

Series: Bon Voyage

October 23, 2016

Title: Overcoming Life's Storms

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Text: Mark

Hurricane Season

"Hurricane Hunters"

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It began as an area of disorganized thunderstorms over West Africa. Eventually it moved over the Atlantic as what weather forecasters call a tropical wave. A week or so later it entered the Caribbean. And when it did, a monster was born.

The wave began to twist around itself, earning the name "tropical cyclone." Now it was just a question of how big the monster would become and what it would devour.

In order to find the answers to these questions, somebody has to go into the heart of the monster. Enter the "Hurricane Hunters." Their mission: to fly a plane back and forth through the eyewall of a hurricane for 8 to 10 hours, gathering essential data on the shape of the storm, the intensity of its winds, even the height of storm surge underneath it.

Maj. Brad Boudreaux, a pilot of one of the Hurricane Hunter planes, says:

"To me the most impressive thing is seeing the forces of nature and flying through these storms. My whole life, going through the aviation program and flying other planes in the military, we were trained to stay away from this stuff. And now basically we're flying right through it."

Thanks to the bravery and skill of the Hurricane Hunters, the rest of us can be forewarned of what is to come. They brave the eye of the storm so that the rest of us can take cover.

Or not.

The loss of the Bounty:

In October of 2012 a superstorm named Sandy was barreling up the East Coast. The Hurricane Hunters flew into the storm and made their reports: this storm was huge and powerful, with the potential to devastate coastal communities.

But the Hurricane Hunters' report fell on deaf ears for the captain of a replica sailing ship named the Bounty. Instead of heading for a safe harbor, Capt. Walbridge and his crew of 15 went out to *sail into the hurricane*. He explained that "we chase hurricanes" in order to "get a good ride" by sailing "as close to the eye of it as you can."

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On October 29th, the Coast Guard received a call for help from the Bounty. The 100 mph winds and 30' seas had proved too much for her. She had sprung a leak which knocked out the power to her pumps, and now she was sinking. The wind and waves lay the ship over on her side, tossing her crew into the sea. The Coast Guard arrived in time to rescue 14 of the crew. One crew member's body was recovered. The captain was never found. The Bounty went to the bottom of the deep blue sea.

In its review of the tragedy, the Coast Guard said that the captain's behavior was "reckless in the extreme."

Hurricane Season:

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus tells us to pray:

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

This is what you might call a "Hurricane Prayer." Just as hurricanes blow up in the Caribbean or typhoons in the south Pacific, so too, spiritual cyclones can explode in our lives with the power to shipwreck our faith journey.

And that's why it's so important to pray this prayer! It is the prayer for overcoming life's storms. And it reminds us that only Jesus can fly into the storm. He already did! Our mission is to stay out of trouble.

Hurricane Warning

First Warning:

A spiritual cyclone was reaching maximum intensity on the night that Jesus shared His last meal with His disciples. In just a matter of hours it would break with all the fury of Hell upon their little group. Jesus would be led away to torture and death. The disciples would be on their own. That is why Jesus issued a spiritual hurricane warning. It came in three parts.

First was the warning that He would be betrayed to His enemies by one of the 12:

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Mark 14:18, 21 NIV

While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me – one who is eating with me."

"The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Why do you think Jesus went out of His way to give this warning to His disciples? He was no doubt preparing them for the shock of His betrayal. But could He also have been giving Judas, the betrayer, *one last chance* to find safe harbor?

Whatever the case, Judas ignored the hurricane warning and chose to become part of the monster.

Second Warning:

Mark tells us that the second warning came when Jesus and the other 11 disciples had headed out to the Mount of Olives for the night. Jesus told them that they would all scatter when He was arrested, but that they would see Him after He rose from the dead.

That wasn't good enough for the lead man, Peter:

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Mark 14:29-30 NIV

Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."

"Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today – yes, tonight – before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."

Peter insisted that he would never disown Jesus; he would die first. The other 10 disciples said the same thing. The second warning went unheeded. Not one of them would admit that they were not up to the storm.

Third Warning:

The third and final warning came in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus woke up His sleeping disciples and said:

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Mark 14:38 NIV

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

This was the time to pray Jesus' Prayer: *"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."* Instead, Peter and the other disciples went back to sleep. When they woke up, the eye of the storm was upon them.

Overcoming Life's Storms

Shipwreck:

We all know how things turned out for Jesus' disciples that horrible night:

- Judas Isacariot went over to the "dark side." He chose to become part of the monster and lost his soul.
- Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. He ended up a broken man, washed up on the shore by forces vastly more powerful than himself.
- The other disciples scattered when the temple police arrived. When Jesus died, they were nowhere to be found. So shattered was their faith, that three days later they would not even believe the women's report that Jesus was risen.

This is what happens when you don't heed the spiritual hurricane warnings! And it happens to all of us. Like the disciples on that dark night, we are tempted to misjudge the spiritual hurricanes that come our way. Think about what it's like when chaos erupts in your world. Someone attacks you

unjustly. You see something on the news that makes your blood boil. Death or disease come knocking. A relationship is torn apart by betrayal.

How do you respond?

- Like Judas, are you sucked into the chaos around you, returning evil for evil. Do you give into the evil system, figuring, "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em."
- Like Peter, do you fool yourself into thinking that *I can take on the storm*. I can fix this if I just try a little harder.
- Or do you give into doubt and fear and run away, letting the storm wreck your world?

Standing your ground:

There's a better way, one that enables us to do what Jesus told us to pray.

It begins with remembering that **only Jesus** could fly through the eye of the hurricane! He went through the test and the temptation *so that we would never have to*. He defeated Sin and Death – the two greatest forms of chaos in our world – so that we could be forgiven and have eternal life.

Second, we need to take our stand *within the protection God has provided*. Paul writes:

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Ephesians 6:13 NIV

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Paul is not saying that we have to make our own armor. Only God's spiritual armor will stand up to the spiritual hurricane.

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His armor covers us from head to toe, protecting us with God's truth, God's justice, God's good news, and God's salvation. It is with our trust in God that we ward off the enemy's attacks.

Our only offensive weapon is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We speak to the chaos and brokenness of the world through what God

says about His world and His purpose for it. We proclaim that “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell in it.” We remind ourselves that the God Who created the world will repair His creation. We shine the light of His word like the beam of a lighthouse to those caught out in the storm. We offer safe harbor!

Overcoming Life’s Storms:

In this life, storms will come. Jesus said:

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John 16:33 NIV

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

When trouble comes, remember first and foremost that Jesus already conquered the storm. The storm will try to suck you into its vortex. Your emotions will engage. You’ll feel anger or fear, disgust or despair. That is the time to put on the armor of God. That is the time to decide to *stand*.

Remember, the storm will pass. However dark the night, daybreak is coming! Our biggest spiritual battles are the ones in which we stand our ground and let God do the fighting for us. And when we stand firm, He makes *us* part of the solution. Again, like the lighthouse in the storm, we help point the way to safe harbor.

So when the spiritual hurricane strikes, take heart! Jesus has overcome the world.

LIFE Group Notes for Session Six:

Getting Started:

- Greet group members and thank them for coming.
- Open with prayer.

Ice Breaker:

- When a major storm is predicted, what are the 3 most important things you make sure you have in your house or car?

Lesson:

- Jesus tells us to pray is: "*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*"
- As we saw this past Sunday, Jesus urged His disciples to pray that they not enter into "temptation" when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane with them just before Judas betrayed Him. The reason: the storm they were about to experience was way beyond their ability to survive.
- Paul shows us how to weather spiritual storms when he tells us to "put on the full armor of God." Our goal: to stand strong in the attack and never give our ground.
- Let's take a few moments and think about this "armor of God":
 - *The Belt of Truth:* standing strong begins with standing in God's truth, rather than getting caught up in lies and misperceptions.
 - *The Breastplate of Righteousness:* This piece of armor represents God's justice as our protection. No matter how unfair or unjust the world may be, God is always faithful.
 - *The Sandals of the Gospel of Peace:* We walk out God's story, the story of God bringing His New Creation order and goodness.
 - *The Shield of Faith:* "Flaming arrows" of doubt and fear will come when we are under attack from the spiritual realm. The Shield of Faith is our defense. Every time we choose to trust God in times of trouble, we are letting this shield extinguish a flaming arrow.
 - *The Helmet of Salvation:* The helmet protects the "command center" – our mind. Paul tells us that when we make God the focus of everything in our lives, "the peace of God, which

transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:7)

- *The Sword of the Spirit*: This is our one *offensive* weapon. Just as God created the world by His Word, we defeat the forces of evil and chaos by God’s Word.

Application: Goal – to help group members learn to pray for their needs!

- Remember the question about what 3 things you find most important when a storm is coming?
- Well, what parts of the Armor of God do you feel the greatest need for?
- Which ones are you most likely to forget to put on?
- Who do you know who will help you remember?

Prayer time:

- Have group members pray for each other.
- Divide the group into smaller units if necessary, to assure that everyone gets to pray and receives prayer.
- Have group members pray for each other and agree to pray throughout the coming week.

Thinking Ahead:

- We’ve come to the end of our Bon Voyage lessons. Thank group members for sharing the journey! And ask them if they would like to keep meeting. You can decide to study something together as a group, or you can make use of the LIFE Group lesson notes that will go with the Sunday sermon.
- And thank you for leading your group this past 6 weeks!