

Bible Studies for Life: March 30

The Sign of His Presence • John 6:16-21

By Clay Anthony



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We know that storms are a certainty of life. Everyone is facing hardships. Heartbreaks are par for the course if you live long enough. The disciples were knee deep in a sinking boat and paralyzed by fear. We are told that the "*winds were against them.*" In the original language we are told that the winds were "*contrary.*" That is an old word we no longer use. To be contrary is to be against the rules, commands, or those in authority. The disciples are rowing with oars and bailing water with buckets but to no avail. They are in danger. It must not be lost on us that it was Jesus who put them in the boat in the first place. He wanted to stay behind. Could it be that He knew quite well what was about to happen? Was He about to use the Sea of Galilee as a massive object lesson on trust? Looks that way.

Please take all three accounts of this scene to mind as you read it. We are to remember what the disciples learned in that boat: peace in storms is possible, but only in Christ. We know there was an ongoing conversation at this moment. Jesus approaches the boat that is some three to four miles from shore and speaks peace to His followers. Over the wind and waves and men clamoring, Peter yells out to Jesus a request to join Him on the water. It is the words in that conversation we must heed. "If it is You," says Peter. "It is I," replies Jesus. Often, we are guilty of having life's storms strike us hard and then attempt to gain a foothold on our own. We reach out to seemingly every available hand that we think can aid us. Some of those hands are good: family, friends or even church. Yet, we must never forget that the best of all earthly help is nothing more than temporary. We need a permanent rescue and that only can be found in Jesus.

I have a habit of reading the end of a story first. I do not mind spoilers for books or movies. Each account of this story has a spoiler at the end so if you do not know how the story ends, stop and go read what happens. Matthew 13:34 reveals the same spoiler as Mark 6:53 and John 6:21. Indeed, storms of fear and hurt are going to swamp us from time to time. If you are reading these words thinking that your life is rather peaceful and easy, then take it from one a little older than I used to be: hang on. Storms are coming. Jobs are lost. Sickness sets in. Loved ones pass away. Relationships are strained. We live in a Genesis 3 world. That fact alone comes with only two guarantees: first, as mentioned above, rough waters are ahead. There is no way around them. Second, in Christ and only in Christ, we are going to the other side. That is the grand spoiler of this story: we make it!

What a great roller coaster of emotions that were felt on that boat. Jesus told them He would hang back while they go ahead. Did anyone think, "How is He going to get to us over there?" Then a drizzle turns into a down pour which then turns into a squall. Water and wind are pounding these men who no doubt are fearful for their lives. Then a figure appears on the surface. Then that figure speaks. The closer this person gets to the boat, the calmer both nerves and waves become. I just picture Jesus climbing into the boat and taking a seat with a grin on His face as He surveyed the shocked faces around Him. *"What? I said we were going to the other side. I said nothing about it being easy."*

Anthony is Missions Pastor at Harrisburg Church, Tupelo.