

## Here Comes the Storm

Based on Mark 4:35-41

My first congregation was in typical small town Ontario: one grocery store, one pharmacy, and one funeral home. The director of the funeral parlour happened to be a member of my congregation, and on occasion, I would get a call in the middle of the day. "Teresa, put on your suit, your collar and your cross. I've got a situation over here!"

Suffice it to say that discussing funeral arrangements does not always bring out the best in us! The funeral director was very good at conflict management in difficult circumstances, but there were times, when even his skills were put to the test. I would put on my severest, blackest suit, the biggest silver cross I owned, and head over to the funeral director's office. You could often hear the squabbling from the parking lot. I would open the door and enter the room smiling blandly.. and the noise would stop. Now it wasn't something brilliant I had said, because I hadn't said anything yet. It wasn't my stylish outfit, because it was a plain black suit. But the funeral director was right.

There was something about a collar and a cross that changed the tone of the room. Christ had entered the conversation.

Jesus was resting after a busy time of teaching. Everywhere He went, crowds would gather. They wanted to talk with Him, debate with Him, pray with Him, expound their wisdom upon Him. Each time He found a quiet place to catch His breath, the crowd would catch up with Him, and the teaching would begin again. Then Christ got creative. Ah! A boat! No one could chase Him in a boat! Someone set up a nice place in the back for Him to rest. We're even told He had a pillow, to make His sleep more comfortable!

But the rest was short lived. A sudden storm appeared on the horizon, and quickly, refuge in the boat became danger in the boat. Reminiscent of the sailors transporting Jonah as far from Ninevah as possible, the disciples became fearful for their lives. Yet, Jesus slept. Finally they could take it no longer. They woke Jesus up and scolded Him:

*"Teacher, don't you care that we are about to die?" (v38)*

The story continues that Jesus stood up and called out to the storm:

*"Be still!"*

*"The wind died down, and there was a great calm." (v39)*

A miracle? Coincidence? Yes. Perhaps. But there is something more, I think. Most contemporary translations of this passage will use the phrase, 'be still' or 'be quiet' when it comes to the part where Christ calmed the sea. Moving backwards in time, an older word begins to pop up instead. "Hush." Just listen to the sound of the word as it escapes your lips. The word itself begins to convey some of the hidden meaning behind it. "And Jesus said to the sea, hush!"

Digging deeper, the original Greek of the word 'hush' becomes a murky mess of phrases like 'holding one's tongue', 'stillness', 'to keep the peace', and possibly even the 'voluntary or involuntary refusal to speak'. In fact, to put it rather simply, it may mean that nothing was said, at least with words and vocal chords.

Is it possible that Christ's presence at a difficult moment in that boat was sufficient to hush the winds?

Is it possible that Christ's presence at a difficult moment in our life is sufficient to hush the winds of chaos?

We often use this story to convey the idea that we should hold tightly to our Christ and to our faith, especially in the storms of life, for He is our rock and our strength, rather like the hymn says,

*Oh, Jesus is a Rock in a weary land, a shelter in the time of storm.*

~Vernon Charlsworth

But let me turn that on its head for a minute, and suggest, that you can be the rock in the room in the midst of a storm; that because of your faith, and because of your discipleship and because of your commitment to the Saviour, you can be the still, small voice, you can hush the winds; and that you can do it all without saying a word. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the truth. Use words if necessary."

It would be easier, to send you on your way today with a

simple message of "Hold on tight to Christ, Hold on tighter if you are feeling a storm headed your way. He is your rock. He will keep you safe." And if the storms of life are weighing heavy on your shoulders right now, then grab hold tightly, and hang on.

But for you disciples out there who feel you have your balance at the keel of the boat, I suggest there is more. Our Saviour needs men and women to be His voice and His presence in the world today. He needs men and women who can hush the winds. He needs men and women who are understand: there are times to speak; there are times to be silent; there are times to refrain; there are times to pray earnestly. Our Saviour needs men and women who understand, that being His presence in a room is often enough to bring a calming

influence. Being His presence in a difficult situation can build bridges of hope. Being His presence where there is anger can sometimes bring thoughts of reconciliation.

Do not underestimate the power of Christ to work through your presence, your care and thoughtfulness, your silence, or your voice. Do not underestimate your ability to hush the winds, to calm the storm, to be a shelter for the fragile. Yes, it would be easier to hide in the bottom of the boat. But then you would miss the sunrise, now wouldn't you?

Hold on tight when the world is rough.  
Hold your tongue while the tempests toss.  
Hush the winds.

Be not afraid. I go before you always.  
Come follow me, and I will give you rest.