

## **Shipwrecked & Rescued: 2. Peace in the Storm**

**Mark 4:35-41**

**June 17, 2018**

**Pastor Tami Luckhardt and Jeanine Johnson**

### **Pastor Tami Luckhardt**

The summer before I entered the 6th grade, my family moved from a small town in Massachusetts to sunny Southern California. Because my father was in the military, we had moved every 4 years but this was to be the last move for our last family. Once we were settled in, dad signed up for sailing lessons. I think he was trying to fully embrace his new So Cal culture. So every Saturday for a few months, my dad would head out for sailing instructions. Then, one Saturday morning, having successfully completed the introductory level of instruction, dad announced that he was going to take my younger sister, Lisa and I out for a sail. We were excited to go and at first things went well. It was a partly cloudy day, the winds were calm and there was hardly a boat in the harbor. That should have been our first clue! We headed out soon the sky darkened, the winds increased and wall of dark cloud rolled in upon us... and it began to rain. Dad turned us back around and we headed back in we didn't get very far. Before we knew it, our little dingy was stuck, tossing to and fro, stuck between two massive navy vessels. And no matter which ropes we pulled or loosened, and no matter which direction Dad swung the bow, he could not get us back into port. Fortunately for us, the Coast Guard is really good at their job and when a storm like this rolls in, they head out looking for folks like us. Through a bullhorn they announced, "Drop the sail and grab this line." My dad grabbed the line and tied to a cleat and in we went. We were had been rescued from the storm!

Today's gospel story tells of a rescue at sea, on the Sea of Galilee -- a very important place in Jesus' ministry. The Bible mostly tells us about the last three years of Jesus's life when he was in ministry and most of it is spent in and around water. The Sea of Galilee is the lowest body of freshwater on our planet. It is 680 feet below sea level and because of the surrounding hills, sudden, unexpected storms are a common occurrence.

How many of you, like me and just love to be near water? Maybe up at the lake or near the ocean? There is something about water that is captivating to us. Growing up in San Diego, there is no place where I feel closer to God than when I am walking along the beach at the ocean. It is there where I feel at peace and connected with God. It was the same for Jesus. 43 times in the Gospels, the word "boat" is mentioned. Jesus clearly loved being near the water, fishing with the disciples, going in and out of boats, crossing the sea and ministering to people.

In this story, Jesus has just spent the day in the town of Capernaum, teaching and healing the sick and he is exhausted. It was night time, they have had their supper and as the sun is going down, Jesus says, "Let's get in the boat and go to the other side." The disciples are used to fishing at night because at night, it is difficult for the fish to see their nets. So they head out and Jesus immediately falls asleep. But while they are about to the middle of the lake, a furious squall comes up. The disciples are terrified and Jesus is still sleeping.. on a cushion! So they say, "Jesus, we're going down. Don't you care?" Jesus wakes up, looks at them and responds, "Don't you get it yet? Didn't you just see me cast out demons, restore sight to the blind and heal the lame so that they could walk again with just my touch? Do you really think we're going to drown out here? I'm in the boat with you!" And just to be sure they get it, he got up and cried out, "QUIET! Be still." And suddenly, the wind dies down and the waves are calm.

Gospel stories are written to help us understand who God is and here we see the disciples actually asking, "Who is this man? Even the wind and the waves obey him?" (Mark 4:41) They

are starting to get it. They know from their Hebrew Bible that there is only One Force who controls nature. Psalm 89:9 says, "You rule over the surging sea: When its waves rise up, it's you who makes them still." They are beginning to figure it out that the man in the boat is Emmanuel, God with us. God has come in the form of this man and it is God in their midst.

Sooner or later, we will all have to face storms in our lives, times when the seas get really rough, the waves threaten to capsize our boat and we're afraid we won't make it to the other side... and it is terrifying. But this story is reassuring us that Christ is already in the boat with us. He's sailing with us. But the promise is not that he's going to make everything okay or that we'll never have rough waters in our lives. The promise is that no matter what you are going through or how terrified you are Jesus says, "I will be with you. I will take care of you. The worst thing is never the last thing. Don't be afraid."

I'd like to introduce you to my friend and sister in Christ, Jeanine Johnson. She and her family have navigated a few storms in their lifetime and she has a powerful story of faith and hope to share with us this morning.

### **Jeanine Johnson**

Good morning! For those of you who don't know me, my name is Jeanine Johnson. My family and I have been attending Messiah since January of 2011. I am married to Scott and we have two children. Parker is 19 and this fall he will be a sophomore at North Dakota State University in Fargo, North Dakota, where he is studying architectural design. Faith is 14 and this fall she will be a freshman at Delano High School, studying all things...well...high school.

Several weeks ago Pastor Steve invited me to participate in today's service. And as I prepared for our time together this morning and reflected on the scripture we just read about Jesus and his disciples experiencing a storm, my thoughts kept wandering back to a recent storm I experienced.

This storm wasn't in a boat, it was in a car. It wasn't on a lake, it was on the freeway. It wasn't a raging thunder and rain storm, it was a snowstorm. And the passengers were not Jesus and his disciples, it was my son and me.

Parker had been home from school for a long weekend and since he didn't have classes on Monday we decided to drive up to Fargo that day. Although the weather predictions didn't sound ideal, it did seem as though the drive would be fairly manageable. We quickly found out otherwise. Although it wasn't the worst driving I've ever experienced, it certainly wasn't the best, either. Our plan had been for Parker to drive half of the way to Fargo and for me to drive the other half. However, Parker doesn't like driving much begin with, much less driving in inclement weather. So when I asked him if he wanted to get in the driver's seat for the first half of the ride, he responded with, "Yeah...no. I don't think I'm gonna want to drive in this."

So I drove. The drive was a mix of snow, wind, rain, and slush. Visibility was clouded in part because of the snow coming down but mostly because of slush spraying up on the windshield. I mentioned earlier that the passengers were only Parker and me, not Jesus and his disciples, but I've got to tell you...Jesus and I were having some serious conversations during that drive!

Parker, however, wasn't seem phased by any of this. In fact, at one point I looked over at him and he had his headphones in listening to music, and his passenger seat was reclined back to a relaxing, sleeping position and although I don't think he actually fell asleep, he was resting

comfortably with his eyes closed. He was completely oblivious to the conditions that surrounded us.

It was seeing him like this that I thought, "WOW! He has complete trust in me!"

My son trusted me so much during that awful drive that he was able to stay calm and relaxed. He knew I had more driving experience, more knowledge of how to navigate the roads, and that I had driven through conditions much worse than the one we were in. He knew that as his mom, I had only his best interest in mind and I would do everything I could to keep him safe.

Through the years I've learned that this is how God wants me trust Him, too. When the storms of life are raging, I can imagine him saying, "Jeanine...I've got more experience than you and I know how to navigate the roads of life. I have only your best interests in mind and I'll do everything in my power to keep you safe. Trust me."

It's taken several storms in the life of my family for me to be able to understand this...and more importantly, for me to believe and trust this. In the little over 25 years that Scott and I have been married and in our 19-plus years of parenthood, there have been a few storms. As I prepared for today, I went through the records I've kept on the happenings of our family over these past 25-plus years. I've never added all of it up at the same time, and I'll be honest, even I was a little surprised by the results. Here's how it breaks down:

- Scott has been diagnosed with three different types of cancer, not including the diagnosis of retina cancer he received as a child
- Two weeks after our wedding he began six months of chemotherapy
- In these 25 + years he has had approximately eleven different surgeries, none of them minor and many of them emergency-related
- Parker was diagnosed with retina cancer when he was four months old. His cancer was treated with lasers. But to keep him cancer-free his eyes had to be examined and treated while under anesthesia. He's had approximately 29 surgeries in 19 years
- Faith was born six weeks premature
- She was diagnosed with retina cancer when she was two days old
- Like Parker, her tumors were treated with lasers but she also required eleven months of chemotherapy that started when she was four days old
- When she was eleven months old she had radiation treatment on her left eye and when she was fifteen months old she had radiation treatment on her right eye
- The lasers and radiation destroyed her vision and she is completely blind in her left eye and she has limited vision in her right eye
- She, too, had to have her eyes examined and treated while under anesthesia to keep the tumors and the cancer from coming back. She's had approximately 47 surgeries in 14 years.
- Not to be left out, I experienced a few minor surgeries of my own
- Scott and I experienced the challenges of infertility and we mourned the loss of three unborn babies
- And starting in 2003, I was treated for anxiety...and...something I don't mention much...also depression
- So...if you were doing the math as I was sharing these experiences, you would have come up with a total of five cancer diagnosis, 90 surgeries, 3 miscarriages, anxiety and depression

Life doesn't always go the way we plan and hope, does it?

It was one Sunday morning in the spring of 2005 the main theme and message of that day's church service was from John, Chapter 9, verses 1-15. But it was specifically verses 1 through 3 that caught my attention:

*As Jesus and his disciples went along, they saw a man blind from birth. Jesus' disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him."*

Now, I had heard this story multiple times throughout my life. It just didn't resonate with me until God decided that on that Sunday morning, in that church, in that pew, at that exact moment, He was going to capture my attention...and my heart. It was an "AHA" moment that transformed my heart and mind from knowing about God, to wanting to KNOW God.

That moment of clarity caused me to slow down...to be still...and to look at how God had been working in my life. It was easy to give God credit when life was good. But when the storms were raging...I looked back and saw myself secretly doubting God. But when I took the time to slow down and be still...when there was clarity in my mind and heart...it was ESPECIALLY when the storms were raging that I could see God working in my life even more than any of the other times. I was amazed at His steadfast presence during my times of doubt.

It was this "AHA" moment in life that shifted my perspective. I read somewhere that sometimes the toughest storms in life to get through are the ones our soul need the most.

It was this shift in perspective that stopped me from wondering, "Why...why is all this happening?" to instead wondering, "What can I DO with all of this to use it for something good?"

I began to share my family's story with the purpose of offering it as a testimony of God's love, protection, guidance. I share our story in hopes of offering light to others during their times of darkness.

One thing I learned early on, though, when our children were born and diagnosed with cancer, Parker within months and Faith within days, after their births, was that nothing was going to stop me from enjoying my children. Not even cancer. Especially NOT cancer! God created two amazing and unique people who I get to hear call me mom and from the time they were born they have brought me complete JOY! This I have NEVER taken for granted. I learned early on not to sweat the small stuff because really, most things are small stuff. While I fully believe in rules and discipline and expectations, I have chosen to implement them with a softer, yet still effective, approach.

I share this with you because several years ago I was having coffee with a woman I had known for many years. We disconnected when a chain of events took us in different directions. At the time of our reconnection she and her family were in the fight of their lives for their teenage son, who had been recently diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. As we sat across the table from each other, coffee mugs in hand and tears welling up in our eyes, she kept saying to me over and over and over again, "I didn't understand. I'm so sorry, Jeanine...I just didn't understand." Confused by this I finally asked her what she meant by it. Her response was not what I expected. She explained that when she was a teenager she lost someone she loved. This started her on a path to creating strict rules in an effort to keep bad things from happening

in the future. As an adult, she continued this mindset in the way she parented her children. She was adamant about creating rules that left no room for exceptions and she expected these rules to be followed in order to keep things running smoothly. She admitted to me that she didn't understand...and certainly did not agree...with my softer approach to parenting and because of this she would silently judge and criticize me. But then she said, "What I never understood, Jeanine, is how you always enjoy your children so much...but now I get it!"

The storm her family was experiencing shifted her perspective.

All too often, I try to navigate the roads of life by myself. It's during these times of trying to go-it-alone and attempting to control the outcome that I look back and see that I'm not a very good navigator. But I am a continuous work-in-progress. Every day I try to trust a little more. I stop trying to go-it-alone and instead, go-it-with-God. I'll be honest...I may take a softer approach to some areas of my life, but in other areas, I'm a little bit of a control freak. If you'd like, you can verify this with my family and I'm sure they would be more than happy to confirm this! Giving up control isn't always in my nature to do. But the more I do it, the more I see and feel God's experience, wisdom, and love. And the more I see and feel His experience, wisdom, and love, the easier it is trust.

God doesn't purposely create the storms in our lives any more than a parent would purposely create storms in the lives of their children. But when the storms of life rage around us, what God does wants us to do is turn to him for comfort, for guidance, for peace, for wisdom. When the storms of life rage, He wants us to seek shelter in Him.

I'd like to read you something that I found several years ago. I don't know who wrote it, but I do know that it has always offered me encouragement and hope. I hope it does the same for you.

It's called, Go For The Ride

*Not all sections of the road we travel are smooth, paved, easy riding. We may prefer the smooth sections of highway, but sometimes the road gets rough. And the rough section can go on for miles and miles.*

*That's okay.*

*It doesn't mean you've lost your way. It doesn't mean the rough section and bumpy spots will last forever. You're still on your path.*

*Relax.*

*Wiggle your shoulders a bit.*

*GET READY...for you just might be in for the ride of your life!*

*Don't try to ignore the bumps or pretend they're not there. Not all roads are paved and smooth. Not all roads are meant to be.*

*Slow down a bit if you need to, but don't stop.*

*Accept each part of the journey as it comes.*

*Let each stretch of your path be what it needs to be.*

So whether life has given you serious storms or bumpy roads, trust God enough to recline back a little, get comfortable...possibly even pop in your headphones and listen to a little music...

...because God's got this!

Allow Him to navigate.

Relinquish your control and jump into trust by saying,

"Yeah...no. I'm not gonna want to drive in this."

And when the storm is over...

Share the story of how you survived...of how the works of God were displayed in your life...

**AND GIVE GOD THE GLORY!!!!**

**Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of June 17, 2018**

### **Daily Prayer**

Great Protector, in the midst of life's storms, you are right beside me. In the darkness and terror, you are with me. So why am I so afraid? Help me to remember that through you, I am safe and loved. Thanks be to you, God who cares deeply for me. Amen.

### **Monday, June 18**

#### **Scripture: Psalm 107:23-31**

Some of the redeemed had gone out on the ocean in ships, making their living on the high seas. They saw what the Lord had made; they saw his wondrous works in the depths of the sea. God spoke and stirred up a storm that brought the waves up high. The waves went as high as the sky; they crashed down to the depths. The sailors' courage melted at this terrible situation. They staggered and stumbled around like they were drunk. None of their skill was of any help. So they cried out to the Lord in their distress, and God brought them out safe from their desperate circumstances. God quieted the storm to a whisper; the sea's waves were hushed. So they rejoiced because the waves had calmed down; then God led them to the harbor they were hoping for. Let them thank the Lord for his faithful love and his wondrous works for all people.

**Observation:** The 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. Jesus' followers who'd fished Galilee for a living had a healthy respect for the strong storms that could blow up on that landlocked lake. To see Jesus act out that divine power before their eyes was indeed awe-inspiring.

**Application:** Singer-songwriter, Scott Krippayne wrote, "Sometimes He calms the storm, and other times He calms His child." In which of those ways has Jesus most supported you in life's storms? How has that impacted your relationship with God, and shaped the person you are today?

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

## **Tuesday, June 19**

### **Scripture: Psalm 46:1-3, 113:1-8**

God is our refuge and strength, a help always near in times of great trouble. That's why we won't be afraid when the world falls apart, when the mountains crumble into the center of the sea, when its waters roar and rage, when the mountains shake because of its surging waves. Praise the Lord! You who serve the Lord—praise! Praise the Lord's name! Let the Lord's name be blessed from now until forever from now! From sunrise to sunset, the skies! Who could possibly compare to the Lord our God? God rules from on high; he has to come down to even see heaven and earth! God lifts up the poor from the dirt and raises up the needy from the garbage pile with the leaders of his own people!

**Observation:** Sometimes we say that in today's world "the only constant is change." Many times this idea brings us deep-seated fear. That didn't just start. In the Psalms (Israel's hymnbook), we find mention of the world falling apart, mountains crumbling and the sea (an ancient symbol of chaos and disorder) roaring and raging. But we also find the confidence that God is high over all the changes that cause us fear. God is always our refuge and strength.

**Application:** What experiences have you already had that made it feel as though your world was falling apart? Did you allow your faith in God to provide you with a stable place to stand as everything else seemed to be crumbling? What makes it valuable to build your trust in God before the next time when everything seems to fall apart?

**Prayer:** Lord God, I want to praise your name from sunrise to sunset because I genuinely trust that you are "high over all the nations." Let my praise to you override my fear about any other realities. Amen.

## **Wednesday, June 20**

### **Scripture: Romans 5:1-5**

Therefore, since we have been made righteous through his faithfulness, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand through him, and we boast in the hope of God's glory. But not only that! We even take pride in our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. This hope doesn't put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

**Observation:** The apostle Paul sketched the spiritual growth process through which every Christ-follower can develop a character that meets challenges (like unfair conviction, or any of life's dark twists and turns) with hope and trust, not despair. God, the apostle said, has the power to bend even bad things to good purposes in our lives. Paul said that as we meet trouble in God's grace we grow in the kind of resolute, grounded hope needed to survive and thrive.

**Application:** Later in Romans, Paul wrote, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). How close to "overflowing" is your inner supply of joy and hope today, whether you face good

situations, hard ones or a mix? How can you open your heart and allow God to fill you to overflowing with all joy and peace?

**Prayer:** Lord God, come and fill me. Replace fear, doubt and despair with your joy, peace, faith and hope. Let me walk every day in the light and love you pour into my heart. Amen.

#### **Thursday, June 21**

##### **Scripture: Mark 4:35-41**

Later that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the lake." They left the crowd and took him in the boat just as he was. Other boats followed along.

Gale-force winds arose, and waves crashed against the boat so that the boat was swamped. But Jesus was in the rear of the boat, sleeping on a pillow. They woke him up and said, "Teacher, don't you care that we're drowning?" He got up and gave orders to the wind, and he said to the lake, "Silence! Be still!" The wind settled down and there was a great calm. Jesus asked them, "Why are you frightened? Don't you have faith yet?" Overcome with awe, they said to each other, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

**Observation:** This passage evoked the famous Old Testament story of Jonah from last week's message. In each, a storm blew, while the main character slept. But Jonah was running from God, while Jesus slept in peace and trust. When the disciples asked, "Don't you care that we're drowning?" Jesus (being God in the flesh) calmed the storm. They were amazed. Only God could calm the sea's stormy chaos. This miracle further revealed and affirmed Jesus' identity as Messiah.

**Application:** Think of one major life "storm" you've experienced. How did you make it through that experience? Did you have a sense Jesus was "in the boat" with you to guide, comfort, and help bring you peace? How has that experience impacted your relationship with God, and shaped the person you are today?

**Prayer:** Lord of all, thank you for your faithful presence in my life, and for walking with me through life's storms. May I trust in you and your saving grace more each day. Amen.

#### **Friday, June 22**

##### **Scripture: Matthew 14:22-33**

Right then, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake while he dismissed the crowds. When he sent them away, he went up onto a mountain by himself to pray. Evening came and he was alone. Meanwhile, the boat, fighting a strong headwind, was being battered by the waves and was already far away from land. Very early in the morning he came to his disciples, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified and said, "It's a ghost!" They were so frightened they screamed. Just then Jesus spoke to them, "Be encouraged! It's me. Don't be afraid." Peter replied, "Lord, if it's you, order me to come to you on the water." And Jesus said, "Come." Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus. But when Peter saw the strong wind, he became frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, "Lord, rescue me!" Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him, saying, "You man of weak faith! Why did you begin to have doubts?" When they got into the boat, the wind settled down. Then those in the boat worshipped Jesus and said, "You must be God's Son!"

**Observation:** Matthew's story sounded almost exactly like the one we read in Mark—until Peter spoke up. He showed that mix of faith and doubt most of us wrestle with at times: “Lord, if it's you, order me to come to you on the water.” Next thing he knew, he was striding across the water! It worked until he let the wind distract him and his fear took over. “As he began to sink, he shouted, ‘Lord, rescue me!’” And Jesus did.

**Application:** When Jesus said, “It's me,” he was using the same words in Greek as the “I Am,” God's Old Testament name (see Exodus 3:14). Scholar Myron Augsberger writes that “The primary meaning is that Jesus as Lord of creation can be present in the lives of people in this material world.” In what parts of your life do you need Christ's comforting, calming presence today? How confident are you that he can and will be with you?

**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.

**Saturday, June 23**

**Scripture: Mark 5:1-20**

Jesus and his disciples came to the other side of the lake, to the region of the Gerasenes. As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out of the tombs. This man lived among the tombs, and no one was ever strong enough to restrain him, even with a chain. He had been secured many times with leg irons and chains, but he broke the chains and smashed the leg irons. No one was tough enough to control him. Night and day in the tombs and the hills, he would howl and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from far away, he ran and knelt before him, shouting, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!” He said this because Jesus had already commanded him, “Unclean spirit, come out of the man!” Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He responded, “Legion is my name, because we are many.” They pleaded with Jesus not to send them out of that region. A large herd of pigs was feeding on the hillside. “Send us into the pigs!” they begged. “Let us go into the pigs!” Jesus gave them permission, so the unclean spirits left the man and went into the pigs. Then the herd of about two thousand pigs rushed down the cliff into the lake and drowned. Those who tended the pigs ran away and told the story in the city and in the countryside. People came to see what had happened. They came to Jesus and saw the man who used to be demon-possessed. They saw the very man who had been filled with many demons sitting there fully dressed and completely sane, and they were filled with awe. Those who had actually seen what had happened to the demon-possessed man told the others about the pigs. Then they pleaded with Jesus to leave their region. While he was climbing into the boat, the one who had been demon-possessed pleaded with Jesus to let him come along as one of his disciples. But Jesus wouldn't allow it. “Go home to your own people,” Jesus said, “and tell them what the Lord has done for you and how he has shown you mercy.” The man went away and began to proclaim in the Ten Cities all that Jesus had done for him, and everyone was amazed.

**Observation:** Mark said that right after calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus went to its eastern shore where mainly Gentiles lived. He found himself facing a man whose life was torn apart by terrible inner storms. Jesus healed the man, cast out his demons, and brought calm and peace to his storm-tossed life. When the transformed man sought a mission, Jesus told him to “Go home to your own people and tell them what the Lord has done for you and how he has shown you mercy.” The man became Jesus' “first Gentile missionary.”

**Application:** Where do you most need wholeness, healing and hope in place of inner or outer “storms”? In what ways, directly or through human instruments, do you believe Jesus’ power is available for you, just as it was for the man in today’s story? What abilities and possessions is God calling you to put at his disposal, so that you can become a channel of blessing to others facing life’s storms? How could a deeper involvement in God’s healing mission bring new freedom and purpose to your life?

**Prayer:** God, please use me as your hands and feet in this world to offer your grace, healing and transformation to those who are hurting. Amen.