

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

9244 Five Forks Road

Waynesboro, PA 17268-9612

Tel: (717) 762-2991

SCRIPTURE: Mark 4:35-41

DATE: 2019-11-17

Place: Auditorium

SUBJECT: Faith

Series: Resilient Faith wk. 3

THEME: Resilient Faith

SERMON: "A New Perspective"

Introduction

At around 5:30 in the evening on Dec. 10, 1914, a massive explosion erupted in West Orange, New Jersey. Ten buildings in inventor Thomas Edison's plant, were engulfed in flames. Between six and eight fire departments rushed to the scene, but the chemical-fueled inferno was too powerful to put out quickly.

According to Edison's son Charles, Edison calmly walked over to him as he watched the fire destroy his dad's work. In a childlike voice, Edison told his 24-year-old son, "Go get your mother and all her friends. They'll never see a fire like this again." When Charles objected, Edison said, "It's all right. We've just got rid of a lot of rubbish." Tomorrow we will build bigger and better. Edison rolled up his coat and went to sleep.

How could Edison respond to his crisis that way? One key – **Perspective**. His perspective on the tragedy, his stuff – what he had lost, and the future – the possibilities that lie ahead, was different from many observing the same event.

We have been talking for a few weeks about Faith – **Resilient Faith**. That is faith that withstands, faith that recovers, faith that holds on to Jesus in all of life – both the good parts of life and the difficult parts. It is faith in Jesus Christ that gives his followers a different perspective on life.

We began by noting **7 qualities** that the Apostle Peter says we, as disciples, should be adding to our belief or trust in Jesus Christ.

Last week we saw the importance of knowing the **foundational tenants** of our faith - what we must believe to be true disciples of Jesus Christ. We noted the importance of the **scripture**, the bible, in our lives and the significance of our **ongoing witness**, or testimony of our faith. Just as we were introduced to Jesus, we introduce others to Jesus.

All of these were characteristic of the first Christ followers in the early church. People who faced extreme opposition from the Roman Empire and even their own neighbors.

These were people who also faced the tragedies and crises of life – the unexpected, unwanted, traumatic, frightening, overwhelming events and situations in life. And yet, they made it through, with their faith intact. The apostle Paul described it this way:

2 Corinthians 4:7-10 We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰ We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

Resilient faith in Jesus Christ gives one a different perspective on life. We have heard two stories of what resilient faith looks like in the lives of people we know.

I have asked one more person to come and share part of her story with us, as yet another contemporary example of what I believe Resilient Faith looks like.

Gretchen Wease

Thank you Gretchen.

Several times in scripture we come across stories of people being in storms – literal storms. Jesus, his disciples, Paul, and others. Please turn with me to Mark's Gospel.

Mark 4:35-5:1

³⁵That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." ³⁶Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the

boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

³⁹He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

¹They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.

This stories gives us some insight as to how Jesus was giving his disciples a new perspective on what life was about, who he was and how he related to them and their life situations – so they would be able to trust Him going forwards.

So for a few moments lets unpack this story.

Verse 35 – when evening came – to the Jews this was the beginning of a new day -- a new day of learning. Jesus is going to use this crisis as a teaching moment about faith. Crises, tragedies, hardships do that for us. We don't always learn in the moment, but we always learn.

"over to the other side" -- to the beyond – journeys and crisis involving crossing over to the other side of life. Life is going along smoothly, we are handling it, and then something comes up – something that we say "takes us out of our comfort zone."

We see this in:

Verse 36

Leaving the crowd behind... the crowd was the familiar, the safe, the known, the sure thing. – Jesus and his disciples left people and places of familiarity and structures of security.

We generally tend to gravitate towards what is familiar. We sit in the same seats on Sunday morning. We talk to the same people – even ignoring people we don't know, because it is uncomfortable for us to talk to strangers. We tend to shop in the same stores and even eat the same foods regularly. These are our security structures. We need many of these in our

lives for a significant amount of time or life threatens to overwhelm us. So security structures are important.

But here is an interesting observation, rarely does our faith grow, and rarely do we learn in those safe and secure periods of life. Faith tends to grow more in crises, than in the calms of life. And yet we believe we need we need great faith to survive a crisis. Hmm, that is a puzzle.

Back to our bible story.

The disciples leave their security behind. This is what a storm of life is. It means letting go of what you know and can see and entering a time and place where you can't see clearly, you are not sure, you are apprehensive, frightened, probably feel inadequate and maybe overwhelmed. Setting out on a journey into the unknown. Sometimes by choice – but often, storms just set upon us unexpectedly.

And a storm can take so many different forms – a financial crisis, a broken marriage, a rebellious child, a death, or even children leaving home and moving away. Almost every significant Bible character was called into a journey of some sort - to the unknown. Abraham, Moses, Gideon, David etc.. I'm not sure what your storm looks like today but I can almost guarantee that you are either in one, just came out of one, or you will be getting into one.

How are you feeling about your faith?

Next Mark prepares his readers for what is to come, with a strange phrase. The disciples get into a boat and then about Jesus he says:

“They took him just as he was.” What is that supposed to mean? They didn't let him run home and change clothes? They didn't let him go get his fishing rod? I believe Mark was setting up this question, to be asked and answered as the story unfolds.

Is a “just as he is Jesus” enough for me in my journey? Or do I try to create him into something new, into someone I think I want him to be? **Example?**

Will a “just as he is Jesus” be just what I need for the storm I am in? This is the great question of faith. Do I trust Jesus as he is? The Three Hebrew children from last week. They trusted God just as God is. “God is able to deliver us. But if God does not deliver us from the fiery furnace – we will still trust our God.”

Is the Jesus I believe in adequate? That is the question hanging out there for the moment.

Verse 37 The storm hits

Storms are a part of life and always come up – The disciples knew this and we know it too. We try to handle some of them on our own.

But if the storm begins to grow bigger than our boats ability to ride it out, we begin to panic. This storm becomes a crisis - A challenge which outweighs the disciple’s resources and coping mechanisms.

Notice that even though Jesus was with them they weren't immune from hard times and nor did his being there guarantee smooth sailing.

But the storm is not merely there, this storm is flinging itself into the boat -- as if the boat is targeted by the storm. The storm is attacking the boat with fury.

What is interesting to think about is that the disciples likely would have been familiar with the story of Job. From Job’s perspective of life, who directs storms? **Job 38:22-35**
God asks Job:

³⁵ Do you send the lightning bolts on their way?

Do they report to you, 'Here we are'?

God is in control of this storm and this storm is winning.
Have you ever felt like the storm in your life is winning?

And where is Jesus in all of this.

³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion.

Jesus had said, **“Let’s go over to the other side.”** He essentially steered them into the

storm and then fell asleep. What business does a carpenter have steering a boat. Why would he do this? Why must this happen? Why storms?

Notice a Jesus who appears to be the polar opposite of the storm.

<u>Storm</u>	<u>Jesus</u>
Overwhelming	unimpressive
Imposing	asleep
Threatening	useless
Surrounding	isolated
Present	irrelevant

The storm has dwarfed the Savior. Is it possible that even Jesus can't meet this challenge? Jesus is asleep in the boat. What a useless Savior – and so:

Verse 38 is a panic reaction

“Teacher, don't you care if we drown?”

Central to the story are the disciples' and Jesus' reaction.

What is a storm? What are stormy moments/people in our world?

A storm is an unexpected or unwanted threat which descends on my boat.

A storm is an unwanted, uncontrollable and unexpected threat on my world.

The storm got into the boat and into the disciples too. Into their belief system.

It was convincing them that it was lord and not Jesus.

What do we become when storms descend on us? What do we believe? The disciples feared.

This is the story of two Lords: Lord Jesus and Lord Storm.

The one is ominous, imposing, strong, loud, threatening.

The other is quiet, seemingly useless, weak.

Poised between them is the disciples.

They could **hear** the storm winds – but there was nothing to hear from Jesus

They could **see** the water's and fury – but there was nothing to see from Jesus

They could **feel** force of the storm – but Jesus is untouchable and isn't reaching out to them.

Their senses redirected their faith from Jesus and to the storm.
Ultimately they believed in the storm and doubted the Savior.

We panic because we believe the storm is greater. **“Teacher, don't you care we are perishing?”**

There is stinging shame, rebuke, finger-pointing here. God needs to do a better job of running his world, starting with me. He needs to get on the ball. Where is the God of love?

Jesus doesn't focus on the tragedy of their possible drowning/loss or on the need of their possible survival. The real issue is:

Win or lose, are they completely certain Jesus will be there in the end?

God wakes up -- versus 38 to 39

Job had said God can command the storms as Jesus does here.

The issue isn't, will God calm my storm and the sooner he gets busy the better

The issue is:

God can calm my storm if he so chooses because he has that capacity but that is irrelevant in the long run. The issue is can I calm my heart in the storm and stay close to God despite the outcome?

Storms are meant to increase that kind of capacity.

Calming storms and making great peace isn't the first priority of God. **Storms make great character and great faith and this is God's first priority.**

The restoration of calm -- versus 39 to 40

Calm is a return to normal, the known, the safe.

Why do we have the notion that the goal of life is getting into our boats (the marriage of boat, the job boat, the ministry boat, the parenting) and getting to the other side? Why is that the goal?

Perhaps other goals in route are greater than safe, predictable arrival at the destination. The goal is not calming and rebuking storms so they stay away and all is pleasant. The goal is calming and rebuking **ME!**

The revelation -- verse 38

Perhaps the storm came to reveal something, namely to reveal how deeply attached we are to our success, our stability, our preservation, our survival mode, and how cheap our sense of investment is in life. Storms show how deeply we are addicted to playing it safe.

We argue with God, "Why don't you care that we are perishing?"

More important than not perishing is that I learn to live life with a deep conviction that I am God's.

Jesus said: **"If you save your life you will lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake you will save it. [Matthew 16:25](#)**

My need for safety is actually making my soul very unsafe because I tend to trust myself, rather than relying on God.

So God unleashes storms and lets them come right after me! I yell, "Crisis!! He's out to get me! Help! God do something! And then God unleashes the storm and he takes a nap!"

Storms come to teach me to let go of the boat, the life I've been given, and to rest in God as my boat and vessel. Storms come to teach me to trust in Jesus.

This is the new perspective Jesus wanted the disciples to gain.

Paul's perspective on life's storms was: God is allowing this to happen to me because he wants to do something in me so he can do something through me.

This is the biblical perspective as we face our crises. It is not fun and comfortable but it is really living and our trust is in God and what he is doing in the whole narrative of our lives.

How we adapt to our storms

There are those who **avoid** and despise all storms, living life in careful places.

There are those who **curse** the storm and the God who allowed it.

There are those who **lose** to the storm and give up. The disciples did that here.

There are those who **use** the storm as Jesus does to teach and learn.

There are those who **sleep** in the storm as Jesus did here.

There are those who learn to walk on the storm and help others do the same..

These are the ones with Resilient Faith. The ones mentioned in Hebrews. The ones we are striving to become.

PRAY