

## STORMY REVERENCE

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John 6:16-21

### EXODUS

Our Bible starts off with the story of Creation:

*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.*

Darkness, water, wind. We call this chaos.

*Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*

God became present and brought order to the chaos.

From Creation, we are introduced to the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Jacob's son Joseph brought the family into Egypt where they prospered for 300 years until the day came when we read: *Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.* This pharaoh did not know the history of Joseph, the Hebrew who saved Egypt. All he saw were these foreigners inhabiting his land and so in order to subdue them, he enslaved the Jews and put them to work on his great public works projects.

But God hears the cries of the Hebrew people and calls Moses to help God lead these people out of slavery to a land of freedom.

God calls to Moses from the burning bush and tells him how Moses is to lead the people out of Egypt.

There is one problem here. Just as the pharaoh had forgotten about Joseph, in the several hundred years since the Jews had come to Egypt, they had mostly forgotten about God, the god of their ancestors.

And so Moses says to the voice in the fire, "When the people ask what is the name of this particular god, what shall I tell them?" Are you Osiris, or Isis, or Horus, or Hathor, any of the many Egyptian gods?

But the voice does not give the name of an Egyptian god, or any known god for that matter. The voice answers, saying, *I AM WHO I AM.* "You shall tell the people 'I AM has sent me to you. The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.

That is God's name—I AM. In Hebrew, the word is YHWH.

The Hebrew is a bit vague here, so it could mean I Am Who I Am, or it could mean I Will Be Who I Will Be.

What it means is, God is. There is no name to adequately describe God. God simply IS; God defines what is real. When God says, Let there be light, light exists because God wills it.

God doesn't just send Moses; God promises to go with Moses and be with Moses always.

## SCRIPTURE

I want now to jump from learning the name of God to our scripture reading from the gospel of John. Here, we find the iconic story of Jesus walking on water.

Occurs within a section of John's gospel where Jesus has performed a series of miracles and healings.

<list>

\*cured a man at the Pool of Bethesda who had been waiting for 38 years.

\*curing the weak and the sick brought to him.

Immediately before is 5000.

*<sup>14</sup> When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."*

*<sup>15</sup> When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him **king**, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. (like a political messiah)*

Why did the people view Jesus as a prophet? Because he had fed thousands with seemingly no resources. That is what prophets did. Moses & manna. Elisha.

The people naturally assumed Jesus was a prophet.

And what did they seek to do? they wanted to make him their king—by force if necessary. They desperately wanted a king and Jesus would be the perfect political messiah. he could lead them to freedom from the Romans. He could lead their nation back to God.

but Jesus has no desire to be king. That is not his purpose. So he withdraws up a mountain alone.

### <scripture>

For some unexplained reason, the disciples leave Jesus on the mountain.

Boat to Capernaum.

Dark

rough, strong wind. (in danger?)

rowed 3-4 miles

*They saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified.*

Why terrified? not a ghost, they apparently recognize him.

Maybe, at this moment, they finally realize who he is; put the pieces together.

Not a prophet like Moses or Elisha. Something more.

And then, as if to confirm their belief, Jesus utters the ancient formula of God: I AM.

With those words, Jesus separates himself from Moses and Elisha or any other prophet. Prophets are great. They point us toward God. But Jesus is more than that. He's not a prophet pointing toward God. He is God—God in the flesh, God walking with us.

What we learn here is that, like the disciples, sometimes we find ourselves lost in the dark, tossed about on the rough waters of chaos.

Examples

This week, a group of us served lunch at Compassionate Hands. We served people whose lives are defined by the chaos of being homeless. In addition to serving, I offered a devotion before lunch.

Compassionate Hands seeks to create a refuge of safety for these people, a place of calm and light.

Woman, seizures, 12 yo son. Sleep at the Rescue Mission, leave at 6:30am.

After serving lunch, I ate my meal with several men and listened to their stories.

As a church, why do we serve lunch to these folk? First, as a direct response to Jesus' command to "feed the hungry." But we also do it as a way to let them know that Christ is with them. We are there as disciples, walking with them, to let them know that Christ is there with them in the chaos of darkness, water, and wind.

Here in our church, there are many stories of people tossed about in rough waters. Last Sunday, Melissa was here in worship. On Monday, she woke up paralyzed on her left side. The doctors are trying to figure out why. She is brave, but overnight her life went from order to chaos.

Another of you is having surgery this week to treat a recently discovered cancer.

Others of you are dealing with aging siblings and parents;

No matter what is going on, we all need the reassurance that Christ is with us.

Jesus walking on water is the moment that the disciples realize the Jesus is more than a prophet. He is God. He is the I AM. They had witnessed any miracles, but it took them being alone on the rough water to put the pieces together.

We witness miracles all the time. But do we put the pieces together and recognized that Jesus is Lord?

When Jesus came to the disciples in the boat, it is interesting to note that the storm did not cease, the waves did not flatten. All we are told is that *immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.*

The storm still raged. And this is what we need to remember. Christ comes to be with us, to be God with us, not necessarily to fix what ails us.

What Jesus does bring is peace. Peace for our souls. the peace that comes from knowing that god is with us.

We can be threatened by storms in our lives. We can be terrified of drowning in angry seas. but we don't need to live in fear because of the peace of God brought to us by Christ.

Allow me to close with Jesus words from John's gospel:

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.*

*Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*