



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

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"Don't You Care If..." - Hope Restored Sermon Series

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Good morning! My name is Jenny Sung and I'm one of the lay pastors on staff. It's an honor and pleasure to serve alongside so many of you in this church family. Let's Pray...

Heavenly Father, we thank you for who you are, the God of love, full of mercy and grace. We bring before our simple selves, wanting to know more of you. Reveal to us your truth, Fill us with your Holy Spirit. Lead us and guide us, break through barriers or hardened hearts. May we experience your presence today. In Christ's name, Amen.

Today's passage is from the book of Mark, chapter 4, verses 35-41. ³⁵ *On that day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us go across to the other side."* ³⁶ *And leaving the crowd behind, they took Him with them in the boat, just as He was. Other boats were with Him.* ³⁷ *A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.* ³⁸ *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?"* ³⁹ *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. ⁴⁰ *He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"* ⁴¹ *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 morning we're talking about a boat, a storm, and a band of disciples who are literally freaking out. It's a turn of events that the disciples could not contain nor control and things go really sideways.

We've had our share of family vacations growing up and sometimes things have gone a bit sideways. As you may know, I'm a diplomat kid, so we moved countries every two to three years and my dad took full advantage of destination vacations all around the world.

One year we went scuba diving in Acapulco. With barely any training, we jumped off this massive cliff with giant waves crashing onto the rocks. Hitting the water, one of the fins flew off my feet, my ears were killing me as we descended deeper and deeper in the water and to

top it all off- my sister Dorothy ended up with a collapsed lung.

Another year, we were in the Greek islands taking a boat from the island of Mykonos to Delos, both popular vacation spots. What should have been a pretty normal boat ride ended up real sideways. In the afternoon, when we were going back, it got super windy. Huge waves started to crash on the boat and it felt like we were going to tip over, you literally had to hang onto something.

Most of our family was inside the boat, which made it safer, but my sister Anita got caught outside at the front of the boat. It started getting so rocky that she tried to go inside, but couldn't move. It was so windy and rocky that the boat was tipping back and forth, and she ended up clinging for dear life outside. The waves crashed on her over and over again and she got soaked from head to toe.

My father, realizing his child was in danger, tried to get her to safety, but he couldn't move without getting thrown around. He was really worried about Anita outside with the waves crashing on her, and thought he might lose one of his kids.

He used to call us his “little puppies” when we were small. Later on he said, “I thought I lost one of my puppies!” We got back to Mykonos in one piece. Anita was okay, we found her after we docked, but she looked like a wet cat.

These are lighter stories, perhaps not as serious as the passage today. For the disciples in the boat, they really thought they were going to die. When you examine at this group, many of them were fishermen, at least four of Jesus’ disciples and possible up to seven. These guys knew the water; they were familiar with boats and storms as well, as storms were noted as quite common in the Sea of Galilee. Here’s a description of the area:

The Sea of Galilee sits seven hundred feet below sea level, and just thirty miles to the north is Mount Hermon, ninety-two hundred feet high. The cold air from the mountains continually clashes with warm air coming up from the Sea of Galilee and as a result there are impressive thunderstorms and squalls. Professional fishermen from Galilee (like Jesus’s disciples) were used to them. – Tim Keller, from the book “Jesus the King”

So imagine this group, as they get on the boat on the Sea of Galilee and head out to the other side, they know what they’re doing. They’re quite familiar with boats, the storms, and knew the waters. Their confidence and faith was in their expertise, their knowledge and themselves.

Now Jesus has been teaching all day and being fully human as well fully God, He is tired. From previous chapters, we know how people have been flocking to Him. In verse 9, it says: *“9 Because of the crowd He told his disciples to have a small boat ready for Him, to keep the people from crowding Him. 10 For He had healed many so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch Him.”*

Later He goes into a house in verse 20 and again *“a crowd gathered, so that He and His disciples were not even able to eat.”* In the beginning of chapter 4 we see that again. . . *“The crowd that gathered around Him was so large that He got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water’s edge.”* And Jesus is teaching, telling parables of the sower, the seed, and the lamp. . . All day He’s been teaching. So, after a very full day, Jesus says, let’s go to the other side.

I imagine the scene like this where the disciples are like, “No problem teacher, we got this!” They push off. They know what to do, Maybe the disciples were like “Teacher, rest. Put your head on the cushion, we’ll take care of everything, we know what we’re doing, we’ll get you to the other side.” Maybe when they set out the water is calm. Later on it gets worse. Maybe they’re still like, okay, looks like a windstorm but don’t wake up the teacher, we know what we’re doing. We got this. Then maybe it gets

worse, and the wind picks up, waves get choppy.

I wonder, at what point does it shift? At what point do they panic, where the faith they had in themselves and what they know begins to falter? At what point do they realize that they can’t control what’s happening and they can’t stop what is happening, despite their expertise, their willpower and strength? The furious storm hits and it goes sideways. The boat is taking on water and they are going to sink. When all control is lost and they think they are going to die, they turn to Jesus, and they ask Him this question: It’s not, “Teacher, can you help us. What should we do?” It’s, “Don’t you care...?” Here are different versions of the Bible passage:

NIV: “Teacher, Don’t you care if we die?”

NRSV: “Do you not care that we are perishing?”

MESSAGE: “Is it nothing to you that we’re going down?”

I have two boys, ages nine and twelve, and I think if they came up to me and said, “Mama don’t you care if we die” I would be like, “what?! Of course I care, You are my child, I love you. I would give my life for you. Of course I care.”

I think we ask the same question to God, in the storms of life when we lose all control, or when we see the struggles in this world, in the midst of them we go, “God, Don’t you care? Is it nothing to you that we are going down?”

And God can seem like He's taking a nap, sleeping, silent. The question, "Don't you care if we perish?" That's exactly the question that God cares about. That's why He sent Jesus, His Son.

Jesus would say, "Yes, I care. In fact, I more than care, I care so much that I gave my life for you. My body was beaten and broken for you. My blood was shed for you. I gave all that I had, took on all the sin of the world and absorbed it onto myself, all because I love you."

What's the most heard famous bible verse we hear? John 3:16 - 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life (that's a lot longer than the 99, 100 years we may live on earth).

The devil, the greatest liar in the world, would like to convince us that God doesn't care. He'll use the storms to tell you God doesn't care about you. Satan mocks, "Why would He care about you. You are not worth caring about." Or "God doesn't care about anyone, He looks down and laughs at you" Or "God doesn't care because He doesn't exist." These are lies that Satan uses to draw you away from the truth.

The disciple Peter, describes the devil like a prowling lion waiting for someone to devour. Peter says, In 1Peter chapter 5, verse 7-8: *"7 Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 8 Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a*

roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour."

Cast all your anxiety on Him. The truth is God cares more about you than anything or anyone. He can handle all that you care about, fret about, and all that you fear. Because His nature is good and God is love, you can trust Him in any weather condition. God understands the overarching scope of all time, of life and death, of the seen and unseen. God of the universe has infinite awareness, knowledge, and insight. And with this power, the God of the universe chose great sacrifice, the death of His one and only son, because He loves you and wants you to be with Him forever.

The more we read the Bible, the more we see the overarching story of God's love for you, a love that pursues and redeems and restores. Max Lucado talks about the Bible. In his book called, "The Story", he says: This book (Bible) tells the grandest, most compelling story of all time: The story of a true God who loves His children, who established for them a way of salvation and provided a route to eternity.

The same God is alive and active today — still listening, still acting, still pouring out his grace on us. His grace extends to our daily foibles; Our ups, downs, and in-betweens; our moments of questions and fears; and most important, our response to his call on our lives.

Often times we are so eager to get out of the boat, escape the storms and think God doesn't care when we don't see Him doing something right away, or the way we think it should work out. But while we are in the world, God doesn't always take us out of the storm, or put us in a storm free zone. Just last Sunday, we got to hear from our high school seniors. Even in their young age they had weathered some heavy storms. There was a common theme of struggle, pain and loss in their testimonies.

I would like to share a couple excerpts that they so honestly and bravely shared: One student shared,

"I prayed to God to protect me and save me from the pain I was in. In that moment of pure exhaustion, I could do nothing but surrender. I breathed slowly and relinquished everything I had. Instead of worrying about dying, I surrendered my life to God and trusted that what was meant to happen would happen. At the state championships, I was not crowned the champion. Instead, I fell harder than I ever had before. But God did not forget me in my time of need. He swept me up into his love and allowed me to come out of that experience in a totally different way than I had pictured."

Another student said, "So many of us are also weak and hurting inside, yet we are ashamed and hide it. However it is in our weaknesses that we truly experience God's power and grace for us.

It was in my physically weakest moment, that I was spiritually strongest. It was when I couldn't depend on myself or my surroundings that I fully depended on God. I realized that God's strength was the only strength I really needed."

It's about the storms, of course, the storms of life that are going to be there, but Jesus never said there would be no storms. He says He gives peace, but not as the world gives. The Bible says do not be surprised when struggles and trials happen. Receiving Jesus doesn't create a buffer from storms, there is no cosmic force field from storms. But Jesus offers Himself, and this the gift.

I often feel slightly awkward when I receive a gift from my best friend. I tried to figure why I feel this way, and I realize that I have the love language of quality time. So it's not that gifts are bad, but I see the person as the gift, and the quality time we have as the gift. It's the person, not the object.

For the disciples, it's realizing that Jesus was in the boat with them, and that He himself is the rest, He himself is the peace. Rest is not something we get when we get out of the storm, Jesus Himself is the rest, and He offers Himself fully to us, no limits, no holding back. In our fear and confusion, we might ask God, "Don't you care?" And Jesus says, "Do not be afraid. I am here with you."

In the last part of our passage, Jesus addresses the

fear and faith of the disciples. He goes right to the heart of it. The disciples ask, "Do you not care?", and Jesus asks them, "Why are you afraid?" He's asking them to trust beyond what they see (which is the storm) and know that Jesus is in the boat with them, and they can trust the object of their faith.

"Do not be afraid" is written 132 times in the Bible, at least in the NIV version. I think it's written so often because it drives so much of our thought process. I had so much fear when my husband passed away last year. I met him at the age of 17 and he was the love of my life. We had been married 25 years. I had lived life longer with him than without.

When he suddenly passed away at the age of 49, I encountered the greatest storm of my life. I was afraid for my children and myself. I was afraid of how the children would adjust and cope with their loss. What if they spiraled downward, or bottled up their emotions, or lost their faith in God?

I was afraid for their adjustment in school, especially for my older son who was in a new district, had started a new school and knew no one. I was afraid I would lose the house, our home where the children had grown up in all their lives. I had never done taxes in my life, and I was afraid of the bills and the paperwork and figuring out what the numbers meant. I was afraid of disappointing people, wondering how I was going to

juggle seminary, ministry and work. I was afraid of the future and my abilities as a mother.

Carl was always the gentler one, smarter one, more patient, stable and thoughtful. He was our papa and he took care of me as much as the boys. How could I do this without him? Please know that we are well. There is joy. We have much support and we have God's peace. The fears were just that-fears, not reality. But the storms don't just disappear. Sometimes the boat feels rocky and the wind blows strong. But Jesus offers Himself, and what I realize is that the deepest loss is creating the deepest faith.

Pete Greig, a pastor and speaker whom many of you met at the Life in the Spirit conference and the HIM conference, wrote a book called, "God on Mute". In the chapter called "Living Hope", Pete says:

"When we suffer, Jesus comes with questions to refine and enhance our humanity. He of all people understands that this process of dealing with the mess created by our disappointments in prayer can hurt terribly. He knows that without his help, we will become bitter not better, and that we will lick our wounds like a dog, or curl up in a ball of self-protection like a hedgehog. But if like Mary, we will continue to worship, even at the grave of everything we ever believed in, our grief will turn to gold."

The series on prayer might have ended a few months ago,

But our call to pray for one another has not. It begins with honest community where we can be real, name our fears and intercede for one another, in gentle support and fierce love.

If you are going through a rough season right now, please put out your hands in front of you, as an acknowledgement that you want prayer. If the waves are crashing and you need prayer, lift up your hands. And church, if we see those hands, gather around that person in quiet prayer. We don't need to use a lot of words, just ask the Holy Spirit to fill up the person, and allow Him to move. Let us pray...

"Come Holy Spirit. Will you give more of yourself to us. You promise to be there with us, that we are never alone. Holy Spirit, will you guide us, comfort us, and fill us. Lord, we know you are with us, we thank you for being perfect love that casts out fear. We name the fears that hold us back and we give them to you. We cast all our anxieties upon you. We ask that we may trust you more, surrender our fears and the things that hold us down. Breathe your life into us. May you be the rest in our souls and the peace that prevails. In Christ's name, Amen."

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*Note: Sunday sermon texts are also available at fpchawaii.org
The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. You may also request the audio version by visiting:
fpchkoolau@gmail.com*