

Finding Calm in the Chaos of Life

Luke 8:22-26

Why do people sometimes say that life can feel like a roller coaster ride? Do they mean that life is like a thrill ride? Not really.

What people mean is that life is filled with ups and downs, highs and lows, twists and turns, triumphs and tribulations. Life is unpredictable. One moment life seems to be going well, and then suddenly and without warning, it turns to chaos.

You know, there's a difference between a real roller coaster and a roller coaster season of life.

Unlike my wife, some people, get a thrill from riding a roller coaster, even if they are a little afraid. People pay to ride roller coasters and wait with anticipation in long lines to do so.

But no one happily pays for or is looking forward to a roller coaster season of life. We don't look forward to tribulations. Nevertheless tribulation will come.

What I want to suggest to you this morning is that if we would take on a roller coaster rider's perspective when we enter a roller coaster season of life, we can actually rejoice in tribulation and come out of it a stronger Christian.

What is that perspective? Although a person getting on a roller coaster ride may be a little fearful, they get on it anyway, because they know that a very smart engineer designed the roller coaster to scare you but not to kill you. They designed it to give you the experience of chaos, but it's a controlled chaos.

Likewise, when we find ourselves in a roller coaster season of life, when we are faced with situations that seem beyond our control, we can find refuge knowing there's a sovereign God in heaven who is always in control.

There's a God in heaven who engineered and designed the human body, who spoke the world into existence, who placed the earth in orbit at a precise distance from the sun to sustain life, who upholds all things in the universe by the word of his power, and who we can trust to bring us through the storms of life.

There's no reason why thrill seekers should have more faith in the engineers of roller coasters than Christians have in God when going through a roller coaster season of life.

As we will see from our text, the Lord not only directed His disciples to go on a boat ride across a lake, but unbeknownst to them this was going to be a roller coaster of a ride. What's more, it was a wild ride that He not only designed to teach them vital spiritual lessons, but He, the creator of the universe, was in the boat with them.

If they had the perspective of a modern-day roller-coaster rider, the perfect storm they encountered could have been a thrill ride. Instead, they not only thought they would die, but they also questioned whether Jesus cared about their terrifying ordeal.

Main idea: Because Jesus is Lord, all who love and obey Him can find the calm assurance that He will see them through every season of life.

To unfold this theme, we are going to learn three ways that we must trust the Lordship of Jesus to have the calm assurance that He will work all things for good in this rollercoaster life.

1. Calm in the chaos is found by trusting the Lordship of Christ to direct your life.

First, calm in the chaos of life is found by trusting the Lordship of Christ to direct your life. Before we unpack this first point, it's important that we consider the context in which it is found. Remember, that leading up to the roller coaster boat ride with Jesus, He was teaching His disciples about their vital need to hear and obey His word.

After sharing the principle that the one who has will be given more, referring to hearing and obeying God's word, Luke records: *"Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. 20 And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." 21 But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."* Luke 8:19-21

Jesus was not rejecting His earthly mother and His younger siblings. Rather He was reinforcing His teaching that those who have a close relationship with Him, those to whom He reveals the secrets of the kingdom, are not only those who listen to His teachings but also those who obey them.

Hearing, trusting, and obeying God's word will bring us into greater intimacy with Christ, and enable us to make spiritual progress. But this doesn't mean that life will be all smooth sailing. In fact, it's when we keep trusting and obeying God's word, even when life is hard that we make the most spiritual progress, and come to know Christ in deeper ways.

This is the lesson Jesus wants to imprint on the hearts of His disciples on a boat ride that started off smoothly, but suddenly turned chaotic from their perspective.

Beginning in verse 22, we read: *"One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out, ²³ and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger."* Luke 8:22-23

Notice that Jesus got into a boat with His disciples and directed them to go to the other side of the Lake. This was not a trip that they planned, and later asked Jesus to come along. Instead it was a trip Jesus planned and they came along with Him.

After setting out, Jesus fell asleep in the boat. While He was asleep, chaos ensued. A violent windstorm came down on the lake and their boat began to take in water, apparently threatening to sink the ship.

What's happening here? Did Jesus forget to check the weather forecast? As we will see in a moment, the weather doesn't control Jesus, Jesus controls the weather.

Away from the needy crowd, Jesus in His humanity is getting a nap in before His next assignment. While Jesus sought rest on this trip, it was also intended for the spiritual development of His disciples.

How many of you know, as followers of Jesus we are always in training? Sometimes He leads us to places so that we might join Him in His work, and other times He takes us to places that in our minds look totally out of control to prepare us for what lies ahead.

Now God may also allow us to sail into a storm or bring a storm into our lives to get our attention when we are going in the wrong direction. This happened to Jonah.

God instructed Jonah to bring a message of warning to the Ninevites. But Jonah, who saw the Ninevites as the enemy of His people, decided that he had a better plan. And so he went in the opposite direction of God's will for his life. But the ship that he boarded in opposition to the will of God also encountered a violent storm.

However, this storm was not one of development but of discipline. It was designed by God to get Jonah back on the right course.

You know, sometimes people blame the devil for the opposition or difficult circumstances they encounter in their lives. The enemy does oppose believers and seeks to hinder their service for God. But as my sister in Christ Melody Fabien once said: It's not always the devil; it's often your decisions.

Living the Christian life will not always be smooth sailing either. But when we are in the will of God and going in the direction that He leads us, we can find calm in the chaos.

We can find calm because we can trust that where He guides, He will provide. And that all things work for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Going back to our text, while sailing in their boat in the direction Jesus told them to go, again, the disciples encountered a storm with Jesus on board. The fact that Jesus was the one who directed them and was on board with them should have been enough to ease their fears.

But it did not. Storms have a way of causing us to lose sight of the power and presence of God in our lives. Additionally, the fact that Jesus was sleeping while the storm continued to pound their first century boat, further confused them.

Although Jesus was fully human and His body required rest, He was also fully God. Concerning the humanity and deity of Jesus who was asleep in the midst of the storm, one commentator insightfully observed:

“Of course, to the disciples, Christ seemed to be unaware of their plight. We know that in the incarnation, Christ chose to always live in conscious dependence upon the Father. Therefore, he could sleep a real sleep, knowing that the Father would awaken him to do his will. Nevertheless, their perception of Christ’s apparent obliviousness to their misery pictures how we often feel during life’s storms. Does he know or care?” Kent Hughes

Do you know that according to the parallel passage in the gospel of Mark, that was the precise question the disciples asked Jesus in their distress?

This brings us to our second point:

2. Calm in the chaos is found by turning to the Lord Jesus in distressing times of life.

While the storm was raging and Jesus was undisturbed and asleep on the boat, Luke records:

“And they went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.” Luke 8:24

Again, in the gospel of Mark we learn that they didn't just inform Jesus that they were about to perish, they said, *“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”* Mark 4:38

Remember, that this trip across the lake where the disciples encountered a storm, was planned by Jesus. It's was a trip designed not for their pleasure, but for their spiritual development. How many of you know, although we may not like it, spiritual development often flourishes more in times of adversity than in times of prosperity.

After Jesus' ascension into heaven and as they set out to spread the gospel, the disciples would face many challenges. And in these turbulent times, they needed to see beyond the chaos, to a God who is in control and works through the chaos to accomplish His purposes in us and through us.

They needed to learn not to fixate on the cause of their distress, but to take their distress to God. In so doing, God would either deliver them from it, or give them the supernatural strength to go through it, along with the perspective that would give them calm in the chaos.

Beloved, what do you do when you're in distress? Do you take your troubles, and your cares to the Lord? Do we do what the word of God exhorts us to do in Philippians 4:6: *“do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* Philippians 4:6-7

It's important to note here that the word translated prayer speaks of more than bringing our requests before the Lord. "It carries the idea of adoration, devotion, and thanksgiving. Whenever we find ourselves worrying, our first reaction ought to be to get alone with God and worship Him." Warren Wiersbe

When we worship, we recognize the worthiness and greatness of God. Excessive worry is often the result of making our problems bigger than God. But when we go to God in worship, when we see Him rightly, we are reminded that God is bigger than our problems.

Start your day praying with an open bible about the things that God is revealing to you about Himself and His will for your life. As the Lord exhorts us to do in Psalm 46:10: *"Be still, and know that I am God."*

This is what the disciples needed to discover on that boat in the storm. They needed to know that the God of all creation—the God who upholds all things by the word of His power was in the boat with them and when things seemed out of control they are not out of God's control.

God can bring calm to the chaos or He can bring calm to our hearts in the chaos. And this peace comes when we draw near to Him and are reminded that God is sovereign over the chaos. Moreover, as we draw near to Him, He works in us through the chaos to bring us to where we need to be.

Beloved, what do you do when you're in distress? Distressing times, whether it be a serious health issue, financial burden, or a wayward child, can cause us to become anxious and depressed. And sometimes when we are depressed the last thing we want to do is talk to God or anyone else. We often choose instead to soak in self-pity.

As I often say, depression craves isolation, and isolation feeds our depression.

When we isolate ourselves in depression because of some distress in our lives, we can take on a victim mentality. And all we keep hearing is our own voice or the voice of the enemy.

When we don't turn to God and instead turn into ourselves all we keep hearing is the same intrusive thoughts playing over and over again in our minds. We fixate on the problems and begin feeling sorry for ourselves. We start thinking thoughts like, "things will never change, and nobody cares not even God."

Our depression becomes more severe when there's nobody else in our lives to help change our distorted thinking.

This brings us to our final point:

3. Calm in the chaos is found by taking every thought captive (subjecting all thinking) to the dominion of Christ.

When the disciples thought their boat was going under and they were going to perish in the storm, they turned to Jesus who was asleep and woke Him up. And after questioning whether He cared and telling Him that they were going to perish, Jesus *rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.*" Luke 8:24

And then in verse 25 we read: "*He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"*" Luke 8:25

Let me ask you, why did the disciples have weak faith? Their weak faith was rooted in a shallow understanding of who Jesus was. Moreover, they were focused on the storm and what they imagined it would soon do to them, namely sink their boat and kill them. They saw themselves as victims of the storm not as victors in Jesus.

In a timely message I heard recently about the prophet Elijah, who during a distressing time isolated himself and became deeply depressed, the preacher shared some powerful insight on victimhood.

He made a helpful distinction between being a victim and having a victim mentality.

A person with a victim mentality says, I'm in this terrible predicament, or I'm stuck, or I feel the way I feel because my circumstances will never change or because so, and so will never change. "I'm in this place because of what she did or what he did." Tony Evans

Beloved, as long as you keep blaming your circumstances for how you feel, or waiting for others to change before you can move out of the pit you're in, you will continue to be a victim. If we're stuck, we must take responsibility for where we are and move forward in faith to where God want us to be. When we do, we will no longer be playing the victim, but walking in victory.

"You may be a victim, but you can't have the mindset of a victim." You can't keep saying to yourself, "if it wasn't for him, or this circumstance, I wouldn't be here."

How do we get out of this victim mentality that leaves us stuck in fear, and soaking in a storm of depression, and self-pity, which will keep us from growing in faith through the storms of life? It's starts with having an honest, real, and raw conversation with Jesus.

Calm came to the disciples on that boat because they turned to Jesus with their victim mentality and allowed Him not only to speak to the storm but more importantly speak into their lives.

Their fear of the storm was replaced with a fear of the Lord—with awe for who Jesus was. They began asking the right question, "*Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?*" No doubt they would conclude, that Jesus was the God man, the creator and sustainer of the universe.

Do you know that what you fear, or revere or love the most will shape your mind and control your life? As the Psalmists explained: "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding.*" Psalm 111:10a

Commenting on this verse, my friend Justin Jeppesen put it this way: “Our lives are formed by what we fear. For what we fear is what we revere, and our lives will be a response to whatever we revere most.”
Justin Jeppesen

We will not experience Jesus bringing peace to the chaos or peace to our hearts in the chaos, unless we turn to Jesus and allow the knowledge of who He is to change the stinking thinking that is shaping and controlling our lives.

Remember, depression gets worse if there’s nobody else in your life besides other depressed people to help you change your thinking. To experience the victory that is ours in Christ, like the peace of His presence, we must be able to say as Paul testified in 2 Corinthians 10:5: *“We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”*

As the preacher also said about victimhood: “If you’re [isolating yourself], feeling sorry for yourself, and you’re talking to yourself, that’s a bad conversation for yourself. You’re already feeling sorry and there’s no other person to talk to but YOU, about YOU, there’s no other person telling YOU what YOU ought to do, and YOU aren’t in a place to hear correctly. If what YOU are telling YOU is only related to how YOU feel, then your discussion with yourself is helping yourself feel worse about YOU.” Tony Evans

If that’s where you are, then you’re not only going to stay where you are, you’re going to drown in your self-pity, unless you turn to the Lord, and allow Him to reveal Himself to you, allow Him to speak faith into your heart.

The distressed disciples were literally seeing, feeling, hearing, and tasting the storm. What they needed was to taste and see the goodness and power of God. They wouldn’t have if they continued soaking in the storm and in their victim mentality.

When we don't bring our distress to Jesus, we can become discouraged and depressed. "And what discouragement, and depression often brings is distorted information," nobody cares, not even Jesus. All you can see is YOU or your distressing situation. What you need is to see the truth, to see and fear God more than you fear man or circumstances.

When we are soaking in self-pity we also need people who know God and He can use to speak into our lives. When we are down, we need people in our lives who will meet us where we are, embrace us, and help us to see God. When we are soaking in self pity, we desperately need a divine perspective.

Conclusion

Beloved, where are you today? Are you living with a victim mentality, or walking in the victory that Jesus won through His death on the cross for our sin and resurrection? The Lord can change our circumstances, but more importantly He wants to change us through our circumstances.

He wants us to know His calm in the chaos. And we can when we turn to Him in our distress and get honest and real with Him about where we are. But don't just talk to Him, stop listening to yourself, and start listening to His voice and trust His lordship to direct your life.

It's knowing His calm in the chaos of this world that will not only make us victors instead of victims, but also make us a powerful witness for Christ and draw others to a saving knowledge of Jesus.