

THE OTHER BOATS

Mark 4:37-41

Jesus often preached along the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Sometimes the crowds would push Him back so much that he would preach from a boat along the shore – besides the sound carried better. On one occasion, it was getting late. Jesus was tired, He was already in the boat, so He told the disciples with Him, “Let’s cross over to the other side.” Just a short trip. A little boat ride where he could catch some shut eye. They launched out into the deep and other boats followed them. Maybe the other boats held other disciples, people who just wanted to be with Jesus and hear more of what He had to say.

They had just gotten a good way off the shore and they sensed a change in the wind, but before they could do anything, a furious squall came up with gale force winds. Most of the disciples were experienced sailors, they knew the danger of these sudden wind storms and they knew what they had to do – but after they had done it all, they were still taking on too much water. The waves were too big. The wind was too strong. The boat was filling up with water – and Jesus was sleeping through it all! They were all about to die and Jesus was asleep!

They had to wake Him up! “Jesus! Jesus! Don’t you even care that we are about to die? We’re all going to drown!” (Notice they didn’t even say, “Sorry, we couldn’t save you!”) Jesus sits up in the boat, looks around at the wind and waves and He commands the wind, “Be quiet!” and says to the waves, “Be still!” The wind dies down and the waves subside to normal. Can you imagine how stunned the disciples were? Who was this who could tell the wind to be quiet and the waves to be still and they listen! They realized there was much more to Jesus than they had ever imagined. It’s great when Jesus is in your boat in a storm – it’s even better when you remember.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, almost forgot Jesus was in His boat in the early years of his ministry. In the early 1700’s Wesley was a very religious man. He worked hard at being good enough, but never felt he was. He even became an Anglican priest – but that didn’t seem enough. So he decided to go to the mission field. There was a new land and new opportunities in Georgia, so he would go there. As he traveled by ship across the Atlantic, they came into a terrible storm. The waves were pounding the ship terribly. The sea water was pouring down into the hold where the passengers stayed. Wesley was huddled in a corner scared to death. He just knew they were all going to die and he was terrified. He was amazed at a small group of Moravian passengers (members of a German Christian sect). They joined hands, sang praises to God and prayed – they didn’t seem to be worried about a thing – even the children. When the storm subsided and Wesley decided he would probably live, he approached the leader of the Moravians with a simple question. “How come?” And there was a simple answer, “We believe in God.” They had a faith in God that saturated every part of their lives. They knew Jesus was in the boat with them. Wesley later gained that kind of faith in Christ.

The disciples weren't much better than Wesley or us – and they had Jesus right there. But like many of us, they thought they could handle things on their own. After all some of the disciples were sailors. They knew all about sailing. They knew all about that sea. When the storm came up, they worked with the sails, turned the boat the right way – did everything they knew how to do, and ended up giving it all up as hopeless. They decided they were all going to drown...and THEN they realized Jesus was in their boat. Then they called on Jesus. But it was probably just to say a prayer for them before they all died.

Sometimes it takes life getting so bad, we know we can't fix things – then we call on Jesus. “The doctors have done all they could. All we can do now is pray.” Things start going bad at work – we try and try and try, we lose our job – then we turn to the Lord for help. And Jesus says to us what He says to the disciples, “Don't you have any faith? Why are you afraid? Don't you have confidence in me yet?”

Faith is not just believing in Jesus – it's acting on that belief – believing so much you trust Him with every area of your life and putting that trust into practice – even if the circumstances say it's pointless. (It is not about trying harder, it is surrendering to Him.) Don't leave your faith on the beach; take it with you in the boat into the storms. Don't leave your faith in Jesus in church; take it with you out into life and the storms of the world where you live. Jesus is in the boat with you.

There is something else that is mentioned in this account that makes me very curious: what happened to the other boats? Did they sink or stay afloat? What happened to the other boats depended on what happened in the lead boat.

There is no further mention of the other boats; I don't think the disciples were very worried about them. When you are so busy bailing water out of your own boat you forget about everyone else. You get so caught up in your own little world, with your own sea of troubles; you forget others out there going through the storm too. Parents, Dads, that's true of us – we can get so caught up in our world, we forget about the needs of others in our family – our wife, each of our kids – in the other boats following us. What happens in the lead boat will affect the other boats.

There are those who are following your lead. What happens to their faith may depend on you. One of the topics in pre-marital counseling we discuss is about the couple's parents. You can look at the father of the young man and find out a lot about the son. The same goes with the girl – if you want to know something about what she is like, look at her mother. It doesn't follow 100% but you can get a general idea. How many of us have found ourselves saying things our father or mother said, that we thought we would never say? Or doing things like them in such a way that someone says you remind them of your mother or father.

What are we teaching those who look to our lead about practical everyday faith? They are following your lead. Maybe you had a father who gave you a bad

example and you have vowed to be a better example for your children. Don't try to do it on your own – don't forget Jesus in your boat.

Are you so preoccupied with your own situation that you have forgotten about them? Will they sink with you or will your example of faith help keep their lives afloat?

As this is Father's Day, when our first child is born, most men are very aware of our responsibility. We want to be the best father we can, and we know that kids learn mainly from example. Keith Simmons, in "USA Today Snapshots," USA Today (June 14-16, 2002) says, "Studies say children with involved fathers are:

- More confident and less anxious in unfamiliar settings**
- Better able to deal with frustration**
- Better able to gain a sense of independence**
- More likely to become compassionate adults**
- More likely to have higher self-esteem**
- More likely to have higher grade-point averages**
- More sociable**

How much are we like our parents in our faith? You still have a choice. It might be your parents didn't teach you much about faith – but you are here, so keep up the good work – apply it in your life. You've heard people talk about how active their mother or father was in church – but they are not active – they're not doing the same thing for their own children. Are you? There are other boats following.

Dads, so many of us are worried about our family having everything they want and we work to get it for them. But what we often forget is what is on the top of their list of wants is you – your time and your life. Most of all they need our spiritual leadership. It's been one of our greatest failures. Maybe we have forgotten that Jesus is in our boat. They need you – like it or not you are in the lead boat.

Make God first in your life for others to discover who God is. You have to have a relationship with Jesus Christ if you expect the others to have one. You've got to have Jesus in the boat with you, or you will be as lost as they are when the storms come. Put your faith into practice day by day, moment by moment, to show others how to live the Christian life. You are in the lead boat.

The storms are coming. Will you take the faith of the beach into the storm? Is Jesus in your boat? Call on Jesus right away for your sake and the sake of the other boats, the children, who look to your example of faith.