

## Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 8-19-18

To Adult Teachers:

August 19 we will study John 6:16-21. Discussion questions are:

1. Is this thought reassuring or intimidating to you: “You are going to die the same way you live!”
2. How do you understand this statement: “Christianity is not only a way of behaving but also a way of seeing.”
3. How do you understand this statement: “The great truths of Christianity are not just doctrines to be believed but they are lenses through which to look at life.”
4. How would a deep faith in Jesus as “Lord of the storm” affect your life?
5. According to vs. 19 were the disciples afraid of the storm or of the one who walked on the waves?
  - a. How could it be frightening to us today to realize Jesus walks on the waves of storms?
  - b. How does awareness that Jesus is God create “approach/avoidance” feelings in us?
    - i. What does it take to get past feeling “approach/avoidance” with God?
6. What is comforting about Jesus words, “It is I.”?
7. How is the fear of the disciples similar to Moses’ fear at the burning bush?
8. Is it fun to have a mentor?
  - a. If you realize Jesus is going to function as a mentor to you, what should you expect from him?
9. In the parable of the 2 men who built houses on sand and rock, what is the function of the storm?
  - a. Under what circumstances would it be difficult for you to thank God for the storm in your life?
10. Where are you when it comes to believing this truth: “Everything Jesus does for you or allows to happen to you is in an effort to mold you into his image.”

### Sermon: "Lord of the Storm"

John 6:16-21

One of the most exciting and dangerous of the newer careers in Oklahoma is that of being a storm chaser. The 1996 movie “Twister” fueled the imaginations of young people with a desire for an adventurous career watching tornados. Whether or not you foolish enough to chase tornados it’s rare to live in Oklahoma very long and never see a tornado. For sure everyone in Oklahoma has seen threatening thunderstorms and wall clouds. Here’s a question you’ve likely never considered: how should a Christian watch a storm? This passage says "unlike anyone else!"

People will tell you that Christianity is a way of behaving, a way of treating people. It is that of course but it is so much more. Christianity is not only a way of behaving but also

a way of seeing. The great truths of Christianity are not just doctrines to be believed but they are lenses through which to look at life. You don't just look at a doctrine, you look through it. The great truths of Christianity are like windows. You don't look at a window. You look through it. The great truths of Christianity are like a pair of eyeglasses. They bring the world into sharp focus and help you see what you could not see without them.

The truth we are looking at today is this: Jesus Christ is Lord of the storm! We don't just look at that truth. We look at the world through that truth. The difference in formal Christianity and vibrant Christianity is essentially a matter of what you do with great truths like Jesus being Lord of the storm. Formal Christianity notices Jesus' Lordship over the storm and accepts it as true. Vibrant Christianity notices Jesus' Lordship over the storm, accepts it as true, and then approaches all of life by pulling it through the knothole of Jesus' Lordship over the storm.

What does it mean to say, "Jesus is Lord of the storm."? It means 3 things:

Jesus is...

HOLY

POWERFUL

OUR MENTOR

### JESUS IS HOLY

Notice an odd thing about the emotions of the disciples on this occasion. Nothing is said about them being afraid until Jesus shows up. Surely they were concerned but there is no talk of them being terrified until Jesus shows up. And why are they terrified when Jesus shows up? Because he is walking on the water. Immediately they sense that they are in the presence of the supernatural. They are in the presence of something from another world.

What does Jesus do? He says, "It is I." Literally he said, "Don't be afraid. I am." Remember that other time when somebody was frightened by someone from another world saying, "I am"? Moses, at the burning bush, heard God say, "I am." The best understanding I have of what God meant by telling Moses his name was "I am" is He meant "I am unlike anything you have ever seen." Remember what Moses did? He fell flat on his face in fear. Now comes Jesus walking on the water and announcing, "I am" and the disciples are as terrified as Moses was at the burning bush.

Why are they terrified? Because Jesus is identifying himself as God! Studies indicate that all men and women in all religions, when they come into the presence of what they believe is supernatural have an ambivalent reaction. They have what psychologists call approach/avoidance feelings. They are attracted and stand offish at the same time. Isaiah wants to see God, gets to see God, and proclaims, "Woe is me! I am undone!" In that "cast your nets on the other side" event where Peter and others pulled in a net full of fish, what was it Peter said? He's a fisherman so you'd think he would say, "Great! Would

you like to sign on as our permanent fishing guide?" But he says, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man." He knows he is in the presence of the holy!

You know why men have that approach/avoidance reaction in the presence of God? It's because our souls have something of a dual nature. Part of us would be very comfortable in the Garden of Eden walking in the cool of the evening with God at our side, comfortably talking with Him. That part of us is like a fish on the beach longing for the water. Part of our soul yearns for the very presence of God. But part of us, the part that once decided to try and live independent of God, is traumatized by the presence of the holy. When an independent person who has decided he really doesn't have to have God to do his job, manage his family, or find happiness in life, comes face to face with the reality of God, he is hit smack in the face with a truth he has run from for years. That truth is you can do nothing on your own. Everything you are, do and aspire to are totally dependent on God.

When we get near the holy we become frighteningly aware that we can't live with God and we can't live without God. We find ourselves saying, "I want Him but what if He doesn't give me what I want? I want him but I also want to be in control." Do you hear the approach/avoidance? The only one who can take you safely to shore is the holy one. And like anyone who truly loves you, he demands that you be all you can be. Real love is always calling you higher. Real love never says, "I don't want to disturb you. I wouldn't ever want you to be upset with me so I'll never ask you to change or improve." That's not love. That's co-dependency. Real love confronts, calls higher, encourages progress.

### JESUS IS POWERFUL

Jesus is saying, "I am Lord of this storm." In Ps. 29 God is described as, "The God of glory thunders....forever." Jesus is saying, "I am that God." He is saying, "When you hear the thunder, that thunder is powerful but it is power on loan from me. This is my storm, my sea, my waves, my wind." If you look carefully you will see Jesus is not only Lord over the storm on the sea but he is also Lord over the storm inside those disciples. Just as he commanded the seas to be still he commands the emotions of these men, "Do not be afraid!" He is Lord of their emotions! Listen to what Jesus is saying: "Do you have me in your life? It doesn't matter how stormy life is if you have me in your life."

### JESUS IS OUR MENTOR

When Mark talks about this incident he makes it clear that Jesus knew about the storm and sent them into the storm. He just got finished stuffing them with bread and fish and now he sends them into a place where it will seem they are abandoned by him to sink or swim on their own. If Jesus is your Lord there will be times you will be sent into danger, into places where he seems to be absent. Don't be startled by that. He is a mentor.

Look at how Jesus helps you deal with storms. What did he say to them? "Don't be afraid. I've been watching the weather channel and the storm will pass in a few minutes."? Some of you deal with your storms that way. You say, "This too shall pass." "Every cloud has a silver lining." That sounds nice but in fact it doesn't work and in your heart of hearts you don't really believe it. Tell that to somebody with a child dying of cancer! Jesus doesn't minimize the storm with some little platitude like, "It's not as bad as you think." He doesn't minimize the storm, he maximizes himself! His message to us in the storm is, "I'm greater than you can imagine. Take heart, it is I!"

I stood on the deck of a huge cruise ship as they explained to us where the lifeboats were and how we were to board them if the ship were to sink. I looked at those tiny boats and imagined the size of waves big enough to sink our ship and thought to myself, "I think these lifeboats are inadequate!" Listen, Jesus sends storms into your life to show you the inadequacy of those life rafts so that you will forget the life raft and cling to him.

Remember what Satan said to God about Job? He said, "Job doesn't serve you. He manipulates you. He is using you. He doesn't worship you. Look at his wealth, his happiness, his popularity, his health. Those are what he worships. Get rid of those God and he will curse you to your face." And what did God do? He sent a storm that blew away his house, killed his children, and destroyed his source of wealth. While Job struggles with his emotions in the book, at the end he clings to the Lord of the storm and says, "All right Lord. I'll live for you."

Remember that famous parable Jesus told about house building? Two guys built houses, one on sand, the other on rock. How do you know which one has the good foundation? "By watching what happens in the storm!", Jesus says. If you build your life on beauty, there is the storm of aging. If you build your life on your career there is the storm of a recession. If you build your life on true love, there is the storm of rejection. Those storms reveal your foundation. They reveal what you are really relying on to guide your life. Why does Jesus send storms? To get you to rely on him. In Jesus, and Jesus alone, there is safety and security.

Before we leave this text let me help you see one more thing about storms. Jesus handles every storm differently. What did Jesus do during the last storm they were in? He sat up in the boat and commanded, "Peace, be still." Sometimes God does that. You pray, "God I have a storm in my life and I hate it." And God removes it. But other times you offer the same prayer and God leaves the storm there and shows his power above it. Sometimes God gets rid of the storm and sometimes he increases your ability to trust him through the storm. Like he did with Peter he may opt to show you how to walk over it, to walk through it. But throughout the teaching you how to walk through it, the storm still rages. Sometimes when you are calm he allows fear into your life. Sometimes when you are afraid he sends calm into your life. Sometimes he shocks you into repentance. Sometimes he comforts you in your fears. He is a mentor.

Everything Jesus does for you or allows to happen to you is in an effort to mold you into his image. You want to be like him don't you? He was a person of joy yet so deeply

touched by the grief of others. He was a person radically determined to do God's will no matter what anyone thought yet so approachable by those who thought he needed their advice. He was a person of fearlessness yet the most humble man who ever lived. Jesus came and suffered not that we might not have to suffer but that when we suffer we might be like him.

Jesus is Lord of the storm. I'll let you in on one of the great secrets of storms. When a storm unexpectedly comes up behind you, if you ride out the storm with Jesus at your side, when it is over you will have gotten to your destination a whole lot faster than you would have ever gotten there traveling over calm waters. You will discover you didn't have to row or even raise your sail. You just had to hang on to Jesus as the rudder of your ship. If storms hit and Jesus is your rudder, all that has really happened is you have been put on the fast track toward your destination. Listen to how this story ends: *Then they were eager to let him in the boat, and immediately they arrived at their destination!* Isn't that how you want your life to end? Who wants to arrive in Heaven exhausted from rowing their canoe, barely alive, and so depleted from the journey they hardly appreciate arriving. Wouldn't you rather arrive at Heaven standing at the helm of the ship, riding the crest of a wave driven by a hurricane force wind, your ship sailing so fast it slides 100 yards up the beach before it comes to a halt? Wouldn't you love to arrive in Heaven like that, turn to Jesus and say, "Wow! What a ride!"

Listen, you will not die that way if you don't live that way. I want to leave you this morning with a truth that will either depress you or invigorate you. That truth is this: You are going to die the same way you live! The question is do you want to die the way you've been living?