

# The Storms of Life are Nothing New to God

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August 9, 2020. Elijah, and Jesus' disciples, were all beset by “storms” at different times in today’s readings. And surrounded by all the chaos in the world today, we may feel that we’ve been blown off course and are lost. But Pastor Meagan preaches today on the comfort that comes from knowing that the storms of life are nothing new to God.

Readings: [1 Kings 19:9-18](#), [Matthew 14:22-33](#)

\*\*\* Transcript \*\*\*

2020 is bringing us some pretty mighty storms so far, isn’t it? The initial onset of the pandemic, uprisings around racism, economic uncertainty, political upheaval, the resurgence of the virus that we’re seeing right now. Christ Lutheran family, we started out this year, and our ministry together way back in the end of February, thinking that we were headed in one direction. It seems the next thing we knew, we were blown so far off course that we aren’t even sure where we are anymore sometimes!

So it's quite comforting, isn't it, to know that the storms of life are nothing new to God. The disciples, and Elijah, were all beset by “storms” at different times in today’s readings. Elijah has been chased, run out of town by Jezebel’s threats to his life. Many, although not all, of his fellow prophets had lost their lives, and Elijah is exhausted, afraid, despairing. He finds a cave to hide in, and he has no idea what to do next. And even if he did, he doesn't have the energy to do it. And the disciples, having been sent out in a boat to cross the lake ahead of Jesus, encounter a storm. And they are trapped on the lake in the boat, wondering if they will survive.

And into this chaos, God appears. A few weeks ago at Pentecost, with the Holy Spirit appearing in wind and fire, enabling the disciples to speak in languages they had never learned, empowering them to boldly and publicly speak truth when they had been hiding from the authorities for days, I reflected that sometimes God comes to *wake us up*! To shake us from our complacency, to bring us out of our comfortable places, leading us to share God’s justice and mercy and love with the world. And sometimes, like today, God comes to heal, to feed, to calm, and then equip us to go out again.

As he fled from Jezebel an angel came to Elijah, offered him food and water and rest, and then left. And the angel returned, to offer more food and water and rest, and left again. And then the angel returned to bring Elijah to the cave, where our reading today starts. And God appears.

I picture the disciples, buffeted and tossed by the wind and the rain in an open boat, holding onto each other and the sides of the boat trying their best to not fall out, and to keep the boat balanced, perhaps struggling to figure out what direction they should be heading, if they can manage to direct the boat at all. And then, they see what they think at first is a ghost — until Jesus tells them it’s him. Most of the disciples stay in the boat, still holding on, perhaps gaping in disbelief at the figure that's coming towards them on the water. Peter, in classic Peter fashion, jumps out of the boat into the water and begins to walk toward Jesus, wanting to see for himself if it’s really him. And Jesus has to remind him, once again, that Jesus is God and Peter is not — Peter will not stay afloat without Jesus.

So, where are you today? Are you with Elijah, laying in the cave, resting, feeling completely alone in the chaos and grief and the danger, trying to recover and make sense of what has happened and decide what to do next? Are you with the disciples in the boat, struggling to hold on while the storm continues

to rage all around you? Are you Peter, leaping out of the boat into the chaotic waters, making your way toward Jesus?

Wherever you are right now, it is comforting to know that the storms of life are nothing new to God. Elijah feels so alone, as we often may in these situations, and yet we can see from the outside that he is not alone. The angel offers such practical guidance for Elijah, and for us. Eat. Drink. Rest. Repeat. I remember a time some years ago when I was at a really low point in my life, wracked by fear and anxiety, struggling at times to do even basic things, and a friend gave me this exact advice. Eat. Drink. Rest. Repeat. This is sacred direction, family of faith, if you are exhausted. Jesus himself sought time to rest and reconnect with God often in the gospels. And he does again at the beginning of today's gospel. The disciples in the boat probably felt abandoned by God too, with Jesus off who knows where while they fought for their lives in the storm. And yet, they were not as alone as they thought. Jesus is with them, in the storm, ghostly as he may look.

In the middle of the storm, God is with us. In that low point of my life, through the voice of my friends and the presence of the Spirit in silence, God was with me, bringing healing and new life and peace. When we are exhausted, and feel afraid, alone, and even abandoned, God is there.

Where are you seeing God, in the midst of the storms you are living in, right now? Is God in the sheer silence, as you rest and seek God? Is God off the port bow, almost glowing as they make their ghostly way through the chaos toward you? Is God in the boat, holding you safely as you ride out the storm together? Are you struggling through the storm, trying to stay afloat on the water, wondering if God is actually there?

It is comforting to know that the storms of life are not new to God. And when we have had food, water, and rest, God reminds us that we're not alone. God made the earth, the sea, the sky, light and dark and everything in between, all the animals, the birds, plants, trees, and each one of us, bringing creation of out unformed chaos. And even in the midst of the sometimes chaotic life around us, God is present, continuing to bring life and make a way through the storm.

Elijah felt alone, but God sent Elisha, and the 7,000, so they could walk together in faith, claiming the goodness of God. And the disciples had one another, and they had Jesus, as they made their way through the storm. In the middle of the chaos, God is with us, preparing us to go back out again, sharing the good news that God can handle the pandemic, and racial injustice, and political upheaval, and economic uncertainty, and loneliness, and fear, and anxiety.

As we continue our ministry together, Christ Lutheran family, we may not know yet what the coming months will bring, but we can trust in the promise that God is with us. Your Council is reflecting on where we are and where God is calling us, and we invite you to do so too. Like Elijah, we hear God in the sheer silence. Like the disciples, we see Jesus navigating the stormy water in front of us, and claim the good news that God has not abandoned us. We eat, drink, rest, and continue the journey, until everyone knows. The storms of life are not new to God. And with God, we have nothing to fear.

Thanks be to God!

\*\*\* Keywords \*\*\*

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