



## **Calm Harbor with Jesus**

Rev. Mark A. Medina

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Harbors are havens, ports that indicate a shelter for ships and boats; it is either a natural place or an artificially constructed place. A harbor is a place where one can find calm, safety and security. It is a place where one can go to get away from the storms of the sea or the struggles of life. Many of us have a special place where we can go to find solace and peace from the busy-ness and concerns of life.

I can personally share with you about the time I ruptured and blew out a disc in my lower back. The pain was intense and numbing. As I approached the morning of my surgery at Mayo Clinic, I was a bit nervous and uncertain about the outcome.

Entering the pre-operating room was intimidating and lined with other patients waiting to go to surgery. I even had feelings of surrender while I suffered to get comfortable. Anxiety was on the rise as the hands on the clock moved slowly around.

My mind was all over the place. I then began to center on a hymn that has been a favorite of mine ever since I was a young boy. As I began to sing and hum the song, I became more calm and at ease. The hymn is called "If you but Trust in God to Guide You."

**If you but trust in God to guide you,  
and place your confidence in Him,  
you'll find Him always there beside you  
to give you hope and strength within;  
for those who trust God's changeless love  
build on the Rock that will not move.**

The trip down the hall began and into the operating room could have caused me a lot more anxiety. But rather than deal with anxiety and fear, I chose to go to a place where I knew there was a safe harbor. I began to hum and sing the song again up until I was no longer conscious.

**Only be still and wait His pleasure  
in cheerful hope, with heart content:  
He fills your needs to fullest measure  
with what discerning love has sent;**

**doubt not our inmost wants are known  
to Him who chose us for His own.**

Friends, the place where we can all go to no matter what the circumstance or situation, good or bad, is with God the Father and God the Son. They are there for us whenever we turn to them in personal prayer or petitions of prayer. We must always keep our eyes on the Lord in whatever storm we encounter in life. Christians experience many stormy conditions and events in one's life. Yet, we can learn from the scriptures on how to make it through the stormy times.

Jesus was in prayer on the mountainside while the disciples got into the boat. He moved away from the crowds and his disciples so that he could be in prayer and in the presence of God. The Lord went to a quiet place to be renewed.

Meanwhile, the disciples found themselves in a storm on a lake with high winds and crashing waves against the boat. Yes, they were alone and fearful of what might happen to them. The light of day was fading into evening and into darkness of night. Then something happened to them to give them hope as they cried out. Scripture says, <sup>25</sup> **Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.** <sup>26</sup> **When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.**

Jesus saw their predicament and sensed their fear. He said to them <sup>27</sup> **"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."** The Lord reassured them and us today to trust more and to not be afraid in adversity.

The disciple, Peter, the impulsive one, said to Jesus when he saw him walking on the water, <sup>28</sup> **"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."** <sup>29</sup> **"Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.** <sup>30</sup> **But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"** <sup>31</sup> **Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"**

Yes, the Lord spoke to Peter's lack of faith. Then the storm takes a turn <sup>32</sup> **and when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.** <sup>33</sup> **Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."** Indeed, the storms we too experience in our lives and in this congregation can be calmed when you and I affirm the Lord as one's personal Savior and Companion.

We acknowledge that Peter's view of Jesus is what kept him walking towards him. Yet, when he took his eyes off of him he began to sink. Jesus wanted Peter to have a strong faith and an obedient heart.

Friends, how many times in our lives have we taken our eyes off the Lord? Sometimes we are so consumed with matters of life and concerns that we forget the one who is always there with us in the beauty of the day and in the darkest parts of the night. So when life becomes unbearable, reach out to the Lord with a yearning and praying heart. Doubt is overcome by the One who is ever present.

The Christian writer, John Ortberg wrote in his book *"If You Want to Walk on the water, You've Got to Get Out of the boat."* The story of Jesus walking on the water and the disciples responding to the command of the Lord is the basis of the book. Overall, the disciple has to make a decision. He states, "This is not just a story about risk-taking; it is primarily as story about obedience." (Page 16)

Peter is taking a risk but more importantly, he is seeking to be obedient to the leading of Jesus. This risk-taking is actually called, extreme discipleship. When one is truly accepting the call of being a disciple then that person moves ahead as Christ calls. The boat is seen as a safe and secure place to stay in in any stormy situation. Ultimately, one finds a safe and calm harbor with the Lord.

The prophet, Elijah, also feared for his life. He fled into the countryside to get away from Jezebel and her actions to rid the nation of prophets. The fear drove him into the wilderness and it was there that an angel commanded him to go to Mount Horeb so God could speak to him.

Elijah spent a night in a cave on Mount Horeb. In the morning he was commanded to go out to speak with God. **<sup>11</sup>The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”** Before he went out **...a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup>After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.**

The sound of the silence brought Elijah out of the cave. As it is written in scripture, **<sup>13</sup>When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah.”** The still small voice or whisper of God spoke to him in the turbulence of the moment. God then sent him back to the Desert of Damascus to proclaim the goodness and salvation of God with confidence and courage. He kept his life centered on God and what God had called him to do in the desert through the anointing of others.

My dear brothers and sisters, God is calling each of us through His Son Jesus to “Not be afraid,” and to get our feet wet in the world. Oh yes, we can sit around doubting our capabilities as Christians or as a congregation. However, with the Lord calling us and leading us, there is plenty of faith to go around. Some of us may be extremely critical of others who are seeking to be faithful to God by inviting strangers and immigrants into our midst. They too are looking for a safe harbor. Other people are reaching out to those who are oppressed, poor, lonely and abandoned in the world.

My friends, the challenge for each of us is to get out of the boat and live out our faith. The safest place to put our faith is in the calm harbor of Christ as we pray and live to the best of our abilities in this world.

With all the troubles we are experiencing in our nation and in our lives today, we still must seek the place in our hearts where the peace of Christ resides. No, I’m not asking you to retreat or withdraw into yourself. We each must remember that we can work for peace and justice from a heart squarely centered in Christ Jesus.

Let us come out of the caves of self-gratification and fear so we can faithfully serve God with confident hearts. Trust in Jesus and seek his calm harbor of love.

I close with the last verse of the hymn I shared with you earlier, which can give us the words to experience the harbor of love, hope and peace in Jesus.

**Sing, pray, and keep His ways unswerving,  
offer your service faithfully,**

**and trust His word; though undeserving,  
you'll find His promise true to be;  
God never will forsake in need  
the soul that trusts in Him indeed.**

Let us pray: Dear God, as we come to you this day, may we find the unconditional love of your heart. Many times we tend to fear you and move away from you. Cause us to remember your gracious love and to hear your still, small voice in the busy-ness and concerns of the day. Gives us the faith to encounter every storm with confidence and hope through your Son Jesus. We thank you, O God, for the gift of your Son Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen.

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#### Scriptural Support

1 King 19:9-18      The LORD Appears to Elijah

<sup>9</sup> There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

<sup>10</sup> He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

#### Elijah Meets God at Horeb

<sup>11</sup> The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

<sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

<sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

<sup>14</sup> He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

<sup>15</sup> The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram.

<sup>16</sup> Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet.

<sup>17</sup> Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu.

<sup>18</sup> Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

#### Matthew 14:22-33 (NIV)      Jesus Walks on the Water

<sup>22</sup> Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone,  
24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.  
25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.  
26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.  
27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."  
28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."  
29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.  
30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"  
31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"  
32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.  
33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."