

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: July 5, 2009

Facing the Storm

by Dan Trygg

“On that day, when evening came, He said to them, ‘Let us go over to the other side.’³⁶ Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him.³⁷ And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.³⁸ Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’³⁹ And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Hush, be still.’ And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.⁴⁰ And He said to them, ‘Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?’⁴¹ They became very much afraid and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?’” Mark 4:35-41

Once again, it is valuable for us to attempt to grasp the clues given to us regarding the sequence of events. It helps us to grasp just a tiny bit of the incredible pressure Jesus was under, due to the great numbers of people who were flocking to Him, demanding His attention. We don't know exactly when this day began, but we know that **from the time He arrived back at Peter's house in Capernaum, the people began to gather, seeking His attention** (Mk. 3:20). It is probably the case that He and the disciples came late at night, or early in the morning, to avoid being seen. In spite of such precautions, word got out about His coming, and those who were sick, or had loved ones who were afflicted, began to gather at the house. **There was a seemingly endless stream of people coming to seek His help, so many that He and His disciples were not even able to eat a meal.** This comment seems to indicate that from the time they woke up, they were pressed to serve those who were seeking their help, or wanting to hear Him teach. In this setting came scribes from Jerusalem to attack His credibility, claiming that Jesus cast out demons by the power of Satan himself. Jesus refuted their accusation, and then also put off the claim upon His time by family members who wanted Him to leave what He was doing to meet with them. He chose to remain on task, saying that those who do the will of God are His true family, even above blood relatives. Matthew then tells us that, **on this same day, He left the house and went down to the sea** (Matt. 13:1). **The multitudes and crowds gathered to Him in such numbers that He had to get into a boat,** and put out from the shore a little, in order to be heard by the crowd. Because of the mixed group of people, ...some hungry to learn, some looking to find some flaw in His teaching that they could use against Him..., Jesus chose to speak to the group only in parables. He told only *the stories* to the crowds, but He explained *the meaning* of His teachings to His disciples privately. **He taught them many things in parables, word pictures from everyday life used to illustrate spiritual truths.** He spoke of the nature of the Kingdom of God, emphasizing that God was looking for fruitfulness from His people, ...and that the Kingdom would start small, but expand and grow to become very large, filling the earth and providing safety and refuge to many. Mark tells us that “with *many* such parables He was speaking the word to them as they were able to hear it” (4:33).

As we pick up today's lesson, we discover that **His teaching lasted until the evening. What a day! From morning until evening, ...teaching, ministering, healing, praying over people, debating with His critics, relocating to a more expansive location, then teaching for hours out in the afternoon sun from a boat. Jesus was dog-tired.** He saw no possibility for privacy, or rest, except the open expanse of the Sea of Galilee. **He said to His men, “Let's go over to the other side.”** They took over. The text says, “Leaving the multitude, they took Him alongside them, just as He was, in the boat” (vs. 36). The phrase, “just as He was” probably refers to the fact that they left without any prior preparations. They were already out on the water, so they just started across the lake to the east. **It didn't take long at all for Jesus to fall fast asleep in the stern of the boat, His head resting on a cushion or headrest** (Lk. 8:23). Here we see His humanity. He was subject to hunger and exhaustion, as are we (Lk. 4:2; Jn. 4:6). **Being filled with the Spirit does not exempt us of the needs and demands of the body.** We may be able to put them off, for a time, but we do need to address the very real limitations of our “earthly dwellings” (e.g., Jn. 4:30-35; II Cor. 5:1-9). **We are stewards of our bodies.** There is weakness that comes along with our flesh (Matt. 26:41; Rom. 8:3), and the desires of the flesh are often in opposition to the leading of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16,17). Christians who live according to the flesh remain immature (I Cor. 3:1-3). Our physical flesh is not our enemy, however. After all, God created us as physical beings. There is balance. Severe treatment of the body is not the answer; we are designed by God to nurture and care for it (Col. 2:23; Eph. 5:28,29). **We are not to be enslaved to our flesh, rather we are to discipline and subdue our bodies so that they serve us as we seek to do God's will** (Eph. 2:3; Tit. 3:3; I Cor. 9:24-27; II Cor. 11:23-27).

The Sea of Galilee (also called the Sea of Tiberias, Gennesaret and Chinneroth) **is the largest freshwater lake in Israel.** It is about 13 miles long, and about 7 miles wide at its greatest breadth. Its surface is 680 feet below sea level, the level of the Mediterranean Sea, just 25 miles to the west. Furthermore, it is surrounded on the east and west

by mountains that rise to some 2,000 feet. Mount Hermon, some 40 miles to the north, towers 9,200 feet above sea level, and supplies much of the water that fuels the upper Jordan. **The weather along the Sea of Galilee, is considerably warmer than the air in the upper, mountainous regions. The cool air from the uplands can come rushing down the rugged gorges and valleys with great force. As it clashes with the warmer air of the valley, heavy rain and strong, hurricane-force winds can be generated.** These can come up quite quickly, and with little forewarning. For this reason, most fisherman generally stayed close to shore, not often attempting to traverse from one side of the lake to the other. As we read the gospels, however, we see that Peter and his friends crossed over several times. They were seasoned fishermen, and had ridden out their share of storms. **Of course, evening would probably be the worst time to be out on the lake. Nevertheless, they decided to take their chances and headed eastward across the lake.**

Once out in the middle of the lake, a “fierce gale of wind” arose, stirring up the waters and driving huge waves into and over the boat. Even the seasoned fishermen were terrified. The boat was quickly filling up with water, and the men could clearly see that they were in serious danger. **In desperation, they came to Jesus, who was still sleeping in the back of the boat, and roused Him.** “Teacher”, they said, “is it not a concern to you that *we are perishing?*” It was almost a rebuke that He would sleep when they were in such danger. He *was* sleeping. He certainly *seemed* to have no cares in the world. *Sometimes our inner peace may be misinterpreted by others as a lack of concern.* On the other hand, Jesus’ response was immediate. **He rose up through the wind and rain and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Be being silent” and “be having-been-muzzled”,** and the wind stopped and a great calm occurred. Then, He turned His attention to them, and said, “Why are you cowardly? Do you not yet have faith?” **Obviously to Jesus, their reaction was entirely unreasonable.** Do they not know that God was with them? Did they not perceive that He would care for them, and keep them safe?

The Greek word for “afraid” or “timid” is one of a number of Greek words used for “fear”. This particular word, *deilos*, and its related forms, is always presented negatively (Rev. 21:8; Jn. 14:27; II Tim. 1:7). ***Deilos* seems to move beyond just the emotional experience to a choice to withdraw, hold back, or retreat in fear.** In John 14:27, Jesus says that He gives peace to His followers, a peace that the world does not understand or experience. Therefore they are told, “Do not *let* your heart be troubled, nor *let* it be fearful (cowardly, timid).” These are *commands*. Therefore, ***we have the capacity to keep our hearts from being troubled or cowardly.*** In the context, Jesus was talking about sending “another helper”, one called-alongside-to-help like Jesus. This is the Holy Spirit. Thus ***we have a choice between withdrawing in timidity or cowardice, or calling upon the Holy Spirit to help us in whatever situation we face.*** This is the way of peace. ***Instead of running away from the intimidating or fearful thing, we regroup with the Holy Spirit and deal with it as He directs.*** Interestingly enough, the passage from II Timothy 1:7 is similar. Paul reminds Timothy to “kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a Spirit of timidity, but of power (ability-to-act), love (*agapē*), and a sound mind (self-controlled sensibleness). Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.” Again, ***there is a natural tendency to avoid suffering and pain, but Paul encourages Timothy to not be intimidated. Instead, he is to keep his ministry active and on-fire for God, and look to the Spirit for the ability to face difficulty with a sound mind.*** Many commentators commend the disciples for going to Jesus and waking Him up. He, by contrast, seems to be disappointed in them. ***The disciples should have sought God themselves, and kept from losing their heads.*** They did not go to God for strength or guidance, at least not as Jesus would have liked to have seen. He said, “Do you *not yet* have faith?” ***Clearly, the disciples’ coming to Him in the boat was secondary to what they ought to have done.***

Finally, we have the disciples’ reaction to the entire experience. They came to be very much afraid (in awe), and said to one another, ***“Who then is this, that even the wind and sea obey Him?” They were right to be amazed, but again, they did not understand the point.*** Moses called down natural disasters on Egypt, and he divided the Red Sea. Joshua called out for the sun to stand still, and it did for nearly a day. Elijah commanded it not to rain, and it did not rain for three years. Then he prayed for rain, and it came. He also called down fire from heaven on two occasions, and destroyed his enemies. Elisha caused an iron axe head to float on water and multiplied food. Both prophets raised people from the dead. ***Commanding the forces of nature was not a new thing.*** Furthermore, we have the examples of the sailors in Psa. 107:23-32 and in the book of Jonah, who saw God calm the raging sea in answer to their petitions. Jesus did miracles by the power of God within Him (Acts 10:38), and *He was teaching them to do the same.* ***The Lord was disappointed that they had not yet the faith to deal with this situation on their own. He was training them to heal the sick, cast out demons and raise the dead, how much more difficult would rebuking a storm be?***