T rusting God's Will for Life When Nature Runs Amok

Session Two

Preaching Supports

Theme Statement
An overarching glimpse of the entire worship series.

Among the most common questions asked by people of faith is, “where is God when life is out of control?” Driving a car, we crest a hill and on the other side hit black ice and spin out; we receive word from a friend that a house fire has devastated their property and ruined their possessions; winds from a typhoon thousands of miles away slam into an urban area, resulting in downed power lines disruption of everyday service and loss of life. In any of these situations, or ones like it, we look for the will of God.

This series suggests that God's will does not create storms like these, but is nonetheless at work within them to bring life and wholeness to us. Jesus confidently sleeps in the storm. When called upon, he stands, challenges his disciples to faith and then restores the calm. Storms are unavoidable; God's will carries us through.

3. Laying Hold of God's Will for Life in the Face of Disease and Death: Mark 5:21-43 (Year B—Lectionary 13 / 4 Pentecost)

Text Study
An expository summary of the reading related to the Together in Faith Adult Bible Study.

The story of Jesus' calming the storm speaks deeply to the life of the disciple. In this event we see how the presence of Christ does not eliminate the storms of our lives but rather carries us through them to eventual triumph. It is intriguing that the words of Jesus expressed to the winds and the waves are identical to the words addressed to the demon-possessed man in Mark 1:25. The will of God is a will for life. The kingdom of God made present in Jesus acts to affirm and defend life.

This affirmation, however, often wears the “masks” of God in order to produce faith. The outcry of the disciples reminds us that God's timing is not ours. Threatened by the wind and the waves, the disciples give expression to their fear of death. Jesus rightly directs their attention back to faith—confidence in the one who conquers death. The wonder and awe of the disciples in verse 41 is Marcan foreshadowing. The disciples will not know who Jesus really is until after the resurrection. Then his triumph over all our storms will be complete.

Focus Statement
Jesus embodies God’s will to protect and preserve, especially when the storms of life threaten to overwhelm us.

Key Verse
[Jesus] said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” (Mark 4:40)

Tip
Many of the creative worship suggestions in these preaching and liturgy supports require some preparation, so please look through them well in advance.
Sermon Outlines

The first outline is designed for use if the scheduling of this series corresponds with the Church Year calendar. The second outline is provided for general use at any time of the year.

OUTLINE 1: (LECTIONARY-BASED SERMON)

Gospel Connection:
The story of Jesus calming the storm speaks to the life of faith on two levels. The first level is cosmic. In this event Jesus demonstrates the power of God at work within him to control nature run amuck. As the Spirit-filled Messiah, Jesus reveals his identity in his ability to command nature. On a second level, our faith and obedience to God does not prevent storms from overtaking us in life. Like the disciples we cry out to God. In crying out to God, we discover God's presence in a wonderful way, our faith is restored, and the storm passes.

Title: Where is Jesus when I need him?

1. When storms hit.
   a. Beyond my control—So where are you, Jesus?
      i. I didn't do anything.
      ii. No one did anything.
   b. I didn't mean it—Where are you, Jesus?
      i. I made a mistake, but this is more than I deserve.
      ii. I may deserve this, but isn't there a way out of it?

2. God at work.
   a. The gift of God's presence.
      i. Not alone in the storm.
      ii. Strength enough.
      iii. Inner calm when the winds blow.
   b. God will calm the storm.
      i. The promise.
      ii. Meeting Jesus on the other side.

   a. Life lessons.
      i. Preparedness.
      ii. Caution.
   b. Christian character.
      i. Increased faith.
      ii. Growing courage.
      iii. Compassion.
   c. Discovering the will of God through the storm—Jesus is with you.

OUTLINE 2: (THEMATIC SERMON)

Title: Faith?

1. Storms of life can overtake us even when we've done the right things.
   a. Storm raged even with Christ in the disciples' boat.
      i. Disciples obeyed the command of the Savior (verses 35–36).
      ii. Disciples doing everything right—welcomed him in the boat and set sail to the other side.
      iii. Jesus was sailing with experts.
         1. Four out twelve were fishermen.
         2. They had experience with boats and rough seas.
      iv. Storms can catch up with you even when you are doing right things.
b. It is human to blame ourselves when things go wrong.
   i. Haven't we all done it? When was last time you did?
   ii. Arguments with loved ones, friends—when done, you blame yourself.
      1. Maybe you thought you should have seen it coming and avoided it
      2. Perhaps you thought you could have handled it better or been clearer.
   iii. Series of things happen in your life—you assume because of something you did wrong.
      1. Personal reflection is a good thing.
      2. Personal guilt can be good when we have reason to believe that we have done wrong.
      3. But personal blame makes no sense and doesn't help us.
      4. Personal blame turns us away from God, loved ones, and against ourselves.

2. Faith changes the world when we discover Christ is with us.
   a. The love of Jesus Christ.
      i. Christians still experience storms.
      ii. We have someone in our boat.
   b. Someone to cry out to.
      i. Disciples cried out when boat was threatened.
      ii. Professionals—Peter, Andrew, James, and John were all boat handlers. And yet? Read verse 37.
      iii. If the boat of your life is threatened, you have someone to cry out to.
   c. God always hears and acts.
      i. Our timing is not the same as God's.
         1. Take note in this text.
         2. Jesus is awakened.
         3. When they were ready for God, they cried out to Jesus . . . he acted.
         4. Timing of God is a matter of trust.
      ii. The way God acts is not always our way.
         1. Disciples would rather Jesus prevented the storm in first place.
         2. They would have never seen the Savior's power over creation.
         3. Trusting how the Savior acts is possible if we believe we will learn.
         4. Disciples learned this.
      iii. Jesus will act to get us to the right destination.
         1. Next event is healing of Gerasene demoniac.
         2. One of greatest miracles: had the storm not blown them off course, they never would have seen it.
         3. God will take the storms and take us to even greater miracles—if we are open.

3. Christ’s invitation to grow in faith.
   a. In faith, the world is different.
      i. God can master any storm.
      ii. Destination was worth the waves.
      iii. Winds stirred up a miracle.
      iv. Jesus wasn't sleeping—only waiting for the right time and the disciples’ need.
   b. On other side of storm is this Savior’s insistent invitation.
      i. Did you hear it? Read verses 39–40.
      ii. Two critical aspects of the text.
         1. First, Jesus rebukes the wind, not the words of his disciples.
         2. Second, he invites them to grow in faith.
      iii. What are you afraid of?
         1. The storm . . . Jesus in the boat.
         2. The waves of guilt and blame . . . Jesus invites you to a new miracle.
         3. That the seas will never be calm again . . . The Savior will speak on your behalf.
         4. Anything? . . . He did this for the disciples; he won't do less for you or me.
Conclusion: Faith changes the world . . . my world, your world. Faith transforms possibilities of life. Faith opens us to the One who takes storms and uses them to bring us to a new shore. Faith means trust—not in us but in the Lord. Are you ready?

**Children’s Lesson**

The first option is designed for use if the scheduling of this series corresponds with the Church Year calendar. The second option is provided for general use at any time of the year.

**OPTION 1: (LECTIONARY-BASED LESSON)**

Supplies needed: a large piece of cardboard to sit on as your boat and a cushion for Jesus. You could just make an outline on the floor with masking tape.

Good morning, everybody! I am so glad you all are here today! There are so many things that you can do with a boat. Let’s try to think of some together. (fishing, skiing, just riding) Those of us that use boats know that bright, sunny days are the best ones to be out on the water. We also know, though, that storms can come very quickly and you need to keep your eye on the weather because being on a boat during a storm is dangerous. Experiencing a bad storm out on the water can be a very scary thing!

Jesus and his disciples were out on a lake in a boat. They experienced a storm with lots of wind and very high waves. The water even started to come inside of the boat. All of us know that situation is pretty bad! Do you know what Jesus was doing during this time? He was sleeping—yes, sleeping! The disciples woke him up, shouting, “Master, don’t you care that we are about to die?” Guess what Jesus did. He woke up and talked to the winds and waves. He said, “Peace! Be still!” Once those words were said, the storm stopped! Amazing! The disciples were all shocked.

We too have some times in our lives that we could call storms. These storms could be from a death in the family, or maybe an illness. Other storms could come as family problems or hard times at school. We need to remember that Jesus can calm our storms too. Those storms or problems may not go away, but through our trust in him, we can gain the peace we need to get through. Jesus promises that we will never have to get through a storm without him. He can calm any doubt or fear we have.

Pray: Heavenly Father, we are truly thankful for all the power you have to calm the storms that come in our lives. Help us to remember that the promise is not that we will never have hard times, but the promise is that we don’t have to go through them alone. Storms can be hard to get through, but we are thankful that you are there with us, giving the peace we need. Amen.

**OPTION 2: (THEMATIC LESSON)**

Good morning and welcome to church today. Being scared is pretty normal. How many of you have been scared of something? What kinds of things are scary? We are going to act out a story today about a scary storm the disciples encountered. Let’s all climb into our boat here. (Have them all sit near you pretending to be on a boat.) We are with Jesus and his disciples. ( Pretend to be rowing and bobbing up and down.) Oh no—all of a sudden, a big storm comes. Do you hear the really loud wind, and feel the huge waves? Now our boat is rocking all over the place. (Make loud claps and exaggerated swaying movements to depict this.) Uh, oh. Water is filling our boat because of all the splashing and I think we may drown with all this water coming in. Let’s all pretend we are pretty scared now. (Make scared or nervous faces and gestures.)

What do you think we should do knowing that Jesus is with us? Oh no, Jesus is actually sleeping right now. What should we do? (Make a sleeping gesture with your hands and head.) All right, let’s wake him up. “Jesus, Jesus, wake up!” (Have the kids help you say this with you.) “Jesus, don’t you care we are about to drown?” Guess what Jesus does? He wakes up and stands. He then says the words, “Peace! Be still!” With these words the waves are now calm, the winds are done blowing and our boat is in peaceful waters. Thankfully, because of Jesus—we are safe and sound!
When this story actually happened with the disciples, Jesus reminded them to be faithful. I am here to remind you that Jesus is always in your boat. We will all go through scary times and it is OK to feel that way. You may have a blanket that helps you feel better or maybe a special stuffed animal. The best safety net you can have, though, is the friend you have in Christ and the promise that he will never leave your side. Sure, we will all have some storms or bad times in our lives, but you have the promise to not go through them alone. Jesus can give you the strength and courage you need to face each one. Next time you are feeling a bit scared or nervous, remember this Bible story and say a little prayer. You have a very strong friend named Jesus!

Idea and Images for Preaching
What follows are a variety of creative ways to enhance the communication of the message. While some links to ideas and images are provided, permission and payment may be required for congregational use.

Active Participation
Ways to create an active learning environment.
Option #1: Do the wave! During the sermon there might be an appropriate moment for the congregation to “do the wave” as a physical illustration of the storm. Perhaps they could sway back and forth to illustrate the wind.

Option #2: At key moments throughout the message have the congregation say: “Peace! Be still!” Perhaps you could divide the words between men and women, or the left and right sides of the nave.

Clips
TV, movies, and miscellaneous videos.
Option #1: Play the musical opening of “Gilligan’s Island” to begin the service. Versions can be found online. Check out http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rELOFvy8ICl

Option #2: Clips from movies like the “Perfect Storm” or “Poseidon Adventure” could illustrate this theme. Video from Hurricane Katrina or devastating tsunami’s could bring real life poignancy to this service.

Drama
Scripts, improvisational igniters, or links to dramatic resources.
Perhaps theatrical members of your congregation can adapt the Gilligan’s Island theme song to the gospel lesson:

Just sit right back and you’ll hear a tale, a tale of a fateful trip
that started from Galilee’s far shore with Christ aboard the ship!
There were the mighty fisherman, the sons of Zebedee.
Bold Peter too, and many more shoved off into the sea.
Shoved off into the sea.
The winds came up the waves grew high; the disciples they did cry
to Jesus, fast asleep, though all thought they would die.
Thought they would die.
When they couldn’t take anymore, the Lord stood strong and true:
“Be still, again!” “Peace unto you!” “Be strong, trust in the Lord!”
“I am with you, forevermore.” “We’ll reach that other shore!”

Illustrations
Stories and anecdotes that enhance understanding.
Illustration #1: Storm Stories
Does anyone in your congregation have a storm story that they would be willing to share with the congregation? Ask for such stories ahead of time. Interview these members as part of the message. If it’s not
a physical storm, perhaps the way the Lord helped a person through an even more devastating storm of life could be shared. Check out The Weather Channel’s Web site http://stormstories.weather.com/stories/ for some other real life stories.

Illustration #2: Deer in the Fire
“This photo of two elk cows surrounded by an awesome conflagration is authentic, snapped on a digital camera by U.S. Forest Service fire behavior analyst John McColgan on August 6, 2000. The location was the east fork of the Bitterroot River near Sula, Montana in the Bitterroot National Forest. ‘That’s a once-in-a-lifetime look there,’ McColgan told The Missoulian after he was tracked down a month later. ‘I just happened to be in the right place at the right time.’ Because the photo was taken with a BLM [Bureau of Land Management] digital camera, it is regarded as public property and McColgan has not been allowed to profit from it.” (from: http://urbanlegends.about.com/library/bl_montana_fire.htm)

PROJECTION
NOTE: The PowerPoint presentation provided for use in the Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies can be easily adapted for worship settings.

PROPS AND OBJECTS
Ideas for designing a more multi-sensory sermon.
Option #1: Nautical stuff—life vests, oars, and so on, might be useful for setting the scene.
Option #2: Give everyone a pack of LifeSaver-shaped candy. Depending on the colors, you could come up with a sticker to affix on the wrapper with a gospel message—red for forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, green for new life, yellow for the glory of God, and so on. Invite members to share these rolls of candy with people who need some lifting-up over the next week.

QUOTES
Theme supporting, thought provoking, words from notable sources.
Quote #1: St. Francis DeSales—“We shall steer safely through every storm, so long as our heart is right, our intention fervent, our courage steadfast, and our trust fixed on God.”
Quote #2: Phillip Melanchthon—“Trouble and perplexity drive us to prayer, and prayer driveth away trouble and perplexity.”
Quote #3: “There’s More” —author unknown
We only see a little of the ocean,
A few miles distance from the rocky shore;
But Oh! Out there beyond—beyond the eyes’ horizon
There’s more—there’s more.
We only see a little of God’s loving,
A few rich treasures from this mighty store;
But oh! Out there beyond—beyond our life’s horizon
There’s more—there’s more.

IMAGES
Links to photos or art that enhance multimedia presentations.
Image #1: photograph of a storm at sea (from: http://www.richard-seaman.com/Travel/Brunei/Storm.jpg)
Image #2: Christ and the Storm by Giorgio de Chirico (from: http://www.cab.u-szeged.hu/cgfa/c/chirico3.jpg)
Image #3: Jesus asleep in the stern (from: http://www.servicioskoinonia.org/cerezo/dibujosB/40ordinarioBl2.jpg)
LINKS
Are you a helpful link? Consider making any creative worship ideas that your congregation develops available for more churches to use via the social networking features of www.bookoffaith.org.

Option #1: There are several Web sites, such as http://www.textweek.com, on the Internet for pastors to use as resources for sermons or to do more historical research on this text. You can always do an online search to find something of particular interest.

Option #2: Visit Web sites such as http://www.faithvisuals.com/content/freevideo.html to view images, videos, and PowerPoint presentations for use during your worship services.

Preaching Supports: Mark 4:35-41, p. 7