

072521 Sermon John 6:16-21 "Take Heart. It is I. Do Not Be Afraid."

The story from today's Scripture is written in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John. According to the Gospels in the New Testament, there were two times when a storm in the sea put Jesus' disciples in danger. One was Jesus sleeping under the boat and hearing the cry of his disciples and calming the wind and the sea. The other was today's scripture, "Jesus walked on the water". First of all, what would be the message of these two?

Even if Jesus is in a boat, or even if Jesus is not in a boat, a storm could come in our lives. These days, there are exceptionally many natural disasters around the world. I cannot help but remind myself of the very last day that the Bible warns us. Hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires, and all-time high heat, and flooding... COVID-19, which is still prevalent, countless news weighs on our hearts. All of us are living these days when the words goodbye during the night come to life. So how are you? Is your life voyage cruising? Or are you experiencing a storm?

As I said earlier, whether or not you trust in Jesus well, storms come without fail. Do you know the greater reason this storm was taken as surprise to Jesus' disciples in today's story? Because they obeyed the word of the Lord, this sea (I mean the Lake of Galilee, which was called the sea because it was so big to people at that time) It was a storm that they met while obeying the word of the Lord. As I mentioned earlier, this story is written in three Gospels. The Gospel of Matthew contains the most detailed information. In Matthew Chapter 14 verse 22 says, "Immediately **Jesus made the disciples get into the boat** and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd." Just before the beginning of today's Bible story, there was a miracle that Jesus fed the multitude with five loaves and two

fish. At that time, if you counted the number of men only, the number was over 5,000. If you add women, children, and the elderly, the number was probably well over 20,000. Can you imagine that scene? Many people were with Jesus and Jesus dismissed the crowd. Meanwhile, Jesus purposely sent his disciples on a boat first.

There will be difficulty in life whether or not you keep worship life well, read the Bible in a regular way, pray every day. Would it be unfair if we face difficult things because we are working hard in our faith? Usually, if people are far from God and face difficulties, people are farther away from God. People who have stood in the faith will rather pray more about what God means even if difficulties arise. Today, I bless you not to be far from God until you have finished your journey on earth. That's the greatest blessing! Nearer to God. Storm or no storm, nearer to God!

Now, we need to remember that in the message today, this storm was a storm the disciples met while obeying the words of Jesus. It is true that the storm is no exception to the path of faith and obedience. So, what's the lesson from this storm in the Lake of Galilee?

Looking at today's passage, after Jesus performed the miracle of five loaves of bread and two fish, he went alone to pray and then walked on the sea and came to the boat where his disciples were. At that time, there was a storm in the sea, but the disciples said they were afraid because of the storm, and when they saw Jesus, they were terrified again! They were afraid and yelled out, "Yikes, it is a ghost!" Then, the Lord said, " Take heart! It is I. Do not be afraid." I believe our Lord Jesus will speak to you today! "Take heart! It is I. Do not be afraid."

And Peter makes a famous saying here. "Lord, if it is you, command me to come on the water!" The other disciples were feared and couldn't say anything, but Peter boldly spoke to Jesus. Obviously, Peter is special. Isn't it? However, while Peter was walking on the water to go to Jesus and looked at the Lord, he didn't fall into the water, but looking at the storm was scary, so after losing sight of the Lord, he fell into the water. Quite often, we too can be afraid of the situation and reality. We have no choice but to fall in fear. In such a case, we need to look back on the Lord.

Finally, Peter was drowning and suffering so he said, "Lord, save me," confessing that his faith was weak. Jesus rescued Peter as if raising a fallen child by the hand and said, "Why did you doubt, you of little faith?"

In Mark 6:52, it is written about the reason why the disciples were afraid. "For they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened." The loaves mean the miracle of Jesus feeding the multitude with the five loaves and two fish. It didn't happen a month ago, nor was it a week ago. Even though it had happened within 24 hours, the disciples had completely forgotten about it because of the storm.

You see, when there is a storm, it is so easy to forget the grace that God has entrusted in our life even if it wasn't a long time ago, and God just accomplished something really gracious. Nevertheless, our minds easily become dull. Jesus' disciples were the same. "Because their hearts have become hardened..."

"Being hardened" here means that we have become insensitive to God's work, so if we don't want our hearts to be dull, in other words, the best way not to become dull spiritually is to remember what God has done, every day.

That is to say, getting closer to the word of the Bible! All these words are stories of God's work through the people of faith!

The Bible consistently speaks to us. What we should be afraid of is not the storm, but that we are constantly missing the Lord. Today's message is this: We are anxious and afraid of the situation. We think that now everything is over! But that's not it! We need to continue to ask ourselves. "Am I even trying to become conscious of God's presence? Am I living with the word of the Lord? Do I still lift my eyes of faith and look at the Lord? Is it well with my soul?" Then there are no worries even in the storm. This is because the Lord, who worked in the past, will eventually silence this storm. I don't know how many times I miss the Lord even when I pay attention. We must put all our attention and effort into being with the Lord.

The disciples have seen in their lives that a big storm that can become completely calm in an instant, so the disciples couldn't hide their surprise. Today, the Bible testifies that our Lord is the true Son of God, who has the power to rule over nature. And before this story Jesus power over diseases, and over the spirits.

But there is something really interesting; diseases obey the Lord, demons have to follow what Jesus said, and nature obeys, specifically, the wind and the sea obey, but why can't we as humans obey the Lord's words? Why is it so hard to obey? You need to think about it. In many cases, we pray that there will be no storms or only calmness, but do we really pray for God's presence so earnestly?!!! We ask the absence of a storm. We ask the absence of a problem. We wish there are only calmness. However, the Lord watches us even today to see if we look up with our eyes of faith toward Jesus.

In the conclusion of today's story, verse 21 says, "Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going." If we look for this conclusion in the Gospel of Matthew, it ends like this. Matthew Chapter 14 verse 33 says, "Then those who were in the boat **worshiped him**, saying, "Truly you are **the Son of God**." Through this miracle, the disciples of Jesus praised that Jesus is truly the Son of God.

I pray that the storms of life that we all go through will end with praise and worship as in today's story. Even if the economy is difficult, COVID-19 and its variants frighten us, I hope that in the end we will not go to resentment, complaining, and disbelief, but to praise to the Lord.

I heard this story while watching a Korean Christian shows before. The host of the show was a famous Korean comedian. Young-Hoon Joo. Anyway, he recently bought a musical instrument at a store in Seoul Korea, and the owner at the musical instrument store said, "We would be starving to death if it weren't for churches. All of the instruments people buy these days are for churches. If it's not for the church, everyone in this business will starve!" The moment he heard that, what came to mind was, "Wow, that's right! Maybe this guy is exaggerating but all instruments in this world are made to praise God. And it is said that the human voice is the most beautiful instrument, and that instrument exists in this world to praise God. This is the most important thing!" The show host got this important realization from the owner of the musical instrument store.

Dear Beloved sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, do you praise God still? The stormy environment never matters if our Lord is with us! I pray that you

can hold onto today's message that it is not a problem of storms, but that of not being with the Lord, not looking up to the Lord! I pray that your heart will not become hardened because of the storm. Please remember, whether there is a storm or no storm, we will worship and praise God in the end. Jesus still says to us, "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid!" Then, not only will the storm be silent, but we will also confess our faith just like the disciples who were afraid in the beginning. "Truly you are **the Son of God!**" Amen.