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Peace Be Still!

992-B

Series: Let God Be God

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Peace Be Still!

It is not difficult to relate to the disciples. Time after time they said the wrong thing, did the wrong thing, and made the same mistakes over and over again. They talked when they should have been listening. They slept when they should have been praying. They argued over who would be “numero uno” in the Kingdom, when they should have been finding ways to serve one another in love. They worried about everything from food to shelter to safety, while their Master worried about nothing. They turned exclamation marks into question marks, and opportunities to exercise faith into moments of absolute panic. They wanted a Kingdom here and now (and don’t we still), they wanted to be on a team that was acceptable to the religious and political systems of their day, and they never quite grasped the concept of an atoning death and a resurrection life.

They were not bad guys. In fact, they were the “pick of the litter”, so to speak. They were the ones God Himself went out and chose to represent Himself to a world that wouldn’t even understand why He was there, let alone pledge allegiance to His Kingdom. They meant well...these handpicked soldiers-in-the-making. But somehow, they had to struggle just to grasp the reality of spiritual life, even when God Himself was walking with them and talking with them and demonstrating to them what it was all about.

So don’t feel bad. It takes time and grace to walk by faith. God understands, and He is patient with us, just as He was patient with them. But, at some point, He expected them, as He expects us, to stop making the same mistakes over and over, and begin to obey. You say, “Oh, to have been one of them. They had God in the flesh living with them.” Beloved, you and I have more than they had. We have God *living in us*, and we have *the entire canon of Scripture* to guide us. So if you’re saying, “Gee, I would believe, and I would obey, if I were Peter or James or John.” No, you wouldn’t. You have more than they had. You have Christ resident in your heart, revealed totally in His Word, and you have 2,000

years of visual evidence of His work in human lives. You and I are the blessed ones. We have it all!

Nonetheless, as we pull back the curtain of the Word to read today's story, I think we can relate only too well to the response of these chosen ones to one of God's Moments of Truth. Let's place ourselves in the midst of this story. Let's imagine we are there.

I- STORIES BY THE SEA

We have been seated by the seaside now for hours and hours. The Master has been teaching...oh, has He been teaching...about the Kingdom: what it will be like; what to look for; what to expect; and how to respond to the major events that would descend upon the church. Never before has He taught like this. He has been speaking in what He calls parables, stories cast alongside, simple illustrations that to the natural mind seem frivolous and meaningless; yet to the mind under God's control, they seem to actually open the vaults of Heaven and pour out treasures of spiritual insights.

Why He told us a story about a farmer who was planting precious seed. And He told about what happened to the seed that was wasted, and what happened to the seed that found its roots in healthy soil. Then, in a labor of love, He tenderly unfolded the package of that parable and showed us the contents. The heart of God was in there, and it was lovingly being shared with all who had ears to hear. Then He told us a story about a man who scattered good seed in His field, but while everyone was sleeping, an enemy came and scattered tares. And He explained why you don't tear up the field to get to the tares; some of the good seed will be hurt in the process. You just wait until the harvest, when the fruit of the good seed will be gathered up, and the tares will be burned. And once again, He pulled back the curtain of eternity and showed man what was in the Mind of God where the judgment was concerned...all through the use of parables.

He spoke of mustard seeds and leaven and hidden treasures and beautiful pearls. It was more than most of us could take in at one sitting. At one point, the Master dismissed the crowds and took us inside, and began to explain in more detail what it was He had been saying. And when He was finished, He asked us: "Have you understood all these things?" We answered, "Yes, Lord!"

Remember? We were there. We were captivated by His every

Peace Be Still!

word. And do you remember the next chapter of the story? Let me refresh your memory. It reads like this:

²Then the same day when it was evening, ¹Jesus, seeing great crowds about him, gave commandment ³and said, “Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.” So ¹his disciples, ²dismissing the throng, ¹followed him into the boat. And ²they took him with them as he was, ³and sailed forth; and there were other small ships with him also.

(¹Matthew 8:18,23-27; ²Mark 4:35-41; ³Luke 8:22-25 TLOCIS)¹

II- ALONE AT LAST!

So the scene is set for a midnight cruise across the waters without the press of the crowds or the pressures that accompany an all-day Bible Conference. “Now we will have the Master to ourselves,” we reasoned. “Now we can ask Him questions and share our own insights with Him. We can have what we Christians call a little ‘after-church fellowship’ with the pastor. At last, Jesus has gotten rid of those pesty hangers-on, and is ready to concentrate on His special ones, those of us He has given so much of His time to. Sure, there are still some other ships following in the distance. We’re used to that. But for the most part, for now at least, *He belongs to us!*”

III- LIFE’S UNEXPECTED STORMS

But, as is so often the case when we become presumptuous in our relationship with God, the circumstances that followed were not at all as we expected. Let’s read on:

³But as they sailed, ¹behold, ²a great windstorm ³came down upon the lake; ²and the waves began breaking into the boat, so that it ¹was being swamped ²already ³and they were in peril. ²But he himself was in the stern, on the cushion, sleeping. ¹So his disciples came ³and aroused him, saying, “Master, Master! We are perishing!... ¹Lord, save us!... ²Teacher, don’t you care that we are perishing?” ¹And He said to them, “Why are you fearful, you of little faith?”

(¹Matthew 8:18,23-27; ²Mark 4:35-41; ³Luke 8:22-25 TLOCIS)

“As they sailed, behold....” Behold, indeed. The last thing we were expecting was a storm. *We had God in the boat with us!* That should make us immune from such problems. And should the elements (or any other harmful thing) loom on the horizon, the very fact that Christ was in the boat with us ought to intercept

¹ The Life of Christ in Stereo: The Four Gospels Speak in Harmony; by Johnston M. Cheney; © 1969 Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, Oregon

Peace Be Still!

the problem and solve it *before it could touch us*. Right? Wrong. You see, such is the presumptuous nature of man. We choose to use God as a shield from life's storms, rather than as a source of calm in life's storms. Fools! Thus we miss *the purpose* of life's storms.

As they sailed, behold...a great windstorm came down upon the lake...
(Luke 8:23 TLOCIS)

Here we were, God's anointed, accompanied by God Himself, going on a brief sea voyage in a relatively calm environment, and lo and behold, from out of nowhere there comes...a storm. I mean a real storm. There was no indication that such a storm was on the horizon. After all, we'd spent our lives in these boats. And even without radar, man knows the signs in the heavens that tell of threatening weather. Jesus Himself had acknowledged that in Matthew 16:1-3. Remember? The Pharisees and the Saducees had approached Him and asked for a sign from Heaven to confirm His Diety.

But He answered and said to them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' "And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.'

Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?"

(Matthew 16:2,3 NAS)

We knew how to read the heavens better than that. And this was *no ordinary* light wind. It was a *great* windstorm. And the waves began breaking into the boat, so that it was in danger of sinking, and *we were in peril*. We didn't just think we were in peril, we really were. The Scripture says so!

It was then that some of us began murmuring among ourselves.

"So this is what it means to be a Christian," one disciple groaned.

"Hey, this whole thing was God's idea, wasn't it? I mean, He 'commanded us to get into the boat'. We just followed Him! What has God done, anyway, led us out here to perish?"

I think that line has been used before. Like in Exodus 14:11.

But we were scared! (I mean *really* scared) and confused. We thought following God protected us from these kinds of storms.

Suddenly it hit us. “Where’s Jesus? Where’s God now that we need Him?”

I think it must have been Peter, as usual, who had the answer. At any rate, someone cried out: “The Master’s *asleep* on a cushion in the stern.” We moved as one in His direction. At first, our cries were more subtle in nature. We decided just to *inform* God of our plight. Obviously, He had slept through it all, and He needed to be brought up to date. So we gave Him a three-second rundown of the ten o’clock news, and we sort of gave the weather report priority.

“Master, Master, we are perishing! Lord, save us!”

Jesus opened His eyes. Had He really been asleep? Yes. How do you know? The Bible says so. At any rate, as He came to, our *information* turned to *accusation*:

“Teacher, don’t you care that we are perishing?”

The word for “master” and “teacher” used as the outer layers of this sandwich of cries come from the same word in the Greek. They are titles of respect for one who held a position of honor as an instructor or discipler of men. But the word “Lord” was a word for one who ruled over others. They cried, “Teacher, we are perishing!” “Lord, save us!” “Teacher, *don’t you care?*” They didn’t say, “Lord, don’t you care?” That statement would have been clothed in incompatibility. But don’t you see the progression of their complaint? First, they *informed* God of their plight. Then, they *implored* God for help. Finally, they *accused* God of indifference for allowing such a thing to come to pass. “Teacher, *don’t you care?*” When you are accusing God of indifference, you cannot be addressing God as Lord.

Now before you throw the book at these guys for their apparently blasphemous response to testing, please stop and think about how we respond to the storms of life. Now be honest. When was the last time that you, in your spirit, said to God, “How could you, Lord? Don’t you realize what’s happening? Don’t you care?” “No, we don’t say it out loud. Among the brethren, we assume our pious, Pharasaical “All things work together” routine... our Sammy Spiritual response. But we forget...God looks on the heart! And how often, in our hearts have we said, “God you’ve got to be kidding! Don’t you know? Don’t you care?” Let’s don’t give these disciples the “Harry Holier Than Thou” sermon. Let’s be honest. They are just mirroring what we do. “Teacher, don’t you

care?,” they cried. Oh, Beloved, does He ever care!

The Master raised His head from off the pillow. With those penetrating eyes, so bright with authority, so deep with love... He looked at us. The first words from His mouth should have been enough to silence us in shame. We ought to memorize those words today. We ought to review those words every day for the rest of our lives. God looked us in the eye and said, “Why are you fearful, you of little faith? What are you afraid of? I AM is here.” That is the essence of what He said.

Do you see the problem? They were afraid because they were responding to a situation, based on *what God appeared to be doing*, rather than on *who God IS*. That’s our problem, as well. What difference does it make what God is doing? Our confidence is based on the character of God, not the performance of God. His performance in any given situation is the result of the exercise of His divine sovereignty, ruled by His divine omnipotence, decided through His divine omniscience. Whatever He is doing is best. Whatever He is allowing is best. However it may appear to us, because He is who He is, He is to be praised, and we are to be at rest.

Jesus *appeared* to be unconcerned. He was asleep on a pillow. He chose to sleep to demonstrate the peace that man on earth can have in a crisis when He is inhabited by the Living God. He was demonstrating the Mind of God, and if it took waves six feet high and winds 40 mph strong to get our attention, He was willing to do it. But only His body was sleeping. His Spirit was alive and awake. The God of Israel never sleeps or slumbers.

Many of us either are or have been passing through some storms of our own. None of them is exactly the same. Some are apparent disasters. Some start out as contrary winds and build into hurricanes. Some seem to hover overhead like ominous clouds just waiting to dump their fury on our lives. But the storm is not the problem. Our response to the storm is the problem. The Master, our Lord, is in the boat with us. He is quietly at rest, but ever aware of the rumblings in the sky overhead. He knew that storm was coming; so He led you into the boat, the ark of salvation, to keep you secure. But He did not steer you around the storm. He wants to take you through the storm, so that by the storm you might become like Him. And the minute you begin to rail at Him because of the storm...the minute you cry, “Teacher,

Peace Be Still!

don't you care?", you *miss the whole point of the storm*. Why are you fearful? Nothing can sink that ship. Nothing. Relax.

IV- PEACE, BE STILL!

Now listen to what Jesus did and what Jesus said to us, once He decided to act:

Then he arose and rebuked the winds ³and the raging of the water, ²and said to the sea, "Peace, be still." And they ceased, and there came a great calm. And he said to them, ³"Where is your faith?" ²"How is it you have no faith?" ¹And the men were filled with wonder ²and were awed beyond measure, ³saying to one another, ¹"What kind of man is He? ³WHO then is He, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?"

(¹Matthew 8:18,23-27, ²Mark 4:35-41, ³Luke 8:22-25 TLOCIS)

It wasn't the storm that bothered the Master. The storm would bow down in humble submission the moment His Word went forth. Storms don't bother Jesus, and they don't bother Jesus in you, either. No, the storm wasn't His problem. The disciples were His problem. We were His problem. We let the storm erase from our minds, at least momentarily, who He was. So He asked us: "Who's the Captain of this ship, anyway? Where is your faith?"

First, He rebuked the winds. He told them to hush. Then He spoke to the raging waters which were swirling about that boat, ready to inhale its occupants like a vicious whale. He said, "Water, stop that!" He said, "*Peace, Be Still!*" And immediately it was as though someone pulled the plug or turned a switch on a mighty machine. In a fraction of a second, there was, according to the Scriptures, *a great calm*. Not just a cessation of the winds and waves...a great calm. It was as though there had never been a storm. We were surrounded by what appeared to be the peaceful waters of a mountain lake on a summer day. There was no movement of the sea at all. The wind went from infinity to infinity. From devastation to zero. It stopped dead in its tracks. It had to. The God of Eternity had spoken.

V- WHO, THEN, IS HE?

But we didn't get the picture, did we? God was amazed at our lack of faith, and we were amazed at His control of the elements. "Who, then, is He?" we cried; "He commands even the winds and the water." Wow! Look at what our God can do to a storm.

Peace Be Still!

You and I have to deal with this passage honestly. We have to *seek understanding*. We have to try to take the principles involved and *personalize* them until the message Jesus was trying to impart to those bewildered saints on that wind-tossed lake settles into our lives and makes a difference.

I believe the major messages that unfold from this experience can be boiled down to these:

1- Just because we are following God's leading does not mean that we will miss life's storms. He *gave commandment*...for us to get into that boat and cross over the lake. We *followed Him* into the boat. We felt secure circumstantially, because we believed we were in the will of God. And we were. But, you say, doing the will of God almost cost us our lives. Beloved, *doing the will of God did cost Jesus His life*. This life is not where it's at. This life is a proving ground to test us and prepare us for Heaven, and this life is a field for us to farm, a place to plant seeds, water them, and watch a miraculous God give the increase. But this world is not a haven which God has designed to make His children comfortable on their way to Heaven. And you get serious about doing the will of God, and you'd best *expect* some storms. It goes with the territory. These guys shouldn't have been so surprised at the wind and the waves. But they were. And so are we.

2- You and I must be careful how we approach God when the skies overhead get a little dark. If our God is sovereign, and our God is omniscient, and our God is love, then how can we get angry just because life's winds are blowing a little harder than usual? But, oh, the deceitfulness of the human mind. Our three responses are usually pretty much like the disciples. First, we *inform* God of our plight. "Master, Master, we are perishing!", we cry. (Usually, we aren't, but we somehow think if we sound dramatic, God will take pity on us.) Then, we *implore* God. "Save us," we cry. What we mean, is, "Lord, take this thing away from me. Take away this sickness. Take away this business problem. Take away this misunderstanding. Lord, it's raining, and the waves are coming into the boat. Lord, save me from all these problems." But, oh, so often, all we hear are the sounds of silence. The waves still beat against the ship. The winds still howl. The rain still falls. And gradually, little by little, we begin to get angry with God. We don't usually say it out loud. But usually, our hearts begin to whine..."God, don't you care that I am perishing? Don't you care?" Now stand back and analyze that statement. The God

Peace Be Still!

of Eternity, Creator of Heaven and Earth, left heaven and came to earth, took on the cloak of a slave, and died the death of a criminal for you. And you ask, “Don’t you care?” Someone dies in your place, and then, because they love you so much they want you to have attitudes of Heaven while you live on earth. They allow you to pass through some storms to achieve that end, and you ask, “*Don’t you care?*” Dare we ever utter those words again?

3- God wasn’t rebuking them for not having the faith to “believe” away the storm. He was rebuking them for being afraid of the storm. Please don’t miss the deeper meaning of this passage. Any fool can command God to take something away. Only a man or woman of faith can submit to whatever comes. Don’t you see? Because their faith was so small, God halted the storm. But they missed the blessing that would have been theirs had they learned just to rest as He did!

He said to the storm, “Peace, Be Still.” What He wanted to do was say to their hearts, “Peace, Be Still.” For they had no faith. They could not trust God for who He was. They based their confidence in God on what He did when life’s clouds began to form. If He removed the clouds, He was a good God. If He let it rain, He didn’t care. That was their perspective of their God. He replied, “You have no faith.”

Now I do not know the kinds of clouds that might be forming overhead in your life right now. You may be panicking over the international scene. The economic signs may be threatening your security. Your health may be failing. Your family may be crumbling. I do not know. One thing I do know. I know He knows. He knows when we hurt. He knows when we suffer. He knows when we’re lonely. He knows when the waves beat against our lives until we cannot help but cry. “Master, Master, we are perishing! Lord save us!” But, oh, it breaks His heart when we cry, “Teacher, don’t you care?”

Whatever the storm may be that is threatening you today, Beloved, may I remind you that your God is in that boat with you, and He is at rest. He is beckoning *you* to rest, as well. He offers you the cushion of His Word to place your head on, and begs you to quietly lie down, though the winds be blowing, and the waves be pounding, and crawl up into Him by faith.

He wants you to take a deep breath, right now, and say to your anxious soul: “Peace, Be Still”. He may speak to the winds, and

Peace Be Still!

they may cease. He may speak to the waves, and in an instant, they may become like a crystal sea, quiet, and calm.

Or He may say to your heart, "Rest, my child, in Me."

Which would you rather have? Quiet waters? Or a quiet spirit? Peaceful seas? Or a peace-filled heart? A trouble-free life with a troubled spirit? Or a few battle scars that ultimately leave the imprint of His life upon your soul? Which would you rather have? His miracles? Or His character?

Why don't we stop right now and tell God that all we want is Him! Let's tell Him we'll stop badgering Him to remove the thorns and the winds He's using to make us like Him. Let's tell Him. And then, let's listen, as quietly, He whispers to our souls:

PEACE, BE STILL!

Peace, Be Still! You need not fret
Though wind and waters roar;
Your God can still that howling sea
He's done it oft' before!

Your God can tame that circumstance
That has you so forlorn
He can but speak a word, and lo,
That problem will be gone!

But, oh, Beloved, better still,
When e're we face a test
Why not just do what Jesus did
And in His power...rest!

Peace Be Still!

Suggestions for Application

1- Read the parables that followed the parable of the sower and the seed (the parable of the mustard seed, the leaven, the hidden treasures, the pearl). What common threads do you find woven through them all? What have you learned about why Jesus spoke in parables? Can you find any practical application that would affect teaching techniques today?

2- Reread the passage used for today's study three times. It is found on pages 4, 5 and 6. Now try to imagine that you were one of those in that boat with Jesus. What do you think your first response would have been? Would you have been offended that He was asleep? Would you have been likely to have accused Him of not caring?

3- Which of the following reasons do you think was in the heart of God when He invited those men into that boat knowing they would encounter a fierce storm?

- a- He wanted to discipline them
- b- He wanted to frighten them
- c- He wanted to demonstrate what he could do to the elements
- d- He wanted to test their faith.

Can you find other illustrations in Scripture in which God did the same thing? What is His ultimate goal?

4- Take a piece of paper and write out, in your own words, in essay form, a contemporary story in which a group of Christians experienced what those men experienced. Use any kind of circumstances you choose. Tell a little of what they felt, and how they reacted. See if you can make this story a reality in today's world. Ask God for wisdom in learning to respond to the winds and the waves He sends your way.

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