

John 6:16-21
Rescued from the Storm!

Sermon introduction:

“Houston we have a problem,”

Astronaut John L. Swigert uttered these famous words a few seconds after an explosion shook his Apollo 13 spaceship in April of 1970. He was over 200,000 miles from planet earth with two other astronauts.

What happened? A spark from an exposed wire in the oxygen tank caused a fire, ripping apart one oxygen tank and damaging another inside the spacecraft.

This small spark left the three astronauts with several problems—power outages, freezing temperatures, a shortage of food, a shortage of potable water, and poisonous air. To make things worse they could not stop by the local parts store, since they were 200,000 miles from planet earth.

Ground control in Houston Texas scrambled to develop an emergency rescue plan as millions around the world nervously watched the perilous events unfold on their televisions.

Would ground control succeed in rescuing these men? Yes!!! A generous amount of grit, ingenuity, courage, and hard work allowed these men to be rescued.

We all love rescue stories. This rescue story reminds us of one of the most famous rescue stories in the gospels. In John 6, Jesus walks across the water to rescue the disciples from a fierce storm.

But it is not only the disciples who need to be rescued. We all need to be rescued from the storms of life. Maybe you are in a severe storm right now??? Maybe it is a financial storm, a relational storm, or a health storm.

Is it possible to get rescued from these storms??? Yes!

This story teaches us that *we can trust Christ to rescue us from the storms of life.*

If we understand this story, we will never ever be the same!!!

This story unfolds in three scenes...

The storm
The rescue
The response

First, the storm!

John 6:16–17 (ESV) — 16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, **17** got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

When Jesus miraculously fed 5,000 men plus women and children, the Jews wanted to make him king. Jesus realized their intentions and immediately departed. But before he left, he sent his disciples, by boat, to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 6:45). Then he withdrew to a nearby mountain to spend time alone praying to his heavenly father.

John 6:18 (ESV) — 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.

As darkness descended on the region, a storm descended on the waters.

The Sea of Galilee is subject to violent storms. It sits six hundred feet below sea level, and it is situated in a natural wind tunnel—gales blow off the Mediterranean Sea and through the mountains, stirring up the lake without warning.

According to the parallel accounts in the gospels, we learn that it took the disciples 7-8 hours to row three miles. They set out at dusk and rowed until at the third watch of the night. In normal conditions it would take experienced rowers one hour to row that far, it took the disciples 7-8 hours.

In other words, this was not your run of the mill storm. This was a severe storm. If this storm were an ice storm it would be ice storm 96. If this storm were an athlete, it would be Marshawn Lynch. If this storm were a movie, it would be Rocky (1-6).

How many of you have been caught in a severe storm?

Illustration:

I visited my wife's parents for the first time in October of 97. They took me sailing in the Puget Sound near Tacoma Washington. Let me provide a little bit of context. My father-in-law was a rookie sailor, and his sailboat had a hollow keel (filled with water) not a led keel. Hollow keel sailboats are easier to move across land, but they are not as stable as led keel sail boats.

It was a grey overcast day, with light rain. After being on the water for about an hour the winds picked up. As a result, we started to really move across the water. I felt like Dennis Conner as we sliced through the waves.

But then the wind and rain kicked into high gear!!! I started to get nervous as the sails and the boat tipped further and further over and the boat moved faster and faster. My father-in-law looked very nervous/scared—which did not give me much confidence. He realized too late that he was in over his head.

A moment later a massive gust of wind smashed into the sails and the little boat rocked violently to the left. The main sail nearly touched the water. At the same time, my stomach churned, and my face turned green.

We were all terrified as the waves soaked us and the wind whipped against our faces. We felt like a leaf in a raging mountain stream. If the boat capsized, we would not survive long in the frigid water. As a result, we desperately fought to trim the sails. Once the sails were down, we quickly motored to shore.

While weather storms can be scary, the storms of life can be much more terrifying.

Application:

Some of you have experienced...

The storm of cancer!

The storm of arthritis!

The storm of unemployment!

The storm of inflation and recession.

The storm of a difficult marriage.

The storm of wayward children.
The storm of an impossible boss.
The storm of Chronic pain.
The storm of poverty and war.

And just like the sea of Galilee, our circumstances can change very quickly. All it takes is a diagnosis, a recession, or a car accident and our lives can change very quickly.

Is anyone able to rescue us from the storms of life? This brings us to the second point...

First, the storm.

Second, the rescue.

What enables Christ to rescue the disciples? At least two things...

Jesus Christ is divine.

John 6:19 (ESV) — 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened.

After hours of fighting against the storm, the disciples are exhausted. It is dark, windy, and wet. Then someone in the boat sees Jesus walking towards them—on the water. Keep in mind that they are three to four miles from the shore. In other words, they are in the middle of the Sea. What did they say to one another?

They were terrified! You would be too.

Many people assume that the disciples were afraid of the storm. But, according to verse 19, they are much more afraid of Jesus than the storm. The word for frightened is often translated as terrified. Why were they terrified of Jesus?

They realized in that moment that the reason that Jesus could walk on the raging sea was because he is the one who made the sea and rules the sea. The one who is very human is also very divine. You too would be terrified. They understood that they were in the presence of a holy God, and the maker of all things!

Walking on the sea is a powerful, visible demonstration of Jesus' sovereignty over the world that he created (Heb. 1:3, 10). In the OT, God alone rules over the seas (Ps. 29:10–11; 89:9; 107:28–30). By walking on water Jesus proved that he was God.

Not only does Jesus act like God, but he also claims to be God. Let's keep reading...

John 6:19 (ESV) — 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened.

John 6:20 (ESV) — 20 But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

It is easy to miss Christ's claim in verse 20. He literally says, "Don't be afraid, I am." This is an allusion to Exodus 3:14, roughly 1500 years before Christ.

Do you remember this story?

God appears to Moses at the burning bush and Moses is terrified, just like the disciples are terrified.

Then God says, “Moses, I have chosen you to deliver my people from Egyptian slavery.” Then Moses says, “who shall I say sent me?” And God said to Abraham, “Tell them that ‘I am’ is sending you.”

This name is spelled with four Hebrew Letters YHWH. In the Greek version of the OT this is translated as “*ego eimi*.” It means something like...

I am self-existent and independent. Which means that I need nothing and I’m dependent on nothing.
I am the sustainer of everything.
I am unchangeable in my ways, meaning I’m always reliable.
I am eternal in my existence.

Jesus makes the same claim in John 8:58. He says to the Jews, “before Abraham was I am.” Then the Jews picked up stones to kill him, because they understood exactly what he was claiming.

Why can Jesus rescue us? He is the divine and holy one!

Application:

Many people think of Jesus as nothing more than a great moral teacher, or miracle worker, a wise sage, and a super nice guy. He probably recycled, volunteered at the pet shelter, and drove a Toyota Prius. For others Jesus is like Santa Claus without the white beard and red clothes. He loves and accepts everyone!!!

But this was not the Jesus the disciples encountered in the raging storm. When they saw him in divine and holy splendor, they were terrified.

This is always what happens in the Bible when people encounter the divine.

Later in the gospels when Jesus perform a miracle Peter says to him, “Depart from me for I am a sinful man.”

One scholar writes,

“Have you ever felt such awe for Jesus that you’ve needed to hear his reassurance that you don’t need to be afraid of him? If not, might it be that your view of Jesus is simply too small?” (Moody)

Jesus is holy.
Jesus is divine.
Jesus is self-existent.

Because Jesus is God, he is able to rescue you from any storm.
Since he is lord of every storm.
There is no storm that is too big or violent for God to handle!!!

Then why am I still experiencing a storm?

Christ let the disciples wrestle with their storm for a while—several hours. He let them get wet, tired, and discouraged. Sometimes Christ allows us to wrestle with storms for a while to teach us dependence on him and to build character in us.

If he is not immediately rescuing you from a storm, it is not because he can’t rescue you, it is because he loves you and wants you to be conformed more and more into his image.

How should we respond in this midst of the storm? With trust, patience, and confidence!!!

What enables Jesus Christ to rescue the disciples?

Jesus Christ is divine! What else???

Jesus Christ is near!

John 6:19 (ESV) — 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened.

After rowing for hours, the disciples probably wondered, where Jesus was? In the meantime, the waves were bashing against the side of the boat, the disciples were probably soaked to the bone, there was probably water in the boat, maybe the mast was cracking. The disciples probably wondered, has God forgotten us? Maybe you have wondered the same thing?

God did not forget them, in fact, he was about to join them. Have you ever wondered why Jesus walked across the water toward the disciples? He could have easily calmed the storm from the side of the lake. Instead, he walked across the waves to be with the disciples.

He draws near us in our storms to provide comfort in the midst of storms.

Illustration:

Anne Steele lived in England from 1716-1778. Her mother died when she was 3 years old. When she was 19, she suffered a severe injury to her hip, rendering her an invalid for most of her life. When she was 21, she was engaged to Robert Elscourt, but the day before the wedding he drowned while bathing in a river! She never married and assisted her father in his pastoral labors for her whole life, although for the last 9 years of her life, she was never able to leave her bed.

Recap- no mother, crippled her whole life, single her whole life, fiancé drowned, in bed the last 9 years of her life.... Lots of storms...

She wrote a beautiful hymn. It is titled, "My God My Father Blissful Name." Listen to the sixth verse,

If cares and sorrows me surround,
Their power why should I fear?
My inward peace they cannot wound, If Thou, my God, art near.
My inward peace they cannot wound, If Thou, my God, art near.

We don't have to be afraid of the storm, if we remember that Jesus is near! He is with us, and he will never ever leave us or forsake us.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us of this glorious reality.

Application:

Isaiah 43:2-3a (ESV) — 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. **3** For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Jesus comes to us in our trials...
He does not watch from a distance...

I have never heard anyone say, "I can't believe how much I grew through that season of prosperity." But I have heard many people say, "I can't believe how much I grew through that season of sorrow and pain." In the sorrow and pain, we are forced to rely on Christ like never before. When we draw near to him in the midst of the storm, he draws near to us. And the fellowship is life-changing.

Jesus drew near the disciples to rescue them from the storm. How did they respond? This takes us to the last point...

*First, the storm
Second, the rescue*

Third, the response

How did the disciples respond? They gladly welcomed Christ into their boat!

John 6:21 (ESV) — 21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

Jesus came to rescue them, and they gladly let him into their boat...

"This story is not a parable; it is a historical narrative. However, it certainly illustrates what happens when Jesus comes into our lives. Life is a time of pulling against the oars, against resistance, trying to get somewhere. However, we're not getting anywhere and we're about to be engulfed. But as soon as Jesus gets in the boat, we're home free. That's what happens when Christ comes into the lives of His people. He doesn't take away all difficulties and make our lives beds of ease, but He gets us through the darkness. He gets us through the violence. He carries us through the storm." (Sproul)

Application:

It is a dark and stormy world for everyone, Christians, and Non-Christians alike. Let me ask you a question, are you sure you can survive the storms of life on your own?

The disciples could not get to shore on their own, they needed Christ's help, you do to.

Jesus is the refuge from the storm, take him into your boat this morning. In other words, make him Lord of your life but turning away from your sins and trusting him to forgive and change you. When you do, he will be with you in life's storms.

If you're a Christian, don't forget that Christ is with you in the boat.

One old hymn goes like this...

His love, in time past,
Forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last
In trouble to sink:

By prayer let me wrestle,
And He will perform;

With Christ in the vessel,
I smile at the storm.

How did the disciples respond? They gladly welcomed Christ into their boat!

How does Jesus respond to the disciples? He brings them safely home.

John 6:21 (ESV) — 21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

As soon as Christ enters the boat, John writes, “and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.” Was this quick trip to shore another miracle? Possibly...

But more importantly it is a fulfillment of Psalm 107:29-30.

Psalm 107:29–30 (ESV) — 29 He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. **30** Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.

Christ fulfilled this psalm, written 1000 years earlier.

Christ saw the disciples in distress and acted (Mark 6). He came down the mountain, walked on the water, entered the boat, and he brought them safely home to their desired haven.

Christ sees us in our distress. He sees us battling the storms of life.

He came down from heaven to earth to rescue us from the greatest storm—the Storm of God’s righteous wrath. No storm compares to this storm. On the cross Jesus faced our storm head on. He absorbed the lightning and the thunder! As a result, you and I never have to face that storm.

Furthermore, because Christ faced that storm, our sins have been removed. Since our sins have been removed, we are made fit for our desired haven. In heaven, there will be no more tears, no more pain, no more sadness, and no more storms of any kind.

Ultimately, how do we know that Christ is able to rescue us from the storms of life? Because he rescued us from the greatest storm—the storm of God’s wrath. If he rescued us from the greatest storm, he can rescue us from every storm, and pilot us to our desired haven—the eternal land of rest. Let’s pray....