

The Storms of Life

Mark 4:35-41 (NIV) Jesus Calms the Storm

35 *That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."* **36** *Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.* **37** *A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.* **38** *Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"* **39** *He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.* **40** *He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"* **41** *They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"*

My late grandmother, Helen Becton was born in Havelock, North Carolina in 1928. She was a strong woman of great faith who loved the Lord and her family very much, including all of her 36 grandchildren. She had such a profound impact on my life growing up, that my wife and I named our second daughter after her. One of the things she often encouraged me to do was to "trust God no matter how difficult circumstances in life become." When I moved to Chicago in 2003 to serve as a community pastor on the city's westside, those words helped me get through some difficult times throughout my first year of ministry. She passed away a year later, and I remember then her words came to mind. The same is true for today, "trust God no matter how difficult circumstances in life become."

The country and our world are experiencing some difficult circumstances in light of the impact of COVID-19. It's hard to fathom the impact COVID-19 has had on our daily lives in just a short period of time. North Park University, along with other institutions, across the United States have decided to move classes online while grieving the loss of embodied community for the rest of the semester. Conferences, campus chapel services, athletic competitions, concerts, senior recitals, lectures, and service learning trips to other countries, all canceled. We may feel confused by these times, angry, let down, saddened, and even fearful as some moments have seemingly been taken without warning.

While these are difficult times, Mark 4:35-41 reminds us that Jesus is able to calm the most violent storms that we may face in life. There is no question that Jesus disciples feared for the safety of their lives as they encountered this storm, even while Jesus was with them. What I love most about this passage is that in their most difficult circumstances, the disciples did not hesitate to cry out to Jesus. In many ways we are just like the disciples, facing a major storm that is causing fear, anxiety, stress, and panic. When the frightened disciples woke Jesus up in the boat (Mark 4:38), he quickly calmed the storm and their fears. No matter where you are in your faith journey, this is a time that we all can call out to Jesus in desperation: "Lord, help us!" Let us also remember that the resurrected Jesus does not need to be awakened, but is alive and near. He is also able to calm our fears and walk with us through the storms of life. Be blessed.