

Silver Linings

Turning Storms Upside Down

February 25, 2024

Today we're gonna look at how Jesus turns storms upside down!

So, here's the question of the day: **Do all your storm clouds have a silver lining?**



I know I shouldn't be, but I'm often surprised by life's storms. I'm imperfect, living in an imperfect world, with other imperfect people so yeah, storms are gonna' happen! And it's right there in our manual:



Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you – 1 Peter 4:12 ESV

[And Jesus says *not* to expect smooth sailing with Him] "In this life you *will* have trouble." – John 16:33 NIV



So really, we're only surprised when **we have unrealistic expectations**. It's easy to think, "Storms are for those 'other people' – people without Jesus in their boat." *Wrong!* Storms aren't selective. They happen to all of us. They don't care if you're young, old, from a good or bad home, or if you haven't missed church since the 90's.



But we can fall into this trap I call "vending machine theology"; I put my money in the machine, do the right thing, say the right words, and expect something good to magically appear. And although something good always appears, the truth is, **God's definition of good is often different than ours.**



Sometimes good comes from places we don't expect. Like the good that came from this storm:

That day when evening came, [Jesus] said to His disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side.' Leaving the crowd behind, they took Him along, just as He was, in the boat. There were also other boats with Him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?' He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to His disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?' They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!' – Mark 4:35-41 NIV

Now, Jesus has been on the road with His disciples, and day after day these guys had a front row seat to all that He was doing: they listened to Him preach, they watched Him perform miracles – the lame walked and the sick were healed. They watched Jesus do the impossible over and over, so, why'd they have to ask, "Who is this?"

Like us, they seem to be filled with great faith one minute, and doubt the next. So Jesus brought His friends to a place where He could test their mettle by turning up the heat.



I don't know if you've ever seen precious metal melt, but I once got to watch my wife Erica make a silver ring. She put these old, tarnished rings in this extremely hot furnace and once the temperature got to over 1700 degrees, they all melted. And all the impurities or junk in the silver floated to the surface- everything *unusable* was now *visible* and separated from the good stuff. God tells us He does the same:

For You, God, tested us; You refined *us* like silver. – Psalm 66:10 NIV

[So] Consider it pure joy... whenever you face trials of many kinds... the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. – James 1:2-4 NIV

When Jesus wants to remove impurities from our hearts, He often uses extreme heat. We can go to church Sunday after Sunday, listen, nod our heads, and get all *tingly*, but the question is, **what are we going to do when the storm hits?**

We can either trust Jesus *or*, like the disciples, assume it's game over. In verse 38, Jesus was in the back of the boat sleeping, and in a complete panic, they woke Jesus and asked, "Teacher, do you not care if we drown?" Even after all the *miracles*, after all they heard Jesus *say*, and after all the head nodding, **the storm brought some impurities to the surface**, so Jesus asks, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" In other words, "*What else do I have to show you for you to trust me?*"

Since they assumed Jesus didn't care, and since they couldn't do anything about the weather, they did the next best thing – they worried! Their worry wasn't weird, but normal– big waves, big wind, the boat is filling up with water... "*We're gonna die!*"

But worry is an attempt at control when we have none. **Worry is really repackaged fear**. And God knew this would be a daily battle, because one of His most frequent reminders to us involves, not falling into fear:

Listen! The Lord's arm is not too weak to save you, nor is His ear too deaf to hear you call.
– Isaiah 59:1 NIV

I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. – Psalms 34:4 NIV

Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. – 1 Peter 5:7 NIV

We're given these reminders cuz without em, it's easy to develop "spiritual amnesia" – where we're filled with great faith one minute, and great fear the next. But if Jesus took care of yesterday, **why are we so quick to forget that He'll take care of tomorrow?** He hasn't changed; He hasn't gone anywhere. What does that say back there?

He is the same yesterday, and today and forever. – Hebrews 13:8 NIV



When the disciples do cry for help, they call Jesus *teacher*. Why *teacher*? Was that the first name that came to mind? Did they really believe that's all He is?



We don't know how long the storm raged until Jesus said, "*Alright guys, that's enough, you've learned your lesson*". But it was long enough to get these guys peeing their tunics. And at the sound of Jesus voice "Quiet! Be still!" The storm was instantly gone – as if it never happened! Terrified, these guys look at each other and say, "Who then is this... even the wind and the waves obey Him?"



"*Maybe He's more than just a teacher after all – not just a carpenter from Nazareth. Maybe He is the One we have been waiting for?*"



Well, this morning, if you believe Jesus is just a *teacher*, one of many paths to heaven, then when the storms come, your house built on the sand will wash away. But if Jesus is your *King*, then you can trust He is in control. If Jesus is your *provider*, then you know He's got it. And, this morning, **if Jesus is your Savior, the storm is not the end of the story.**



At the end of our earthly lives, each one of us will stand before Jesus and He's gonna want to know, "*Who am I to you?*" Not, "*Tell me Aaron, did your grandma know me?*" Or, "*Tell me Aaron, did your neighbors love me?*" Nope, just like He asked right before He went to the cross, I know what other people say about me,

"But what about *you* ... Who do *you* say I am?" – Luke 9:20 NIV

With every storm that comes our way we get to answer or re-answer that question. We can either believe that Jesus really is the one true King or assume, since we don't understand the storm, this must be the end. It's easy to believe the lie that if Jesus *really* cared, He'd spare me from the discomfort, sorrow, or the pain of this life.

But Jesus wasn't ultimately concerned about the comfort of His friends. He wasn't fluffing their pillows, asking if they were enjoying their sunset cruise, placing little pink umbrellas in their drinks. He was concerned about the impurities in their hearts. I have some bad news if you're looking for easy – **Jesus is more concerned about your heart than your circumstances.**

A few years ago, I did a celebration of life for a baby boy who lived 99 minutes. This young couple, Kennan and Tonya, were trying to have a son. Which they did... for 99 minutes. For 99 minutes they took turns holding Baby Beau until he took his last breath. The doctors knew he likely wouldn't live long, so the family prepared their hearts for a storm, but there are some storms you can't fully prepare for.

It didn't make sense. This amazing young couple grew up in the church, they knew Jesus, they did and said all the right things. They wanted a son more than anything, but didn't get to bring him home.



Why that storm, in that way, I don't know, but as I sat with them and prayed, and shed tears, they continued to trust Jesus, day after day, that He would carry them to the other side of the storm. We praise God today, because they now have 3 kids, including a healthy young son! But storms get us asking all sorts of questions:



"Why me, why this? I put my money in the vending machine, why didn't something good appear?" But **the real question isn't why, but what?** *"What are you up to in the storm, Jesus? What sort of good do you have in mind?"*



I was part of a recovery ministry for a few years, and I was amazed at the storms God used to get the attention of the His most hard-hearted children. For some it was multiple DUI's. For others it was jail time. For others it was losing their marriage, their family, their jobs, or just waking up in their car with no idea how they got there. Cuz the truth is, God uses whatever He needs to get our attention. Jesus could calm any of your storms in an instant. But He doesn't always do that, does He? So, **what if He's got something else in mind?**



What if God is using that storm so that you would walk through these front doors this morning? What if God is using a storm to reveal that Jesus has been in your boat the whole time, but just couldn't see Him! What if your storm is what God uses so you can look someone else in the eyes and say, *"I understand, let me tell you about the storm Jesus brought me through."*

Do you see how God can turn any storm upside down?

And here's the best part: **He promises there will be a day when all storms end.** For those who put their trust in Jesus, storms have an expiration date; in eternity with Him! Just like Jesus did out on the water, we will hear His voice, "Quiet! Be still" and in an instant,

[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. – Revelation 21:4 NIV

Until then, as we continue to face storms, the only answer is to put your trust in Jesus. He is listening. Whatever you are facing, He sees you and He cares. He hears your cry for help and He promises to bring you to the other side.

Because with Jesus, all storm clouds have a silver lining.