

Have No Fear, I AM Is Here – Pr Jim Sprengle – July 25, 2021

- I. **Mark 6:50** – “they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately [Jesus] spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”
- II. **Nature can be so unpredictable and absolutely devastating.**
 - a. Lately, we have experienced wildfires that are leaving behind all kinds of destruction like in Paradise, CA and last year’s fire around Detroit to this year’s Bootleg fire in Klamath County.
 - i. We can’t be sure how the rest of this summer will play out – so we continue to pray for better conditions...
 - b. But just think about all the places our church has sent missionaries to give some help in the middle of natural disasters.
 - i. A few of the trips have included Vernonia, Haiti, New Orleans (LA), Joplin (MO), Minot (ND), Tonasket (WA) – and I’m pretty sure others I can’t remember
 - ii. It’s always humbling to see the amount of trouble people deal with as they survey the damage and consider their future
 - c. I remember talking with Pr Bohren when he returned from Joplin and the tornado in 2011.
 - i. He was shocked at the power of the wind and how it could drive objects into homes, trees and buildings –
 - ii. Not only that, but some areas were almost bare as whole homes were swept away down to the foundation
 - d. The thing is that we never know when a major event might hit us – just look at the heatwave in Oregon that almost matched the record high temperature for... Las Vegas!
 - i. Who of us at the beginning of this summer would say, “ya know, I think we could hit 115 degrees this year in JUNE!”
 - e. I guess that’s the trouble – the storms of life are never planned.
- III. **The Sea of Galilee is known for its storms too.**
 - a. When we went to the Holy Land, our guide explained the winds from Mt Hermon would rush down the mountain without warning... and because the Sea of Galilee is about 700 feet below sea level, huge squalls could pop up unexpectedly.
 - b. He said that the modern-day city of Tiberius had some damage and flooding from waves that were pushed toward it from wind gusts.
 - c. We had a chance to go up to Mt Hermon – which is a ski area – but it sits to the northeast of the Sea of Galilee and the winds would come down and push boats southwest.
 - d. In our Gospel reading, Jesus and the disciples have ministered to literally thousands of people, along with miraculously feeding them all with a couple of fish and few loaves of bread.

- i. Then Jesus does something strange... He dismisses the crowd to go home and tells the disciples to leave Him behind (vs 45)
 - ii. What would you think if your leader and teacher said, “you go on ahead, I’ll see you there”?
- e. The story then explains that Jesus went to pray (vs 46) and maybe recharge while the disciples tried to cross over.
 - i. You see, they were trying to head to Bethsaida, but the winds from Mt Hermon were pushing them off course... and I suppose they were rowing and doing anything they could to get where Jesus told them to go... because if they weren’t in Bethsaida when Jesus got there to meet them... they couldn’t text Him to let Him know what happened
- f. Now, all the while, Jesus has His eye on them... as it says they were “making headway painfully,” (vs 48).
 - i. I’m not sure this translates the situation they were in... because the word used is “severe harassment or torture” – in other words, these guys were really struggling in these winds and waves for several hours.
 - ii. They may have even started to wonder (like when Jesus had calmed the storm) if they were going to make it – and this time Jesus wasn’t sleeping in the boat, He was not with them at all.
- g. Somewhere between 3 and 6am, the fourth watch of the night, Jesus is walking out on the water, intending to pass by them (vs 48).
- h. As they catch a glimpse of a figure walking out on the water... what else could it be but a spirit that is floating along?
 - i. As if this night wasn’t bad enough, now they are being haunted!
- i. But Jesus calls out, “Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid.”
 - i. Again, allow me to translate more literally, “Be of good courage, I AM. Do not keep fearing.”

IV. **Have no fear, I AM is here.**

- a. One of the best ways to argue the divinity of Jesus in the Scriptures is to look for His “I am” statements.
 - i. That might seem a little strange to say that whenever Jesus says, “I am...” for example, the gate, the way, the truth, the life, the Good Shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the light, the bread of life, or the True Vine” – that all of these are His way of saying – I AM God.
- b. You see, back in Exodus 3 of the Old Testament, God came to Moses in the burning bush, and when Moses asked His name, God said, “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14)
 - i. This is exactly what Jesus says in our reading – Take courage, I AM.
- c. Not only that, but later in Exodus 33, Moses asks to see God’s glorious presence, but God explains that no one can look upon Him and live.

- i. However, the LORD God would hide Moses in the cleft of a rock as He “passed by” – and Moses could see God’s glory indirectly
- ii. Again, our reading says that Jesus intended to “pass by” the disciples – which would show them that God Himself had gone by them
- d. And even Job uses the same language in chapter 9, as he says that God “walks on the waves of the sea” (vs 8) and “passes by me...” (vs 11)
- e. What we are reading in our Gospel lesson today gives us a picture of Jesus showing His disciples... and us... that He is the God of the universe... the great I AM.
- f. The very presence of God, in their midst, and they couldn’t quite grasp it.

V. **The disciples just didn’t understand.**

- a. We shake our heads and wonder how they could be so dense...
- b. But we struggle just the same...
 - i. When the storms of life come in the form of nature’s fury or the struggles of disease, and trials, and death – we don’t always recognize the great I AM is with us.
 - ii. It’s obvious we can face trials without any warning – from health emergencies, to accidents, to natural disasters... but in the moment, many of us are too fearful and anxious to see God in our presence
- c. Our minds are like the disciples who didn’t recognize that Jesus was watching over them... granted, they were blessed to have Him literally get on the boat with them as the storm was calmed... But He never let them out of His sight
- d. The wonderful part of this story is that Jesus did not keep going, or “passing by,” because they could not see God safely... No, He is God with us, Immanuel (Matthew 1:23)
 - i. Our Jesus is the great I AM... and He is the one who we can encounter without fear
 - ii. He is the one who chose to die in order to provide us with full access to the Father – our sins forgiven as He sees us as holy and blameless. (Ephesians 1:4)
 - iii. How can we even wrap our minds around the fact that God Himself allowed sinful men to nail Him to a cross – God chose to die for our sins and to buy us back from the sin that separates us...
 - iv. But even more than that... Jesus gives us the same victory that He won on that cross – the victory over sin... and death... and the devil
 - 1. This simply means that these things have no real power over us
 - 2. This means that we have nothing to fear, because God wins

VI. **God wins, no matter what comes our way.**

- a. As the troubles and trials of life pop up without warning, we turn to Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit

- b. When unexpected health problems, or the natural disasters... or whatever shows up – we don't have to fear and be anxious, because God promises that He is there for us.
- c. In the unpredictable... in the unknown... God is there with His presence
- d. Jesus tells us, just as He told His worn out and scared disciples, "take heart... I AM. Do not be afraid" - Amen