

HEARING GOD'S WORDS OF PEACE

INTRODUCTION:

Last week we noted from Psalm 85:8 that the attitude of the Psalmist was a **hunger** to hear God's Word: "I **will hear** what God the Lord will speak." It was a decision—a resolution—to make what God **says** a priority in his life. If it was an **important** decision to make **pre**-internet, **pre**-radio, and **pre**-TV, it is certainly a decision we need to make **now** with all the "choices in voices" we have available to us. We can't possibly listen to them **all**—so we have to choose **who** we are going to listen to—and **how often**. If we are not careful, we will listen too much to the **wrong** voices—and not enough to what **God** says!

The Psalmist didn't just tell us of his resolve to listen to God, though—he also told us **why**. What **reason** did He give that he was going to listen to God? Because He—God—"will speak **peace** unto His people, and to His saints." We can look for peace in a lot of different places, but since God is the **only One** who can give peace, He is really the only One who can speak peace. But what does it mean to **speak** peace? Is it merely saying the word "peace?"

My guess is that I'm not the only one who has been in a work situation where people **said** stupid things **on purpose** just to be funny. The funny part about people saying stupid things to be funny is that other people join in saying the same stupid things so they, too, can be funny!

Here's an example. Not sure who started it—and how long it lasted—but somehow or another we got on this goofy kick that no matter **what** someone asked you in the way of a question, you gave a **one-word** answer. What was the one-word answer? **WORD!** No; I am not kidding! I would ask someone a work-related question and they would respond with, "word." Can you imagine how annoying that would get?

- Have you seen the paper-cutter? Word
- Do you know where the Colonel is? Word
- The copy machine is broke, any idea who we call? Word

Enough to drive you crazy, right? Ranks right up there with little children asking the question "why" all the time. So where am I going with this. Listen carefully—God **speaking peace** unto His people does not mean He just says the word "peace." God **speaks peace** unto His people by giving them **truths about Himself** and those truths are what give us peace. What I want to do this morning is look at some of those truths that **will**—or at least **should**—give us peace.

Take your Bibles and turn to Mark 4. I want us to look at the account of Jesus calming the storm after being awakened by His disciples. I mentioned this account in passing last week, but want to look at it in more detail this morning. As we go through this passage, we will note 5 truths that I believe can give us peace in the storms of our life.

Notice first...**1. Jesus was with them in the storm**

Follow along as I read verses 35-36.

What does that mean—"took Him **even as He was** in the ship?" Look at verse 1 "And He began again to teach by the seaside: and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land."

Most commentators suggest that "taking Him even as He was in the ship" means that Jesus was there teaching all day and when the evening came, He said "Let's go to the other side." They took off, then, without really any preparation for the trip (like food and water).

--v 37 "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full." --v 38 "And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow..."

--v 39 "And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

Important for us not to miss this—Jesus was with them **before** the storm...and **during** the storm...and **after** the storm! Jesus wasn't **out of the storm**, safely on shore, shouting "Peace" to them—He was **with them** in ship, He was with them in their time of difficulty and fear!

Is that still true **now**? It sure is! In fact, it is truer for us than it was for them because Jesus **left** them for a time before sending the Holy Spirit as another Comforter.

He has promised to **never leave us**, though! **Hebrews 13:5** "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, **I will never leave thee**, nor forsake thee."

Truth #1 that speaks peace to us: **God promises to never leave us.**

--Even though Job lost everything except His wife, God never left him—He was with him in his trial.

--God was with Shadrach, Meshack, and Abed-nego in the fire—and Daniel in the lion's den.

--Stephen was stoned to death, but God did not leave Him during that critical time. In fact, Stephen **saw** Jesus as he was being killed for his faith!

Acts 7:56 "...Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

--Paul was beaten, imprisoned, stoned to death, and shipwrecked, yet God never left him.

God, who cannot lie, **always** keeps His promises and He has promised never to leave **you**. Don't think for a moment that God will fail **first** on you! He is with you before the storm...and will be with you during the storm...and will be there after the S!

Jesus was not just **with them** during the storm... **2. Jesus cared for them during the storm**

Jesus was not just a helpless bystander—although that is what they accused Him of!

Middle of v 38 "and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?"

--'Aren't you **concerned** for us? How can you be sleeping when we are about ready to drown?'

--'Don't we **matter** to you; don't you **care about** us? Why are you **letting this happen** and not doing anything?'

--In v 40 we see Jesus "getting after them." "And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" It's pretty easy to assume He was scolding them because they thought He couldn't **do anything** about the storm. We see that in their awe of His power. End of v 41 "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and sea obey Him?"

--The flip side, though, is that they woke Him up in hopes that He **would** do something. They had some faith, but I tend to think that part of His rebuke was that they **doubted His care for them** as well as His power.

Isn't that true of us sometimes? Don't we **say** the same words—or at least **think** the same thoughts?

--'God, don't you care that I'm **overwhelmed** with what is happening right now?'

--'Don't you care that I'm **fearful...and helpless...and don't know what to do**?'

--'How long are you going to **wait** before you do something?'

Jesus certainly didn't want them to doubt His **power**, but He didn't want them to doubt His **love and care** either. Truth #2 that speaks peace to us: **God promises to always love us.**

How we need to hang onto that promise—especially during the storms; the trials of life. Although it is not plainly stated in this passage, it sure is in **Romans 8**. Let's turn there for a moment.

Look at v 35: "Who shall **separate** us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

Do any of these things sound **enjoyable** or **good** (tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, etc)? No; they are all bad! But just because bad things happen—it doesn't mean God has stopped loving us!

V 36 and 37 say that even if we are **killed** for the cause of Christ, we are still loved!
Now vs **38-39** “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, **shall be able to separate us from the love of God**, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Regardless of the storm or trial in our life, we need to hang onto this truth: God **has not stopped** loving you—and **will never stop loving you**—because He **can’t** stop loving you! And it is **not** because you are unlovable!

So how can I make the claim that God will never stop loving you? Paul said nothing can separate us from God’s love and Jesus Himself makes a comparison between the Father’s love **for Him** and His love for us. **John 15:9** “As the Father **hath loved me**, so **have I loved you**: continue ye in my love.”

Think about that—Jesus will **stop** loving you when the Father **stops** loving Jesus—which is impossible! And then Jesus says “continue ye in my love.” Abide in it; rest in it; keep it in front of you; wrap it around you!

Back to Mark 4. Truth #1 that speaks peace to us: **God promises to never leave us**.

Truth #2 that speaks peace to us: **God promises to always love us**.

Let’s consider next... **3. Jesus had a purpose for the storm**

Was there a purpose for this storm? Was it just **random**—did it just **happen**—or did God **purposely send** it? If you’ve spent much time in the book of Job, you will notice that frost, ice, and snow—as well as clouds, rain, and lightning—are all under the control of God. God sends them when He **wants to**—and doesn’t need our permission to do so! Pretty safe to say God sent this storm for a reason, too!

So **why** did God bring this storm? Although we are not specifically told, we can lump the reasons under two headings: Jesus wanted to teach them things about **themselves**—and He wanted to teach them things about **Himself!** Since things we learn **about ourselves** do **not** bring peace, we are going to focus on what **does** bring peace—what we learn about God!

We’ve already seen two ways God speaks peace to us—by telling us He will **never leave us** and telling us He will **never stop loving us**. Here’s a third: A. God’s power is greater than any storm!

What was Jesus doing during the storm? V 38 “And He was in the hinder part of the ship, **asleep** on a pillow!” Why? Because in His human body, He was tired! I believe it also demonstrates, though, that storms don’t bother God! He is above them...and in control of them...and has power over them.

Impossible to miss that, isn’t it? Mid of v 38 “...and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?” Jesus’ response?

--And He arose and ‘started barking out orders to the disciples regarding what they should do.’

No; that’s not what it says, is it?

--And He arose and encouraged them, saying, ‘Hang on for dear life, it will end soon!’

Nope; doesn’t say that either!

--He didn’t even tell them to **pray**, did He? Vs 39 “And He arose, and **rebuked the wind**, and **said unto the sea, Peace, be still**. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”

--It wasn’t a **gradual** slowing down of the wind and waves—it was immediate. “Peace, be still”—followed by instant calm!

Jesus had **unmistakable power** of the storm. The disciples **saw** it—and the disciples **said** it! Vs 41 “And they feared exceedingly, and **said one to another**, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” We need to remember that don’t we? Although we don’t have power over the storms in our life, God does! None are greater than Him; none are too hard for Him!

Truth #1 that speaks peace to us: **God promises to never leave us**.

Truth #2 that speaks peace to us: **God promises to always love us**.

Truth #3 that speaks peace to us: **God’s power is greater than any storm**.

B. Truth #4: God's purposes for storms are not always understood

Did the disciples know what was going on? Were they calmly asking each other what they thought God was trying to teach them? Not at all—they were **scared to death!** Verse 38 “Master, carest thou not that we **perish?**” is much **more urgent than**, “Master, our feet are getting wet!”

They didn't fully understand **who** Jesus was—and they certainly didn't know ahead of time that one reason for this storm was to teach them that Jesus **was God!** Their “fear” of drowning in v 40 carries the idea of being cowardly and timid. In v 41 it says “And they **feared** exceedingly...” This is a different word for fear, though, and here means having a **reverence** for Him. They were **awed and amazed** at Jesus' power—not fearful that He would do something to harm them. In fact, after going through the storm they realized that He **did care** for them!

Good reminder for us, right? We don't always know **why** God brings storms. We don't always know ahead of time what He is trying to teach us—or how He is going to use a trial in our life. **Don** mentioned recently how he will be able to better **help others when they suffer the loss of a loved one.**

Job didn't know **why** he was going through what he went through when it was happening—and probably didn't know until he got to heaven! I don't know **why** God allowed Bev...and my neighbor...and the Pastor of a friend of mine, die—or why Jeanne had a stroke.

What I **do** know, though, is that God is good—and does good (Ps 119:68)! He is perfect—and cannot make mistakes. And His ways are higher than ours and so we must trust Him!

C. Truth #5: God's plans of future glory will make you forget the past storms

Do you believe that; that God's plans of **future glory** will make you **forget** the past storms? God through Paul said it so we better believe it!

Romans 8:18 “For I reckon that the **sufferings of this present time...**” Let's pause here for just a moment and be reminded of who wrote this. I just mentioned it was Paul, but let's not forget how much Paul suffered. He was beaten and imprisoned multiple times...shipwrecked three times...whipped five times... spent a day and a night “in the deep” ...and was stoned—I believe to death—in Lystra. He knew what suffering was about!

But in spite of all that suffering, he said “that the sufferings of this present time are **not worthy to be compared with the glory** which shall be revealed in us.” What is the glory will shall be revealed in us? There are some things we will be **free from** in heaven, what I'm calling the “**No-Mores**” of glory. Here are just a few:

No more death—or saying goodbye; No more tears—or reasons to cry.

No more fear—and no more failure; No more pain—and no more pride.

No more sickness—and no more sadness; No more tiredness—and no more trials.

But heaven is more than just the **absence** of bad—it is the **presence** of that which is good! Besides the “No-Mores;” there are also some “Ever-Mores.” **The “Ever-Mores” of Glory:**

Evermore with a body like unto His glorious body; Evermore with a nature that is sin-free.

Evermore with our faith now sight; Evermore with our Savior to be!

Aren't you glad God doesn't just say “peace” to us? He gives us truths about Himself that give us peace.

Truth #1: **God promises to never leave us.**

Truth #2: **God promises to always love us.**

Truth #3: **God's power is greater than any storm.**

Truth #4: **God's purposes for storms are not always understood.**

Truth #5: **God's plans of future glory will make you forget the past storms**

So what does God want us to do in light of what we have heard from His Word today?

1. First, if you've never trusted Jesus as your Savior, these truths do not apply to you. God does not promise peace to you if you do not belong to Him! "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked."
2. If you are a child of God, though, you can count on these truths. The question is—do you? Do you trust on these truths that can speak peace to you—or do you look for peace elsewhere?