

Sermon for June 12, 2016  
"Calming the Storms"

Luke 8:22-39

Everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it. We've all experienced a summer thunderstorm. They can come up suddenly and without warning. One minute the sun is shining and the weather is clear and then all of a sudden a strong wind comes up. Then you hear the thunder in the distance and see the lightning. Before you know it the bottom falls out and the sky becomes dark.

We understand why that happens. In the summer the heat and sun cause water to evaporate quickly. The humidity rises to the point that the hot air has all the water it can hold. Then when it starts to cool off in the afternoon it starts. The cooler air cannot hold as much water as the hot air so the water in the humid air starts condensing. And the quicker it happens the more static electricity builds up in the moving changing air and lightening and thunder and rain are the results. And it keeps up until the humidity and the temperature of the air are again in balance.

We understand the process. You don't have to be smarter than a 5<sup>th</sup> grader to understand the basic physics of a thunderstorm. But none of us can stop it. I don't care how smart you are you cannot prevent a storm from happening. We can sometimes predict it, and prepare for it. Some day we may be able to significantly influence weather on purpose, but to date we cannot control or prevent storms.

The reason I am talking about storms is that there are at least four storms in this passage today. The first one is obvious. Like any body of water, the Sea of Galilee, which was really just a lake, intensified the summer storm phenomenon. The water was there to be absorbed by the hot air and then fall out of the air when it cooled off. So the fishermen among the disciples were used to sudden and sometimes fierce storms.

One day Jesus and the disciples were crossing the lake and such a storm arose. Jesus, probably tired from the teaching and preaching and healing, was asleep in the boat. The storm came up and this was a big one. Even Peter and the other fisherman were frightened. They woke Jesus probably so that he could grab a bucket and start bailing.

But instead of bailing water Jesus spoke to the storm. Luke says he "rebuked" it. And immediately the storm stopped. The disciples, who had seen other miracles, said "who is this that the wind and waves obey him?!"

The second storm is not as obvious, but it is there none the less. And it all has to do with where they were. The Sea of Galilee was the border between the Jewish region of Galilee and the Gentile region of the Gerasenes. The passage starts off with Jesus saying "let's go over to the other side." This is when this second storm started.

The disciples were used to ministering to their fellow Jews. They understood them. They were alike. But on the other side of the sea were people who were different.

Sure they were frightened by the storm, but even before that they must have been scared to be going to the other side. Following Jesus was leading them out of their comfort zone. Some of our Youth participating in Salkehatchie this summer will be led out of their comfort zone. The Attaway's were led out of their comfort zone. I am sure most of you have been out of your comfort zone, so we all know how the disciples must have felt. Add to that a thunder storm and the

disciples suffered from an emotional storm. Fear of the elements and fear of people who were different, culminated in a personal turmoil of doubt and fear.

In the midst of their storm Jesus said “Peace, be still.” That calmed the sea, but I am not sure it calmed the disciples. They were still wondering what they had gotten themselves into. Luke says that after Jesus calmed the storm that they were afraid. They wondered “who is this guy in the boat with us?”

The third storm was the psychological storm that met them on the other side. If the disciples were not afraid before, then they must have been when the boat landed. Not only was there a herd of pigs, a sure sign that they were not among Jews anymore, but a demon possessed homeless man met them and fell at Jesus’ feet. Psychologists would say that this man was suffering from some kind of schizophrenic psychosis. This psychosis caused him to live naked in the cemetery.

The disciples had been asking “Who is this?” after Jesus calmed the storm. The demon possessed man knew who he was. He addressed Jesus as the “Son of the Most High God.” This man must have suffered horribly. Who knows what kind of psychological, emotional and spiritual torment he went through.

Again Jesus used his voice. And just as he had rebuked the storm, he rebuked the demons. He cast them into the pigs and the pigs ran down the bank and were drowned in the sea. And the man was in his right mind. The storm was over and he could return to his home and his life.

This brings us to the fourth storm. The first was a physical storm. The second was an emotional storm. The third was a physiological storm. This one was a social storm. The people of that region who had tried to control the demon possessed man with ropes and chains saw what had happened. The swine herders had run to the village and told the people. They came and saw the man clothed and in his right mind.

And they were frightened. They had not been able to control the man. But Jesus had calmed him with just his voice. They were frightened like the disciples had been when Jesus calmed the storm on the sea.

So out of fear they told Jesus to go away. If he could control the demon possessed man what else could he do? He had already destroyed a whole herd of pigs. What else might he do? So they told Jesus to go away.

Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee and he calmed the spiritual storm of the demon possessed man. And he has the power to calm the storms in our lives. Those storms take many forms. Some are personal and emotional. Some are storms of mental illness or addiction. Some are interpersonal and have to do with relationships.

What are the storms in your life? Jesus can calm them and give you peace. But remember how the people reacted to Jesus’ power to calm the storms. The disciples were in awe and frightened, but they still followed Jesus. The town’s people were frightened and in awe too, but they rejected Jesus.

Jesus has the power to calm all the storms in our lives. Will you stay with him? Or will you tell him to go away? You know sometimes we want the storms to stay. The status quo – even a stormy one - is familiar. Jesus might lead us out of our comfort zone.

Will you follow the storm stopper or will you reject him? Beware: it might get uncomfortable.