

- 1) It isn't the same when it happens to you, no matter how often you've watched from afar.
It's one thing to see from the sidelines; quite another get be caught in the middle.
Observation—imagination—interpretation—explanation—
in crisis management, these are good;
but not much help when it's YOU in the thick of things—upended and out of control.
As water crashes over the sides of their boat—with any distance—which they don't have—
the disciples might have thought to remind each other that,
right from the start, by following Jesus, they'd signed on with a Storm Chaser.
- 2) Thus far, in short order, Jesus has, by turns, weathered, engaged, quelled, and kicked up
storm upon storm—storms of all kinds—physical, psychological, social, spiritual.
 - He's delivered a man from a raging DEMON—in the synagogue on the sabbath
 - Released Simon Peter's mother-in-law from a raging FEVER.
 - Conducted an outdoor sabbath sundown healing clinic,
encountering wave upon wave of folks overwhelmed by demons and diseases.
 - He's undertaken a whirlwind teaching and exorcism tour across all of Galilee.
 - Cured a leper, forgiven and freed a paralytic, restored a man's withered hand—
called as a disciple, and then shared a banquet with a much-despised tax collector—
all of these actions producing fierce blowback.
 - He's redrawn the boundaries of who counts as family.
 - From the deck of a fishing boat, he has just finished a day long parable teach-athon
explicitly designed—He frankly admits—to upend the spiritually self-assured.Jesus is a Storm Chaser, no question about that!
And His disciples get to shadow this storm chasing—from a safe distance.
They even get an insider tutorial about the strange parables He tells regarding the Reign of God.
That it comes not with flash and fanfare; but unobtrusively—
in and through the ordinary and everyday.
Is this great, or what? The disciples are on a roll with Storm Team Jesus!
Wild weather all around them; but with Him up close and personal, they are snug and secure.
Night time—Rest time. It's been a long day. Who knows what they'll get to see tomorrow!
- 3) And Jesus, "just as he was," no pause for breath—not missing a beat—calls out:
Back in the boat, guys—Let's go across to the other side.

But . . . but visibility will be better, and sailing much smoother when the sun comes up tomorrow.

Besides, He can't very well preach, teach, heal, or exorcise in the dead of night, now can He! **NO!** He tells them, **NOW!** THEY row the boat while HE beds down to catch a power nap. **GREAT!** Can't you just see them trading anxious glances: *I've got a BAD feeling about this, don't you?* Suddenly they're in way over their heads—tossing, turning, swamping, sinking—
and HE is . . . **SLEEPING!**

So their shock is compounded—this time the storm's on THEM.

And, what's worse, the One who's rescued OTHERS isn't lifting an eyebrow, let alone a finger. With friends like HIM, who needs enemies?

Fear and anger fuel a storm INSIDE no less wild than the one OUTSIDE.

Wake up, will you, Jesus? Don't you care? You've saved so many others, what about US?

4) You realize, of course, what we're doing here—we are placing ourselves at the **EDGE** of the story;

Not unlike the place where the disciples themselves have been up to this **POINT** in the story. But it's a different thing—is it not—when it happens to **US?**

Along for the ride, we don't ask for the storms. And the storms don't ask our permission. Gospel Story Teller Mark positions his first listeners on the sidelines of this Jesus story.

But they are not exactly detached observers; they are in the thick of a storm of their own. The temple in Jerusalem has recently been sacked by the Roman army; the land is laid waste. Stories of a risen Jesus are making the rounds, but where is His reputed storm-quelling power? Their boat is danger, their lives are in peril;

and any prospect of the promised reign of God seems a most **UN-likely** story.

And, if they track with the narrative to its **PEACE, BE STILL** climax;

it's not likely that they—any more than we—would hear it
as a reassuring, storm-calming "Happily Ever After"!

Which is exactly why Mark does **NOT**, in fact, conclude the story that way.

When the storm comes up, the disciples are terrified—I would be—wouldn't you?

But when the storm is summarily shut down by two firm words of rebuke: **PEACE! BE STILL!**—
the response of the disciples is **NOT** great relief, but far greater fear:

Who IS this Storm Chaser Jesus with whom we have signed on?

5) **WHO, INDEED?** It's a question itself worth chasing across the pages of Mark's Jesus story.

Because, in that story, Jesus Himself seems curiously conflicted about His own use of power.

Time and again, Jesus intervenes on behalf of those who, because of their debilitating conditions, are relegated to the margins of society, where they have little value, significance, or clout.

Jesus restores those whom He engages to full community participation.

But then He orders them, in no uncertain terms, to tell **NOBODY** what He's done for them.

WHAT'S with **THAT**? Just **THIS**:

He selectively, strategically intervenes to **OVER-POWER** forces of **OPPRESSING** power,
to **EM-POWER** those he's healed and freed to themselves bear witness to the Reign of God.

But now it gets tricky—

because, His Kingdom of God power, can, from a distance, be misunderstood to be
like King of the Mountain power—a power that simply trumps who's currently on top.

The Jesus power **IS** a greater power, but it's not a **MORE** power, it's a **DIFFERENT** power.

SO—*Tell no one*, Jesus sternly warns, *because they just won't get it*.

6) But, with His disciples, it's important to make things as clear as they can cope with in the moment.

So, sleeping through the storm, He lets them feel firsthand what raw, sheer threat of force is like.

Then He decisively puts the destructive force of nature on hold—

a force that visually and viscerally symbolizes all the other forces—social and political—
that unleash demonic division and devastation.

The external storm shut down, Jesus now turns their attentions to the storm on their insides—

one precipitated by, but more pervasive and potentially pernicious
than howling wind and surging water.

His questions to his fellow boatmates are neither judgmental nor rhetorical;

they are, rather diagnostic and discerning questions:

- **WHY ARE YOU AFRAID?** Not “Why **WERE** you afraid?” but “Why **ARE** you afraid?”
Not a bad question for them—or for us—to have to face, and spend time with,
when the imminent threat of presenting problems recedes; but free-floating fear persists.
- **WHY ARE YOU AFRAID? HAVE YOU NO FAITH—**
 - Might seeing faith under storm conditions faced by **OTHERS** stir up faith up in **YOU**?
 - Where and how, for you, has God previously been
a stable, faith-grounding point of reference
when all hell was breaking loose around you?
 - When others are in the thick of it, and you are in relative calm,
how have you been—how could you be—
a faith-fostering presence with them in the boat?

Strategically engineering a calm in the external storm,

Jesus moves the attention of His friends from **THAT OUTSIDE** storm to **THEIR INSIDE** storm;

knowing full well that, going forward, the sailing for all of them will be anything but smooth.

So, I'm thinking, that when Jesus says: *PEACE! BE STILL!* it may just be a double entendre. That His rebuking and stilling of the outside storm is quick and easy work in comparison to what He cannot IMPOSE ON; but can only OFFER TO His disciples: PEACE—BE STILL. I'M WITH YOU IN THE BOAT.

- 7) How might those words of Jesus work WITHIN us as we confront the storms AROUND us? Will they produce passivity? I think not! They need not. They should not. When at last He gets to the other side of the sea of Galilee, Jesus immediately takes up again His signature storm chasing—forcefully confronting and dispatching another screaming demon. But He—and we—are better positioned, I think, to deal with howling storms OUTSIDE by operating from the centering calm of the Peace of the Lord—faith-embraced from the INSIDE.
- Something like that happens for Jonathan, I think.
In spite of his royal father Saul's narcissistic violent raging;
Jonathan finds the calm, centering space required,
to relinquish his own position of power and security—
to covenant with his soul mate David
in a shared commitment to a radically alternative kingdom.
 - Something like that happens for Paul, I think.
in the face of continual life-threatening conditions, and
in the teeth of character assassination ploys by jealous rivals, and fickle followers,
Paul stakes out a centered, vulnerable space
from which to engage folks in their very hostility.
- 8) As you and I do our best to contend with cultural, social, and political firestorms around us, it is sobering to realize how easily these EXTERNAL storms can generate INTERNAL storms; and how storms INSIDE can further fuel storms OUTSIDE—each surge spawning the other. And I wonder—what if—as God's people—rather than amping up the chaos further: *WE'RE DYING OUT HERE—DON'T YOU CARE?—* what if, instead, we could attend to the voice of the Storm Chaser—coming from right alongside us—inside the boat—saying calmly, clearly, quietly, firmly: *PEACE! BE STILL!* That might itself be scary, indeed, for us in-the-boat disciples. But it would be a far healthier expression of fear—don't you think?