still with us: "Many Christians are confused and upset because they do not experience God as present and active in the world. Imagine... the disciples on that first Good Friday.... hoping for a miracle. Yet there seemed to be no trace of God's presence or activity at Calvary.... Jesus died.... Those around the cross didn't experience God's presence, so they concluded he was absent. The resurrection overturned that judgment: God **was** present in a hidden manner." ** What are your reasons for choosing a life "which does not promise the absence of pain" but **does** promise peace even when storms blow?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, your servant Paul wrote about "the peace of God that exceeds all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). Give me that peace even when my understanding cannot process the "storm" I or those I love are facing. Amen.

* Madeleine l'Engle, *Walking on Water* (p. 40). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

** Alister McGrath, *I Believe: Exploring the Apostles' Creed*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1997, pp. 68-69.

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