

**June 20, 2021**

This gospel story is known as Jesus stilling the storm and it has a lot of connections with the Old Testament. The first century Jewish Christians in particular would see a lot of symbols that would be consistent with the scripture they already knew; lots of stories about wind and water.

Wind is associated with spiritual matters, which can be both good and bad... And water is often associated with Chaos. In Genesis we hear, “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

It’s part of the creation story, a story of how God brought forth life; it’s a story of speaking chaos into order. Of creating something good and positive out of something dangerous and chaotic.

Some commentators have suggested that this story of Jesus stilling the storm is like a new creation story. Jesus is creating a new way to access God’s love and forgiveness. And I kind of like that idea.

Perhaps another story that many **early** Christians would see in this story, is Jonah and the Whale. Jonah is called by God to go to Nineveh and proclaim that unless they repent, God would destroy them. And since Jonah didn’t like the Ninevites, he thought they were dirty rotten people, he tries to get away. Jonah gets in a boat and goes in the opposite direction.

The story of Jonah and the whale has a lot of similar elements, people in a boat, big storm, someone asleep, fear and panic, lot of chaos...

Quick Story... When I was a kid, my dad took my older brother and I on a fishing trip with his buddies up in Canada. We camped on a narrow point between two lakes. There was a hydroelectric dam upstream, and when the dam was open, the water in that channel was like a rapids-- rushing and swirling, with lots of whirlpools.

We were instructed to stay away, my dad said it was too dangerous. If we slipped and fell in, we might not make it out...

Well, you know how it goes with boys and fishing and danger... First day there, when all the adults were setting up camp, my brother and I along with another kid, were out there casting lines into the rapids.

And oh, my goodness, we were getting bites all the time! I caught a nice northern—but no one was supposed to know about it! And you know what, when you're having that much fun, you just start to forget about the danger...

As you can imagine, we were getting bolder, and at one point the other kid actually slipped and my older brother caught him just before he went in. It spooked us enough to stop, and from then on, we had a healthy respect for the rapids...

I'm pretty sure that was one of those things that happens when you're a kid, that your parents don't hear about. Except until now... That is, if my parents listened to the worship video this week!

When we left that camp, there was an agreement with the outfitters that the dam upstream would be closed, and we would be able take our boats back up through the channel... Which is exactly what happened. I remember being in a little fishing boat going upstream through the rapids, and I was scared to death! We

were thrown all over the place, but dad seemed to know what he was doing and we made it through. I was glad to be on the other side!

It was a scary ride... I bet a lot of you who go fishing have a similar story...

Like being tossed around in a boat on a lake, sometimes life feels that way. Sometimes life feels a little chaotic and out of control... Sometimes we are at the mercy of the circumstances around us, and it is scary...

This whole past year and a half, to me, feels like that...

I've never lived through anything like it. At the beginning of all this we had no idea how dangerous or contagious the virus was... And to some extent, there was a coming together of the whole country on what needed to happen. Everything pretty much shut down... Essential services remained open, but pretty much everything else halted.

Businesses and schools and churches closed and we were all thrown into the chaos of learning to live in the midst of a pandemic ... Our lives were turned upside down.

Many people were very scared, some people were just scared, and some people were a little scared. The common denominator was fear, like being on a boat in the middle of the rapids. I can imagine those disciples waking Jesus, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" Help us!!

The good news this morning is that Jesus said, "Peace! Be Still... and the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm." Like then, like now... Jesus is in the boat with us...

He never promises us that life will be easy, he promises to be with us under all circumstances. When we're afraid, Jesus is a prayer away. When we're scared, Jesus is watching and loving us. When we're not sure where to turn, Jesus is always there. I imagine there were a lot of prayers being said this past year. Like the disciples, "Help us!!" And, Jesus was right there in the middle of all of it!

And indeed, as we are now giving witness to and living into, Jesus is bringing us into those calmer waters... And all we can say, is thanks be to God... Amen.