

**SERMON**  
**“Name Your Hurricane”**  
**Mark 4:35-41**  
**Sunday, June 24, 2018**

Set down on dry land after three days cowering atop furniture in her flooded kitchen, 83-year-old Camille Fletcher stumbled a few feet and collapsed. She and two of her children had made it through Hurricane Katrina alive, but her Glendalyn with the long, beautiful black hair was gone.

"My precious daughter," Fletcher sobbed Wednesday. "I prayed to God to keep us safe in his loving care."

Then, looking into the sky, she whimpered: "You're supposed to be a loving God. You're supposed to love us. And what have you done to us? Why did you do this to us?" ...

After several hours, a small fleet of rented moving trucks showed up to take the people to the downtown convention center so they could be taken out of the city.

Camille Fletcher sat forlorn, not really caring when it would be her turn. Suddenly, a woman emerged from the waters and began walking toward her. She had long, disheveled black hair.

"Mamma?" she shouted.

"Oh my God, oh my God," the old woman screamed, kissing Glendalyn's hand and pressing it against her forehead. "My daughter's alive!"

The 59-year-old Glendalyn Fletcher told her family a harrowing story of how she had floated through a wall at her house a mile away from her mother's and swum, stripped naked by the raging torrent, to a neighbor's house and cowered in an attic; how someone had picked them up Tuesday and left them stranded on a water-locked section of I-10.

"It was horrible, but there were millions of stars," the dehydrated woman said.

A few moments later, it was time for Camille Fletcher to go to a shelter. Before being helped into the back of the moving truck, she looked back at her daughter smiled and proclaimed; "God is good."

When it comes to the storms of life we, like Camille Fletcher, as well as the disciples in the boat with Jesus are not much different. As long as everything is going okay: "God is good;" but as soon as a storm arises we cry out to God: "Don't you care that we are?" Name your storm! It doesn't really matter if it's tropical, sub-tropical, or a full-fledged Category 5 hurricane; when bad things happen we too quickly forget that Jesus is in the boat with us.

Homiletics reminds us the disciples weren't really a seafaring people. Instead of venturing forth into the deep they tended to keep their boats close to the shore. The deep for them represented the unknown — the place from which some people never returned. It was there in the deep that the forces of chaos, evil, and death existed. It was there in the deep that the terrible sea monsters lurked waiting to devour.

It's no accident, then, that Mark preserves this story of Jesus and his disciples on a boat being tossed by an unexpected and violent storm. The chaos rages once again; their rickety boats are swamped by 10-foot waves and are starting to sink. Fear, panic and desperation come over these fishermen, who have clearly never experienced this type of storm.

Mark tells us that in the midst of all the chaos, Jesus is in the stern of the boat napping quietly on a cushion. The disciples, meanwhile, are in a panic. Jesus apparently doesn't sense the chaos, the evil that surrounds them, and so they are concerned. "Wake up!" they yell over the howling wind. "Don't you see that we're dying here? Don't you care?"

Jesus wakes up, and maybe looks at them for a long moment with one eye open. He doesn't answer their question. Instead he stands and addresses the wind and the waves. Mark says that he "rebuked" the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Mark, as well as the other gospels, makes it clear: Jesus has command over the wind and waves, over chaos and calamity and over evil and despair.

Now we, along with Mark's readers, might expect Jesus to give his disciples an explanation of how he did that! How did he calm the storm? How did he turn a violent, raging sea into a placid pond of tranquility?

We might expect a presentation outlining Jesus' humanity and divinity. We might even expect Jesus to smile and go back to sleep, leaving the disciples to wonder about what they had just seen. But, Jesus instead turns and asks them a question: "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

You have to wonder if the disciples were thinking something like, "Well, duh, of course we're afraid! We're in a Category 5 storm, we almost died, and then he stands in the boat, raises his hands like Moses over the Red Sea, and the forces of nature obey him. So yes. We were afraid!"

In their fear, however, the disciples had forgotten one important fact: Jesus was in the boat with them. They woke Jesus up so that he could share in their panic.

Jesus, on the other hand, wants them to have faith -- not fear. "Always remember, I'm in the boat with you," Jesus says in effect, "and I've got this."

The storms hit us, too, often with great fury. Many devastating hurricanes can hit our lives no matter where we live:

- + Hurricane Cancer
- + Hurricane Divorce
- + Hurricane Unemployment
- + Hurricane Financial Crisis
- + Hurricane Grade Point Average
- + Hurricane Child Illness

The thing that all of these hurricanes have in common is that like the disciples we question Jesus' presence in the midst of these storms.

Where is Jesus when the typhoon of devastating illness hits?

Where is Jesus when the lightning strike of a loved one's death leaves us in shock?

Where is God when the waves of death, destruction, and doubt threaten to sink us?

Like the storm the disciples were experiencing these other storms in life also have another common denominator: the answer to our question of where Jesus is.

Where is Jesus?

In the boat, with us, and there he invites us to turn from fear to faith -- the kind of faith that Jesus himself had in the God who brings order out of chaos and will one day still all storms forever.

Faith doesn't mean that we won't suffer. Jesus himself suffered and died while holding on to faith. Faith does mean, however, that we can trust him for our future -- a future made possible by his faith in God's new creation, by an empty tomb and the defeat of death.

A few days after Hurricane Andrew struck in 1992, a 7-year-old girl asked her father why God let it happen.

Andrew's 160-mph winds had ripped the roof from the family's home while they huddled in a stairwell.

The girl's father, found himself wanting to defend God. He didn't want her to think badly of God — but he had no words.

Finally, he said, "I don't understand why this happened. But sometimes you have to lose the roof to see the sky."

Many of us this Sunday are facing serious storms with memorable names. We're afraid, and rightly so. We too just might need to lose our roof in order to see the sky! Faith is the ability to see what the wind and the waves don't want us to see...that the very one who will calm the storm is already in the boat with us.