Onto the Seas of tribulation, be prepared

Have you ever felt alone and desperate accompanied by afflictions, sufferings, fears, and not knowing where the God you cry out to is?

If God is all-knowing, why does He allow us to navigate the storms of life? Why does He push us into them, why does He send us when He knows the outcomes? Today I hope to address the actions and response of Jesus when the disciples were in the storm.

*Mark 6: [45] Immediately **he made his disciples get into the boat** and go ahead of him to Bethsaida, on the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. [46]After he had dismissed them, he went up on the mountain to pray; [47]When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on land. [48]Seeing them straining at the oars because the wind was against them, about the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the sea, and he intended to pass by them. [49]When they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost, and cried out; [50]for all of them saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "**Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid**!" [51]Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down; and they were utterly amazed, [52]for they had not understood about the loaves, because their hearts were hardened.*

In this story, there are two things I ask you to focus all your attention on: Jesus and his actions, and the disciples and their reactions. We are **not** going to address Jesus' walking on water. The backdrop of the story is that this was the second time they were in a storm in Galilea. Immediately before they Jesus had feed a multitude.

***1st* The disciples**

We know very well that God creates situations in our lives to test our faith. Jesus sent the twelve to take the boat knowing the storm was coming.
The conditions that were coming were very extreme.

The disciples were not prepared to face the storm. They were still processing the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes to the 5,000. (*Mark 6:30-44*).

Many people do not understand God's work, so they are often are unprepared for life's challenges. We may feel just the same as the disciples.

The biblical text tells us that Jesus left them alone. The waves of the sea grew against them; so, did the fear in the disciples.

They had very human responses; the text suggests that the disciples became discouraged, grew tired rowing in the stormy winds, and feared for their lives.

It is very curious to see that Jesus wanted to get ahead of them (*v.48*). ***Why is that?***

2nd **Jesus**
We learn Jesus gave the command to the disciples to get into the boat to reach the other side of the lake knowing the storm was coming; He did it knowingly. He knew they would doubt and be very afraid.
What was Jesus doing during the storm? Praying on the mountain, watching them row and watching them from the shore. He was praying that his twelve disciples would learn to trust. To grow in faith and trust In His time, He join them during the storm.

I don't know much about the chronology of the events in Jesus' life with the twelve disciples, but I believe this was the first time He sent them alone, and alone into the storm.

What may confuse young believers about circumstances like these is **WHY**. Why does God send us into storms knowing we will stumble? Consider:

- Is He not our protector (**Jehovah Rohi**) "The shepherd who protects me"?
- Isn't He supposed to deliver us from all evil? According to *Matthew 6:13 He delivers us from evil.*
- But also consider that God does have a purpose for us in everything HE does. His plans for us are good. *Rom 8:28*

3rd **What we must learn.**
We have all lived through the storms of life. Some of us are victims of our parents, others are overloaded with our boss, work, or finances. Some are frustrated with retirements and little significant things to do, others live so frustrated because they are short-sighted, cannot see the end of the race. Others are trapped in circumstances that are not their fault. The truth is that we all have our stories of tragedies and conflicts.

Fearful, worrisome, domineering emotions and thoughts of "What now", "What is next", "I do not know what to do". "*I do not know what to do but I want God to do this or that….*

The first thing we must learn is that adversity and tribulations have purpose. Learning to trust is difficult, but necessary.

Let your faith guide you, not your sight. Jesus insisted that his disciples show their faith during difficulties. *2Cor 5: 7 (for we walk by faith, not by sight).* ***Jesus tells us: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid".***

In *Mark 6:52* the evangelist tells us that the disciples did not understand the miracle of the loaves and fishes. They still lacked understanding about Jesus' power; they had experienced His power to perform miracles of food and healings, but they still lacked faith to understand that He had power over nature, over all things, circumstances and conditions.

The disciples had hardened hearts. We may not know how to transfer the mercy of God that gets you thru traffic without accidents. Who heals your everyday health to change into boldness, that the power of God is greater to any of our challenges, He is able to overcome any adversity in life, no matter what it may be. Whatever!
The same God who takes care of you every day, who provides for you every day, who healed your illness is the one who will give you victory in the greatest storms of your life.

Please understand that those of faith must…must go thru tribulations. Dr Luke teaches: *Acts 14: [22] strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that* ***through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.***
Tribulations are our pathway to the kingdom of God.

1Thes 3: *[3] We didn't want any of you to be discouraged by all these troubles.* ***You knew we would have to suffer,***
Paul implies that all will go through trial so we should stay firmly on the path of reliance and submission. Or go through them with weak understanding, shady beliefs, and frail faith.
[4] because when we were with you, we told you this would happen. And we did suffer, as you well know. Why would we think that we can escape from suffering if we live like Christ?

The disciples did not understand Jesus because of their hardened hearts, because they did not allow themselves to trust Him over the storm. We must learn to trust God. Our pride and hardness limit us before the impossible. Our faith falters before the impossible.
We cannot allow that. Lack of faith indicates that we live by what we see, and with the limits of our reason, and in doubt, questioning if God really cares about us. Our unbelief, feelings, reasoning weighs more on us than the trust we have in God. If we enter distrustfully into the storm, fear will dominate us.

I challenge you to change your perspective on how you see God and how you assimilate God's ways. Our relationship needs to deepen to understand how He works in our lives. It is necessary to change, transform our reasoning to understanding God. And consider that His love is the most important thing. He is love, motivated by love, and He loves us. Let us see the storms from God's perspective, seek to understand His purposes for us. Understand your Heavenly Father as we ask children to understand us.

A side bar, not in your notes.
I remember an extraordinarily strong storm in Puerto Rico. My family and I went through challenges before, during and after the storm.
Before the storm there was a time of stillness and peace, it seems the storm gave us time to prepare. It was a false peace. But when storm came it was destructful; months without water and many without shelter.

A storm is coming, one which can be predicted. One we must prepare for. I cannot stop thinking about what is happening in many churches, there is a void of maturing growth and especially a void of prayer. There is a scary calm in the emptiness among us.

Is it that we do not know how to pray? Can we pray, prayers lead by the spirit, prayer of faith that generate miraculous action? The prayer meeting of the apostolic church was the engine that drove the church to exponential growth. We must not be complacent, in this dangerous and treacherous waiting.

How can we prepare for storm of life? Prayer is the answer; pray preparing and deepening our relationship with the Lord. Pray in surrender and reliance on Him. Pray in the power of the Holy Spirit which moves us to live in the Holy Spirit. Jim Cynbala "We must return to prayer meetings. They provide *a place for us to uphold one another." 1John 4: [4]for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

Back to the teaching: Everything God does is for our eternal gain. The difficult, the painful, even what we do not understand. Let us prepare our hearts to move forward through all obstacles. God watches over us closely; Jesus is praying in the mountains. He stands at the shores of adversity when we go through storms. He is near and will not leave you alone in despair. At the right time He will jump into the boat.

Please notice that there is a progression in the following verses as to the depth and level of storms, trial and tribulation all the way to being persecuted for our faith.

*2Cor 4: [17] These **little troubles** are getting us ready for an eternal glory that will make all our troubles seem like nothing. [18] Things that are seen don't last forever, but things that are not seen are eternal.* Contemporary English Version
This is why we keep our minds on things that cannot be seen as the most important.

- According to Heath Lambert, God does not allow us to lose anything of eternal value in trials and tribulations. We must recognize that, by God's good will, no human trial that He sends you will take away what is essential for eternity, everything you lose is temporary. You will lose what you do not need. And those losses will open the doors to heaven. It is

better to arrive with one eye in heaven than not to arrive because you do not trust. *Matthew 18:8-9*

James 1: [2] My friends, be glad (a sheer gift), even if you have a lot of trouble (coming from all sides). [3] You know you learn to endure by having your faith tested. [4] But you must learn to endure everything, so you will be completely mature and not lacking in anything.
Contemporary English Message 2-4 "do not try to get out of it".

- In the **trial we must learn** to endure, to persevere in the trials that the God of love sends us, trusting that He is in control. He uses trials to measure how deep the Word has gone in our hearts. Jim Cymbala *(Mark 4:17)*
- Let every kind of **trial *lead you to perfection.*** Your expectations, your attitudes, and your submission to God will perfect you. We must depend on Him to achieve perfect trust. The fulfillment of His work in you depends on your faith and obedience. Wait on God. Jim Cymbala said: God is more interested in making us Christlike than the American dream
- A young missionary responded as we were talking about the storms of our lives: "If I fall, He will pick me up". That is not the attitude in which we face trial and tribulation. God does not want us to falter during our storms, give in or backslide. He wants us to overcome the trial and grow and be ready for the next challenge.
- ***2Cor 1:[4] He comforts us when we are in trouble, so that we can share this same comfort with others in trouble.***
- I believe that a ***life without difficulties*** hardens our hearts, we grow insensitive, arrogant, and without compassion. These are not the results God seeks.
- If trials DO NOT lead you to perfection (to grow and mature spiritually), two things will happen to you: 1st you will have to go through more trials; or 2nd God will choose at some point to leave you to your own judgment. **Trials are for our gain. They are for our spiritual maturity, so that we lack nothing,**
- Their purpose is to prepares us to enter eternity with God.
- God wants to ***love you during the trial***, during loneliness, during your attacks of fear and anxieties. God wants to keep you while your faith grows, so that you can overcome by faith in other trials of greater eternal impact.
- We should not think that going through the storm is license to fall, that is a lie.

The apostle is giving this advice in relation to our eternity:
1Peter 1: [6] So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials *for a little while. [7] These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise, glory, and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.*

Those who decide to live a Christ-like life will go thru persecution. The Apostle Paul teaches:*2 Tim 3: [12] Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ...[14] But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.*

It is our faith, the essential of Christian beliefs we learn as we study the Word that will help us overcome by faith, obedience, reliance, love one another, sacrifice, thankfulness…these are our protection to get thru the storms of persecution.
John 16: While you are in the world, you will have to suffer. But cheer up! I have defeated the world.

4th **Conclusion**
The short narrative ends with the disciples reaching the other side of the storm safely and amazed at the love, care, and power of Jesus. They were never alone because their Lord watched over them. He wants to love us in the storms and at the moment He chooses, He appears in our boat and calms the storm.

In verse *[51] Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down; and they were utterly amazed.* He had the last word. He got on the boat and the storm stopped. Do not be surprised that His power is greater than the storm.

The last verse of the narrative reads: *[52] for they had not understood about the loaves, because their hearts were hardened.* Like the disciples, many believers go through various kinds of storms in their lives and come out safely. Some without losing anything of eternal value. But they still do not understand their Lord, nor His love, nor the purposes of adversities and miracles. God does what He does to give us other opportunities to grow and overcome our unbelief and hardened hearts.

I challenge you not to become discouraged during the storms but to look up to the heaven from where our help comes. *Psalm 121* Prepare yourself for the next storm; it is coming soon.

Outline Semon title: *On to the Sea of Tribulations*

1. Introduction: Facing Tribulations

- All have experienced feelings of loneliness, desperation, and affliction, and wondering about God's presence during life's storms.
- Scripture reading: *Mark 6:45-52* (on the Screen)

2. The Disciples

- The disciples are sent into the storm.
- They were unprepared, fearful, and discouraged, still processing previous miracles.

3. Jesus

- Jesus commands the disciples to enter the boat, knowing the storm will come.
- During the storm, Jesus was praying and watching over them.

4. Lessons to Learn:

- Changing perspective to understand divine purposes. Understand God's action from His point of view.

(For screen and not in outline) *2Cor 4: **17 What we suffer in this life is light,** and it soon passes; but it brings us an eternal glory much greater and more abundant. **18** For we do not look at what can be seen, but at what cannot be seen, since what can be seen is temporary, **but what cannot be seen is eternal.** NLT*

- Trials and sufferings are opportunities for growth and learning.
- Lack of faith and hardened hearts are obstacles to understanding God's work in us.
- God's trials are to make us perfect for heaven.

(For screen and not in outline) *James 1: [2] Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, [3] for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. [4] And let steadfastness have its full effect, that **you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.***

- Gods' trials will never take anything of eternal value.
- God wants to love us while we are in the mist of the trial. He wants our victory over trial to bring you ***much praise, glory, and honor.***

(For screen and not in outline) *1Peter 1: **6** So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, **it will bring you much praise, glory, and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.***

5. Closing

- Today we are challenged to change perspective, deepen relationship with God, and recognize His love and purposes in adversity.
- The disciples reached safety, amazed at Jesus' care. They lost nothing of eternal value.
- We should prepare for future storms, by growing in reliance on Him, and understanding God's love and purposes.