

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

SERMON TITLE: How to Find Peace in the Midst of Your Storm

SERMON REFERENCE: John 6:16-21

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Would you take God's Word and be finding John chapter 6. In a few moments we're going to begin reading in verse 16. But we're going to be talking a little bit about troubles, heartaches, tears, disappointments; what we would call the storms of life. We go to the doctor and we get a bad report, or we don't know what the next telephone call is going to bring.

I read there in the book of Proverbs, chapter 27 and verse 1, "*Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day will bring forth.*" None of us know what the next phone call will bring; for good or bad, we just don't know. There are storms that come to us.

Now the Lord here in His ministry in Galilee was with His disciples and they were in a storm. And we're going to read about that and then we're going to learn some wonderful lessons about how to find peace, how you can find peace, in the midst of your storm, because we all have storms.

Beginning in John chapter 6 verse 16 through verse 20, "*And when Jesus was now come down, His disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose, by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship; and they were afraid. But He saith unto them, 'It is I; be not afraid.'*" Now just underscore the last part of that phrase there, "*Be not afraid.*"

Did you know, some 365 times in the Bible, one time for every day in the year, God has told us not to be afraid. In one way or another, He said, "Be not afraid," or, "Fear not." 365 times He tells us not to be afraid. The devil is the sinister minister of fear, but our Lord tells us not to be afraid.

Now remember, they are in a storm. He says in John 6 verses 20 and 21, "*It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received Him into the ship; and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*"

In our journeys to Israel, and I've been to Israel many times, one of the most delightful times that I have is to sit at twilight on the shores of Galilee. It's almost mesmerizing. It's almost like a dream, the tranquility. You're almost intoxicated by the beauty as the sun sets over the Sea of Galilee, and the Golan Heights across the sea from Tiberias turn a rosy color. You sit there. You can hear the birds nesting in the trees. I believe that the Sea of Galilee is one of the most beautiful bodies of water on this earth. The old rabbis used to say that, "When God created all the other seas, then He created Galilee just for Himself."

Now, the background for this passage of Scripture: it had been a wonderful day. Jesus Christ had been with His disciples, teaching them, and He had performed miracles. He fed the 5,000. So the disciples were full. They were full of success. They were full of knowledge. They were full of self-confidence. And they were full of a banquet of fish and bread. And it was a wonderful evening, perhaps like the evening

that I just described when sometimes we sit there and bask in the beauty. And perhaps, the moon was there in the sky, snuggled like a gardenia on the lapel of the night. And a gentle breeze, soft as a baby's breath, kissed their cheeks. And so these disciples, who are seasoned sailors, get in their boat and take sail to go to the other side of the sea, rejoicing in such a wonderful day.

And then it happened. Then it happened just like that. The wind begins to rise. The clouds darken the moon and the stars, and angry winds begin to beat the sea with its fists, and the water rises up and slaps these disciples in the face. And the water that's on the outside of the boat begins to come on the inside of the boat and fill the boat. And they're now out in the middle of the sea. And it's dark, and the wind is contrary to them, and they can't even see their hand before their face. And that Sea of Galilee that had been as quiet as a millpond now has become a dangerous deathtrap. And these seasoned sailors are filled with fear. They bend their backs to the oars. It's too far from the shore to swim. The waves are too boisterous. They have an idea that they are going down.

And on top of all of this, where is Jesus? Why hasn't He come to them? Why has He forsaken them? And then they see Him. He's walking on the water. That doesn't bring them joy. Now their fear has turned to raw terror. Who? What is that walking on the water? Is it a phantom? Is it a ghost? And then they recognize, it's Jesus, the wave walker, walking on the water. And He speaks to them and He says, "*Don't be afraid.*" In another Gospel He says, "*Be of good cheer. It is I.*" And they receive Him into their boat, and when they do, watch this, immediately they're on the shore. Immediately, they are on the shore.

Well, are you in a storm? You say, "No, Pastor, I'm not in a storm." Well I'm glad for you. Enjoy the trip. Have a good time. I'm serious. We're fools if we don't enjoy the good times of life. If you are not in a storm right now, I am happy for you. Enjoy it. But wait awhile, just wait awhile. Sooner or later, you are going to find yourself in a storm.

The Spanish have a proverb, "There is no home without its hush." That just simply means that sooner or later we have storms. And I've learned as a pastor, that while there are many of us here, there's probably a heartache on every pew. Somewhere sitting next to you, there is a heartache somewhere. We have storms. We all have difficulties, if not now, later.

And so, what I want to talk to you about is how to find peace in the midst of your storm, because peace is not the subtraction of problems from life; peace is the addition of power to meet those problems. That's God's peace.

So I want to give you six principles. Will you write them down? Principle number one. Here's what you can say when you are in a storm. Number one: **I am governed by His providence**, I am governed by His providence. What happened to these people that day was not happenstance. It was not a mistake. It was not something that should have been avoided. The storm did not take Jesus by surprise.

Now folks, if Jesus Christ can walk upon water, Jesus Christ can certainly read and forecast the weather. This thing was not incidental; it was providential. Put in your margin Matthew chapter 14 and verse 22. The Bible says, “*And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship.*” Now He said, “You must do it.” It was Jesus who sent them into this storm. It may be that God has engineered your storm. I mean, God has engineered your storm. If He has not engineered it, listen, if He has not engineered it, He has certainly allowed it because our God is over everything.

I was reading Psalm 107 verses 24 and following, “*These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.*” It’s God who is the master of the winds and the waves. And He’s the One who causes storms to come.

You know, it is a shallow theology, a very shallow theology that says if we’re in the will of God, that we’re just going to sail always smoothly on the sea of life. We’ll have no sickness, no sorrow, no disappointment, know no separation. There’ll be no death in our family. There’ll be no problems. And the joy boys get on television and say, “You just get right with God and believe God and send me an offering, you’ll never be sick. Everything’ll be fine.” And this is the gospel of cash and Cadillacs, tranquility. Friend, there’s a Greek word for that and it’s baloney. Baloney. No, no, no, no, no.

Listen, we are going to have difficulty. And the first thing that you can say when difficulty comes is that God’s providence is over it all. I am governed by His providence. God’s wonderful plan is in effect; that we call that the providence of God. Now remember, Jesus constrained them to get into a storm. They were in this storm because of the providence of God.

Now here’s the second thing that you can say. Number two. Not only am I governed by His providence, but **I am growing by His plan**, I am growing by His plan. Now God’s plan is not to indulge you; God’s plan is to enlarge you. Put in your margin Psalm 4 verse 1, “*Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.*” “*Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.*”

Now I want to ask you a question, those of you who’ve been on the trail for awhile: when did you grow the most? When everything was fine, when you were smoothly sailing, or when the storm came? Did you not grow more in the storm, in distress, when you were crowded to Christ, and when you had to call upon Him?

You see, in the Bible there are correcting storms and there are perfecting storms. Now, Jonah, who spent the night on a foam blubber mattress was in one of those correcting storms. I mean, he was in a storm because he was out of the will of God. He was running from God. And God sent a correcting storm.

But there are also perfecting storms. These disciples were not out of the will of God. Why were they in a storm? They were in a storm, don’t miss this, they were in a storm because they were in the will of God. It was Jesus, Matthew tells us, that

constrained them to get into that boat. They were in this storm because they were obeying Jesus.

Why would Jesus want them to be in a storm? Because He wanted them to grow. I've often shared these words with you that someone wrote. I don't know who wrote them. "I walked a mile with pleasure, she chatted all the way. But left me none the wiser, for all she had to say. I walked a mile with sorrow, not a word said she. But oh the things I learned from sorrow, when sorrow walked with me." Is that not true? "*Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.*" Somebody said that faith is like film. It's developed in the dark. That's when we learn to trust the Lord.

I was reading about the Israelites when they were headed into the Promised Land, into the land of Canaan. And in the land of Canaan there were some demon-possessed giants, and they were called Anakim. Not Anacin, but Anakim. They gave headaches, they didn't cure it. These were Anakim. And they were great giants.

And when the twelve spies went into the land to spy out the land, ten of the spies came back and said, "Hey, we can't take this land. Why it's full of milk and honey and corn and wine and oil and pomegranates and figs and grapes. It has hills and valleys. But there are giants in that land, and we can't take that land."

But two of the spies said in Numbers chapter 14 and verse 9, "*Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear the people of the land,*" now listen to this, "*for they are bread for us.*" Not B-R-E-D, but B-R-E-A-D. Bread, like your toast this morning, "*They are bread for us. Their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not.*" They said, "Look, these people are a piece of cake. They're bread for us. Don't be afraid of them."

Why do you eat bread? For strength. You grow on bread. It's bread that gives energy. It is the bread that is the staff of life. What was God saying? These things that look like they are your problems are your food.

Folks, it's when you feed on these problems that you grow. You see, what our Lord was looking for was not softies as disciples. He wanted them to grow and He enabled them to be in a storm that He might enlarge them. So remember that you're governed by His providence when you're in a storm. He rules over all. And remember that you are growing by His plan. And it's in the storm that you're going to grow and become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Well you say, "But, Pastor, I just don't have what it takes to grow when I'm in a storm." True, you don't.

But here's the third thing, **I am graced by His prayers.** Look if you will in John 6 verse 17, "*And entering into a ship and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come unto them.*" They're saying, "Where's Jesus? Where's Jesus? It's dark; He hasn't come. Why hasn't He come? Well He's doing something else. What is He doing? He's praying. And He's up on a mountaintop, praying. Put in your margin Matthew 14:23 because this story's told in different ways

in the different Gospels. And the Bible says, “*And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray.*”

Listen, don't think that He has forsaken you just because you cannot see Him. When you're in the storm, He may not be with you in bodily form, but He is very much aware of you. I love that song, “His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.”

Let me give you another verse from one of the other Gospels. Put this one down. In Mark chapter 6 beginning in verse 47, “*And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land.*” They're in the sea; Jesus is on the shore. Now watch this, “*And He saw them toiling in rowing.*” He saw them.

Did you know that He sees you right now? You say, “He doesn't know where I am. He doesn't know this difficulty. Why is He so far away? Why am I in the storm and He on the shore?” Friend, He is there praying for you. He went apart to a mountain to pray. He's up there on the mountain looking down. He sees right through the dark. They can't see Him; He sees us. And what's He doing? He's praying.

You want a blessed thought? Let me give you a blessed thought. You are on Jesus' prayer list. You are on Jesus' prayer list. There's nothing much more comforting to me than for somebody to tell me that they pray for me.

I met a man in the airport, I wasn't even sure that he knew my name. But I went up to meet him, and because he's a wonderful Bible teacher. He looked at me and embraced me, and he said, “Adrian, I prayed for you this morning.” I mean it was just by happenstance. He said, “Adrian, I prayed for you this morning.” I said, “That's wonderful.” Then you know what he said to me? He said, “I pray for you everyday, everyday.” That moved me greatly.

Folks, there are billions of people on this earth. Some people have never been prayed for one time. If you're on anybody's prayer list, you're blessed, you're blessed. But I can tell you, you're on His prayer list. The Lord Jesus knows you by name and He calls you by name. And the Bible says that, “*He ever lives to make intercession for us.*” Hebrews 7 verse 25, “*Wherefore, He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.*” Did you come to God by Jesus? Then you're on His prayer list. And what is He doing? The finished work of Jesus is Calvary. The unfinished work of Jesus is His prayer ministry.

Listen. I am governed by His providence. I am growing by His plan. I am graced by His prayers. He was praying for them in the midst of their storm. Do you have any reason to doubt that He is praying for you in the midst of your storm? How would you feel if you knew, while you're in your bedroom, that right out there in your living room, Jesus was on His knees praying for you? Is it any less real that you're in the boat and He's on the shore? Or you're here on this earth and He's in the glory praying for you? He ever lives to make intercession for you.

Now here's the fourth thing I want you to learn in the midst of your storm. Not only am I graced by His prayers, but **I am gladdened by His presence**. He will come. Look if you will in John 6 verse 20, "*And He saith, He saith unto them, 'It is I; be not afraid.'*" And in Matthew He tells them to be of good cheer. Matthew 14 verse 27, "*Straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, 'Be of good cheer; it is I. Be not afraid.'*"

I can see these disciples, perspiration is on their brow and their face is a network of fear. Their clammy hands hold to those oars and their backs are aching and they're pulling. Peter says, "Pull harder. We're going to sink." And old doubting Thomas says, "I don't believe we're going to make it. We're going down." And then they see Jesus.

Question: why didn't He come sooner? Why did He wait? You know He'd been there for a long time. If you'll read the story, you're going to find out that they had been out there on the sea for six agonizing hours. They're out there pulling and now it's the darkest hour of the night. Mark tells us that Jesus came in the fourth watch of the night. That's between 3 and 6 A.M., the darkest hour. For six long agonizing hours they're out there and it seems that He has forgotten them. It wasn't Jesus who had forgotten. Really it was the disciples that had forgotten.

You know Jesus had just done a miracle. If you'll read this story in the sixth chapter of John, you'll find out that Jesus had fed 5,000. Notice if you will in John 6 verse 12 and 13, "*And when they were filled, He saith unto His disciples, 'Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore, they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments.'*" Now, why did they fill twelve baskets? How many disciples? Twelve disciples. Alright. He says, "Now, take everything, take the fragments that remain." Every disciple has a basket of bread sitting right at his feet. In that boat is a basket of bread. He's just done a miracle, and now here they are filled with fear.

They're thinking why has Jesus forgotten us? They'd forgotten Jesus. They had forgotten what He had already done. Aren't we prone to do that? I mean, how many times our Lord has delivered us, how many times our God has performed miracles for us, but we have forgotten. And what they should have done was just remember what Paul said in First Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 18, "*In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*"

But our Lord waited. Why did He wait? Well His delay, before He did come to them, was strategic and it was deliberate. Would you write this verse down, Isaiah chapter 30 and verse 18? "*And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you.*" Isn't that a great verse? "*And therefore will the Lord wait,*" not that He might be cruel to you, but, "*that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted.*" Now God is in the business of getting glory to Himself, "*That He may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment.*" That means discernment. He knows what you need. And then it says, "*Blessed are all they that wait for Him.*" God

waits; you need to wait. And you know what God is waiting on? God is waiting for you to wait on Him. God is waiting upon you to wait on Him.

Have you ever thought about the deliberate delays of the Lord? I was reading in John chapter 11 when Lazarus died. And Mary and Martha, who loved Jesus and knew that Jesus loved Lazarus, sent for Jesus. Jesus was not there in Bethany. And they sent for Jesus in John 11 verses 3-5, and told Him, “Look, *the one that You love is sick.*” The Bible says, “*And Jesus waited two days.*” Two days before He ever did anything, before He ever even started to come.

Now, suppose, Brother Bob, that you get a message that your wife, for example, is sick. And you’re somewhere, and you just say, “Well, I just believe I’ll stay around two more days.” That would seem so cruel not to come. And of course you should come and I would come. But Jesus waits two days. And by the time He gets there, four days has passed. And Jesus says, “*Lazarus is dead, and I’m glad.*” John 11:14.

Now wait a minute. But that’s what He said. Because Jesus had a plan there. He’s going to raise Lazarus from the dead. Question: suppose Jesus had come right away and healed Lazarus. Certainly He could have healed him if He raised him from the dead, no ifs, ands, and buts about that. We know He could have healed him, but He didn’t.

Well, had He healed Lazarus, you know what someone may have said? “Well, you know, he might have gotten well anyway. I mean, how do we know really that it was Jesus that did that? Maybe he would have gotten well anyway.” But, there’s no explaining away the miracle when He raised him from the dead.

You see, He had a plan. And the plan did not make sense to Martha; she scolded Him. It did not make sense to Mary; she pouted. But it made sense to the Lord Jesus. “*Therefore will the Lord wait.*” The Lord gave a promise in the Garden of Eden that He was going to send a Messiah, Genesis 3:15, but He waited 4,000 years, 4,000 years. Did you hear that? 4,000 years. The Bible says In Galatians 4 verse 4, “*In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son.*” In the fullness of time.

You know, many times we’re trying to pick God’s blessings before they’re ripe. Isaiah 30:18, “*Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you. Blessed are those that wait on Him.*”

God is developing patience. God is never in a hurry, but He is never late. Habakkuk 2 verse 3 says, “*For the vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie.*” Many of us are waiting for Jesus to come. Second Peter 3 verse 4, people say, “*Where’s the promise of His coming. For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.*” You can put it down big, plain, and straight, He is coming. He is coming. He’s coming in God’s good time, but He’s coming. Our Lord is coming.

Next, you can say this in the midst of your storm: **I am guarded by His power**, I am guarded by His power. Notice what He says in John 6 verse 20, “It is I; be not

afraid.” I don’t know who first said this, but he said a mouthful when he said, “The will of God will never take you where the grace of God cannot keep you.” That’s good. The will of God will never take you where the grace of God cannot keep you. That’s everlastingly true. You see Jesus said to them, He constrained them to get into a boat and to go over unto the other side. You read that in the Word of God, He said go over to the other side. He didn’t say go under, He said go over. God has a plan for you. Jesus did not lead these disciples into disaster. He said go over.

And when He comes to them He says, “I AM; *be not afraid, be of good cheer.* I AM.” Now, “*Be not afraid, I AM.*” When He says the word I AM, what does He mean by I AM? Well, in verse 20, look at it, “It is I.” You see that in verse 20? Well, in the Greek, it just literally says, “I AM.” “It is I,” is the way we read it in the King James, but it literally says, “I AM.” And I AM is the sacred name for deity. It means He is the Almighty, the Everlasting. It’s His saying, “Look, I AM that I AM that I AM.” He is the great I AM. “I was in existence when this thing was not even a vapor, this Sea of Galilee. I AM the great I AM.”

And so, think about it. When He says, “I AM,” that’s a **proclamation of presence**, eternal presence. Not I was, but maybe I no longer am. Or not I will be, but maybe I’m not yet. No. He’s just that I AM that I AM that I AM that I AM that I AM. Hey, there never was a time when Jesus was not. Never will be a time when He will not be. And friend, in the midst of your storm, just remember this: I AM. I AM. It’s a proclamation of presence.

But I’ll tell you what else it is. Not only is it a proclamation of presence, it is an **announcement of abundance**. Did you know what I AM is? It’s an unfinished sentence, it’s an unfinished sentence. I AM, what? Well you fill in the blank. Just fill in the blank. Over and over again in the Gospel of John, He’s saying, “I AM, I AM, I AM.” He says, “I AM the way.” Are you lost? Then fill in the sentence. He’s the way. Are you on the wrong side and want to get in? He says, “OK, I AM the door.” Are you hungry? He says, “OK, I AM the bread of life.” Are you stumbling in darkness? He says, “I AM the light of the world.” Are you dead in trespasses and sin? He says, “I AM the resurrection and the life.” I AM, I AM, I AM, I AM, I AM. And I’m going to tell you something, precious friend, He’s I AM for you. You just fill in the blank.

I don’t know what your problem is, I don’t know what your need is, but I know your answer, and His name is Jesus. Jesus is all this world needs today. Blindly they strive for sin darkens their way. Oh, to pull back the grim curtains of night. One look at Jesus, and all will be light.

And my advice for you, in the midst of your storm, is to see Jesus, the great I AM, and see Him walking on the water. And what looked like it was going to be over their head was already under His feet, under His feet. And you’re seated in the heavenlies with Him. And you can’t drown with your head above water. And friend you’re seated in the heavenlies with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the great I AM. And you can put it down, I am guarded by His power.

And last of all, write this down. You can say **I am guided by His purpose**. Look in John 6 verse 21, *“Then they willingly received Him into the ship; and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.”* God has not promised you smooth sailing, but He has promised you a safe landing. Immediately they were at the shore. Now, you see your destiny is already determined. Time and space are no impediment to the Lord Jesus Christ. He will see you to the shore.

Andrew Murray said this, and it’s another great statement, “God is willing to assume the full responsibility for the life that is totally yielded to Him.” God is willing to assume the full responsibility for the life that is totally yielded to Him. Now they were having tribulation, but Jesus said in John chapter 16 verse 33, *“Be of good cheer. In this world you’ll have tribulation. Be of good cheer. I’ve overcome the world.”* You see that storm just represented the world. Where is Jesus? Jesus has overcome the world. That’s what He’s telling you. That’s what He’s telling me.

Now folks, let’s make another application and then we’re going to wrap this up. The spiritual barometer is falling and all of us, who can read the signs of the times, we know there’s a storm gathering. There’s a storm gathering. Sometimes it’s calmest just before the storm. I learned that in Florida. When they say a hurricane’s coming, you walk outside and you say, “No way.” But yet, the barometer is falling, and you know that it’s coming. The Bible tells us that.

But folks, soon our Lord, who’s been on the mountain of His glory praying for us, is going to rise from His throne. And then walking on the water will be child’s play. He’ll come stepping on the clouds. He’ll come in His glory. And those of us who are here on the sea of time will immediately be on the shores of eternity just like that when He comes. Won’t that be a day? Won’t that be a day?

The Bible says it happened when they received Him into the boat. Have you received Him? Have you? Have you trusted Him?

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And if you need the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, why don’t you receive Him into your boat right now. Receive Him really into your heart, into your life, not merely to be with you, but to be inside of you by faith. Would you pray this prayer? “Dear God, I am a sinner and I’m lost and I need to be saved, but I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me and You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus, right now, with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Come into my heart.” Pray it and mean it. “Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus.” Did you ask Him? Then thank Him. Pray this way, “Thank you Lord Jesus for saving me. I trust You to do it right now like a child, and that settles it. You’re my Lord, my Master, my Savior, and my God. And now, Lord Jesus, begin to make me the person You want me to be. And, Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You. Help me, that I’ll never be ashamed of You. And give me the courage to make it public today, this morning. Help me not to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray, Amen.”