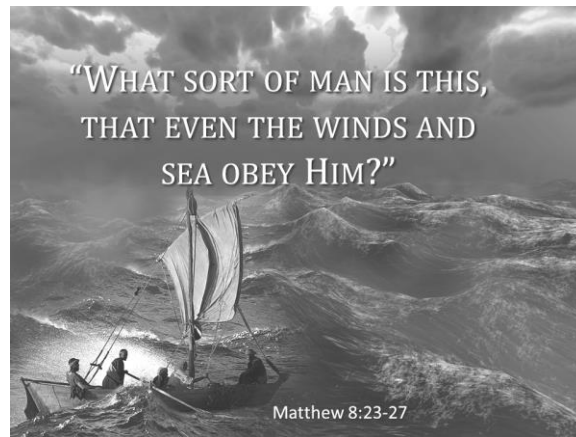


## CALMING THE STORMS



### Scripture:

**Job 38:1-11**

<sup>1</sup>Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind: <sup>2</sup>“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? <sup>3</sup>Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. <sup>4</sup>“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. <sup>5</sup>Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? <sup>6</sup>On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone <sup>7</sup>when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? <sup>8</sup>“Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?— <sup>9</sup>when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, <sup>10</sup>and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, <sup>11</sup>and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped’?”

**Mark 4:35-41**

<sup>35</sup>On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” <sup>36</sup>And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. <sup>37</sup>A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. <sup>38</sup>But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” <sup>39</sup>He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. <sup>40</sup>He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” <sup>41</sup>And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

**This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



Let's play a game. It's summer now. We can relax a little right? It's a guessing game. I'll say a quote and you have to raise your hand and shout if you think you know who said it. The possible famous people are: Maya Angelou, the Dalai Lama, Mark Twain, Oscar Wilde, Mr. Rogers or Jesus. Ready? Raise your hand if you know who said this:

“Patriotism is supporting your country all the time and your government when it deserves it.”  
(Mark Twain)

"Peace, be still!" (Jesus)

“Your job is to lift the fallen, to restore the broken, and to heal the hurting.” (Dalai Lama)

“If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.” (Maya Angelou) - Like the Serenity Prayer: Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. (Reinhold Niebuhr)

“You are a very special person. There is only one like you in the whole world. There’s never been anyone exactly like you before and there never will be again. Only you. And people can like you exactly as you are.” (Mr. Rogers)

“Forgive your enemies. Nothing annoys them so much!” (Oscar Wilde)

“Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” (Jesus)

“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” (Maya Angelou)

## HOW DID THE DISCIPLES FEEL?

How do you think the disciples felt when they thought the storm was going to cause them to perish?

Last week we talked about how Jesus said the kingdom of God is like the tiny mustard seed faith that grows into a mighty tree. How is your mustard seed faith growing this week?

The disciples showed little faith when they awakened Jesus who was sleeping in the stern of the boat. They said to him, “Don’t you care we are perishing?” And Jesus turned around and showed them the back of his rain coat. It said, “I really don’t care. Do YOU?”

No, just kidding. That is not in the Bible. What he said was, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?”

But under his breath he probably said, you have the creator of the universe incarnate on your boat with you, and you think you are going to perish alongside him?

Have you ever wondered why you yourself are afraid when you have the creator of the universe walking beside you today?

Jesus was somewhat exasperated when he marveled at the fact that they still had such tiny trust and little faith when they had just witnessed him healing hundreds of the sick.

Aren’t we the same? We may have had in our personal lives many examples of the ways God has guided, comforted, inspired and loved us. Yet, when the going gets rough and the storms come in, we tend to either think we have to fix things ourselves alone or we get depressed and stressed and forget to lean on prayer asking for divine intervention to help calm the storm.

## GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE

Our Job passage today also reminds us that God created the universe and has the power to calm the seas. God asked these questions of Job: “Who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?” And ...who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?”

And the Mark passage concludes with the question: “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

## THE RESERVOIR

Richard Foster asks a similar question in a short devotion book he titled: *The Reservoir*. Foster reflects on the incredible majesty and power of our God. Like in the Job passage today and in Mark, he remarks that our God is incomprehensible in God’s vastness and greatness.

He quotes the Psalmist in Psalm 145 who said, “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.”

Then Foster explains that the psalmist tells us that God’s greatness is so vast and unsearchable that we can’t begin to understand all of it. Our encounters with God, according to Foster, are incredibly important, but God is always greater than our particular experience of God. The language we have to describe God is inadequate because God is “more than anything we can say about her.”

## OUR THEOLOGY AND TRADITIONS

**Our theology and our traditions point us to God, but God will always transcend our doctrines and denominations. God is so big we will spend eternity discovering more and more about his unsearchable greatness. Although we are discovering more and more about the universe and how it works, there is still so much more to discover about God and how we are created to reflect the image of God to others here on this earth.**

The purpose of the Bible is to reveal the character of God to us. God’s self is revealed

through the stories, poems, and the efforts of the ancient writers to explain the history and ministry of Jesus Christ.

So what have we learned so far from the Bible about God's character and who God is? Basically God is the creator of heaven and earth and all living things. God is unconditionally loving and forgiving like the father of the Prodigal Son. God is love. God is like a parent, a counselor, an advocate, like Jesus, and like the Holy Spirit, full of wisdom and mystery. God wants us to focus our worship on God and have no other Gods before him, loving with our whole hearts, minds, and strength, and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

We can go on and on. Make your own list at home; but the overall message of the Bible is to love one another and do unto others as you would have them do unto you, which is a Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Christian golden rule.

Buddhist's say it this way: "Hurt not others with that which pains yourself." (Buddha)

Forgive and love your enemies is also a Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Christian command.

All of these commonalities among the world religions help us understand the character of God. And yet they just scratch the surface of God's greatness. Having an awe-inspiring reverence for God and for the power of God all around and in us is what the Bible was meant to inspire.

### **ASTRONAUTS REVERENCE FOR GOD'S CREATION**

Astronauts seem to get a new awe-inspiring reverence for God and God's creations from being in outer space looking back at the world. They all get what they now call The Overview Effect; it is an experience that transforms astronauts' perspective of the planet and humankind's place upon it. Common features of the overview experience are a feeling of awe for the planet, a profound understanding of the interconnection of all life, and a renewed sense of responsibility for taking care of the earth and all its creatures. All the astronauts including those from other countries experience some form of this effect by viewing our small fragile planet from space.

Astronaut Ed Gibson said it this way, "You see how diminutive your life and concerns are compared to other things in the universe... The

result is that you enjoy the life that is before you... It allows you to have inner peace."

As a result of being affected by the overview effect, many astronauts joined together and created a movie called "*Overview*." It's just twenty minutes long but powerful. (On YouTube)

### **MR. ROGERS**

Mr. Rogers was never an astronaut, but he also wanted to influence people to have more reverence and awe and wonder for our creator and planet, and thus have more respect and love for others as well.

**I saw the documentary called "*Won't You Be My Neighbor*" last week. I encourage you to see it because, as you heard in his quote at the beginning, Mr. Rogers wanted every person, and especially every child, to feel special and loved for being just the way they are. His ministry goal was for TV to be his ministry of love and hospitality, accepting everyone for being just how they were created, disabilities or not.**

Fred Rogers was born into a very wealthy family in Pittsburgh, PA. But his childhood was very lonely. As a child he wanted to grow up to be a pastor but decided to go into communications at the University of Pittsburgh, first, and then later went to the same seminary I attended for my Doctorate: Pittsburg. Mr. Rogers was ordained to be a pastor in a ministry of television. He was the first Presbyterian pastor to be ordained for a TV ministry. He never had a church with walls, but he had a huge congregation of young people.

Some have said Mr. Rogers was as Christ-like a figure as they had ever seen walking this earth. He seemed to do everything spiritually and intentionally. His goal in life was to bring a sense of God's love and peace to all he met, and to help children cope with their fears.

Mr. Rogers was a child advocate and child development therapist. He thought most TV shows in the sixties and seventies encouraged bad child behavior. He thought all children deserved to be treated with more respect and positive attention.

Fred was also very social justice oriented and wanted to calm the storm of the civil rights movement, so he gave the role of Police Officer Clemmons to a black actor in his neighborhood.

When 911 happened, Mr. Rogers was called out of retirement to do a Public Service Announcement to help parents learn how to help their kids cope with the tragedy.

People had faith in Mr. Rogers and knew he would teach them the right words to say to comfort the children.

A clip of the trailer for the movie was shown to the congregation.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhwktRDG\\_aQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhwktRDG_aQ)

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me." Mr. Rogers said, "Won't you be my neighbor?" He role modeled Christ-like ways with children in his TV ministry, based on the command to: "Love your neighbor."

His wife said in the movie that if he was alive to day he would be so upset with the lack of compassion our country has towards children, especially refugee children.

### **MANY STORMS ARE SWIRLING**

Many storms are swirling around us these days that make us fear we are perishing. The political storms, the aftermath of the firestorms, ongoing gun violence, and the way children are being mistreated on the border. How do we cope? Mr. Rogers would say, "Talk to a grown-up who cares about you. You are not alone with your fears." In other words, pray!

### **MICAH 6:8**

The ancient directive from God through the prophet Micah is as instructive today as it was in the year 700 BC. "Do justice, Love kindness, and walk humbly." That comes from Micah 6:8. The whole passage says: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

This directive from our mighty God is the way to survive the storms. Measure everything you do or don't do with justice, kindness, and humility. Ask yourself, "How much am I promoting social justice in my life?" Am I helping the homeless guy on the corner or protesting injustices that break my heart?

"How much kindness am I showing both my friends and strangers each day? Frame all you do with humbleness. Protest greed and arrogance.

**"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less."**

**(Who said that? C.S. Lewis)**

And about the character of God, C.S. Lewis also said, "The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because God loves us."

Believe and trust, that the one who can calm the wind and the sea, loves you more than you can hope for or imagine, and is with you always, to the end of the age. Amen.

### **Benediction:**

**Go now into the world, inspired by the powerful, radiant love of God.**

**Live generously, and humbly, loving one another because our lives and our fragile planet depend upon it.**

**May the abundant love of God surround you, may the extravagant grace of Jesus Christ sustain you, and may the constant presence of the Holy Spirit inspire and encourage you to live life gratefully.**

**God is good and so are you!**

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen**



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