

When you least expect it, expect it. At least it seems that way to me when it comes to predicting storms. If the forecast is bad, the storm is likely to miss us. But when the forecast says there isn't anything to be concerned about, look out because that is usually when the big storms hit. Life is that way. Unexpected storms can threaten to overwhelm us with little or no notice. It might be a routine visit to the Doctor's office that turns out to be anything but routine. Or it can be a regularly scheduled meeting with your boss that ends up being the last meeting the two of you have. Then there is that unexpected and unwanted phone call with bad news. Maybe you're feeling a little overwhelmed by life right now.

Jesus' disciples had no reason to suspect that they would run into a bad storm when they set sail on the Sea of Galilee. They knew this body of water well. At least four of them had made their living as fishermen on this very same lake before Jesus called them to follow him. The Twelve disciples set out to cross the lake with the promise that Jesus would catch up with them before long. Little did they know that they would be confronted by one the sudden, deadly storms that could pop up unexpectedly on that little lake. A short trip was taking them all night. They were sore, tired and afraid when they saw what appeared to be a ghost walking on the water toward them. It wasn't a ghost. It was Jesus. But the disciples didn't expect Jesus to come to them in the storm. As he approached their fishing boat Jesus said, "Take courage ... I am here." (Matthew 14:27) When Peter heard Jesus voice, he got out of the boat and started walking on the water toward Jesus. (We'll come back to Peter in a few minutes.)

Mary received an unexpected visit from the angel Gabriel. He told her that she was going to be the mother of the promised Savior. Mary could have easily been overwhelmed by the news and overcome with fear. If Gabriel's words came true, Mary was going to face a series of sudden and unexpected storms. She had to tell Joseph, her fiancé, without knowing how he would react. Then she had to tell her parents, since she was still living in their house. That wasn't going to be peaceful. She had no idea what kind of storms she would face in her synagogue or her small village.

Mary already had enough on her plate already, getting ready to get married. She didn't ask for a child, too. That could have pushed Mary over the top, but it didn't because her focus was on the Lord, his Word and Promise. Gabriel told Mary she would conceive her child by the power of the Holy Spirit and that nothing was impossible for God. Mary didn't ask "why me?" Instead she said, "I am the servant of the Lord." Mary was able to move ahead knowing that God was with her. It wasn't easy facing Joseph and her family. But God helped her and even sent an angel to Joseph to explain everything to him. After the baby was born, Mary was able to look back on all that had happened and "treasure" these things in her heart.

Peter was able to walk on water as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. But when he took his eyes off Jesus to look at wave that threatened to crash down on him, Peter began to sink. But Jesus was with him in the storm, ready to rescue him from the wind and the waves. After rescuing Peter, Jesus calmed the storm.

When the storms of life threaten to overwhelm us, we need to remember the words Gabriel spoke to Mary, “Nothing is impossible for God.” God can handle the storms that are too big for us. God can deal with any of the problems that we cannot face alone because he doesn’t leave us alone. He is with us. Regardless of where the storms of life take us, God is there. Nothing can separate us from God. Just as he came to the disciples during the storm at seas, Jesus comes to us in the storms of life. We may not expect to meet him there, but he is. Jesus doesn’t just hang out in church, or at Bible studies or prayer meetings. He knows when we need help. He also knows that He can gain our full attention in times of storms. That was certainly the case from the prophet Jeremiah, who lived a very stormy life. Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations, ***“The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease.”*** (Lamentations 3:22)

If you’re like me, you enjoy a good mystery novel or movie. I especially like the ones when I can’t figure out how everything is going to work out, how it is going to end. But even if I can’t figure it out, I know the author has it all worked out. When life is a mystery, when we can’t see how everything is going to work out, we need to turn to the author. Hebrews 12 tells us, ***“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*** (Hebrews 12:2-3) Jesus faced the biggest storm of life for us and is ready to help us handle anything that comes our way.

Jesus could have calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee before the disciples were caught in it, but he didn’t. Storms are a reality of life, they are not an option. No one goes through life without facing any storms. The question is how do we respond to the storm? Fear is an option, but only one option. The other option is faith. If we feed our fear, our faith will starve. But when we feed our faith, our fears will starve. So look to Jesus in the storms of life. He can help you face anything and everything because nothing is impossible for God. Amen.