Why are you so afraid?

Mark 4:35-41

Key verse 4:40 He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

For two weeks we have studied parables about God’s words and kingdom of God. God’s words have a power to grow all by itself. Our part is to have a sincere attitude toward his words. Those who treat God’s words carefully would be blessed more and more! The ironical thing is that Jesus taught many parables related to farming in the boat on the lake. He wanted to go over to the other side and he and his disciples met a furious squall. Let’s learn who Jesus is and what kind of faith Jesus wants us to have in a stormy situation.

I. Squall visits us without a notice.

Jesus taught the crowd with many parables all day long. As evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. Being with many needy and demanding people is very tiring. They were so excited that they could have a quiet time only with themselves. It was so fantastic to cross the lake in the cool evening. Starry sky seemed to smile at them. As Peter began to sing his favorite song, all other disciples also sung together. However, this good mood did not last long. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

At that time, Jesus was sleeping. He was so exhausted from his all day long teaching. He served people with all his heart and strength until he fell into sleep and couldn’t get up in this terrible storm. I guess that Peter did not want to wake Jesus up at first. When Peter saw a squall coming, he might have said to the other disciples, “Don’t wake him up! We met squalls many times. I don’t want to disturb his sleeping. He deserves it” However, the squall was so furious! The waves broke over the boat and it was nearly swamped. They shouted in one voice! “LORD, save us! Save us!” “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

Here we learn that there are many things beyond our control and ability. We know that a positive thinking works for small matters. We know that when we firmly decide something such as quitting smoking or losing weight, sometimes we can achieve it. But there are many things we can’t deal with or overcome. One day we may be found to have a fatal disease. One day we may get a layout notice. One day we may lose our beloved one. We may not get a job because of poor economic situation. Life is full of storms minor or major. If we wish that our live would be smooth and prosperous without any hindrance or failure, we would see that our wishful thinking is wrong sooner or later.

The disciples were afraid of drowning. They were all young. They had family to feed. They had many dreams. When fear of death came into their hearts, they became so scared and couldn’t breathe well. Several years ago, I was drinking water alone. Accidently the water entered my airway and I kept coughing to take it out but it did not work. I could not breathe well. I could experience fear of death a little bit. After Jesus silenced the wind and waves, Jesus rebuked them because they were so afraid. If I were Jesus, I would wipe out tears on their faces and hug them, saying “Are you okay? It is all over.” Jesus did not comfort them but rebuked them. We can’t say that Jesus brought the squall to train them. But Jesus did not miss this chance to train them to be courageous servants of God. We feel sympathy for these poor disciples. Jesus called them to serve the world with the gospel of Jesus. I know one student who suffered greatly for a long time. Sometimes he lost hope for living. I can see that he is getting stronger in Jesus little by little. I pray that God may train our St. George students and use them amazingly for His Glory.

Even if we don’t have a big problem like a furious squall, we live with many fears and are tortured by them constantly. Many young men are afraid of their future security. Difficult school study makes us miserable and doubt about our ability. Moreover, we can’t deny that their worry or fear is not imaginary but real and true. For example, we may not be smart enough to get A. Many students are struggling to get a job after graduation. I couldn’t get a post doctor offer last year. Of course, we don’t want to be afraid but work hard and live a happy, thankful and active life but we can’t.

I can say that we will be afraid and afraid forever unless we don’t come into rest in God. If our aim is just to live without any problems, we can’t have true peace. Who can give us peace? Let’s remember our Jesus who was sleeping in the stern. Jesus exposed himself as a source of peace. On the night of last supper, he said to his disciples, “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.”(John 14:27)

II. Why are you so afraid?

Let’s read verse 39 together. “He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.” He got up and rebuked the wind and commanded to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind and the waves obeyed him. Jesus healed many sick and drove out demons. Jesus changed water into wine. Jesus had authority to forgive sins. Now Jesus showed that he could control the nature with a command. John was the eyewitness of all events by Jesus. He was so blessed because he could see the creator God with his eyes. In John’s gospel, he declared, “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”

Let’s read verse 40 together. “He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” Jesus saw exactly what their problem was. It is fear that comes from lack of faith. We think that problem is the storm itself that make them dying, but Jesus think that real problem is disciples’ faith problem.

Here what faith is the faith Jesus mentioned here? Some people think that they have faith because they know the gospel. Some people think that they have faith because they studied the Bible and even teach the bible. However, knowledge is not faith. Even demons know that Jesus is the Son of God and tremble. The Pharisees’ Bible knowledge was so broad and great but they crucified Jesus. In Korean, faith is translated as believing. Believing God’s words as truth is faith. We believe that God saved us and adopted us as his precious children. We know that we will inherit his kingdom. However, believing is not perfect faith. We believe that we should love our enemy. We believe that we should seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness first. We believe that we should go and make disciples of all nations. When we do what we believe, that’s faith. However, just obedience itself is not faith. Paul says, “If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.” We can obey out of obligation or self-righteousness. We may obey to have salvation.

Faith is to have trust and love relationship with our LORD Jesus Christ. They said to Jesus, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” Even Jesus who was with them seems powerless or indifferent. Their trust relationship with Jesus was broken when fear enter their hearts.

When we are in trouble, we may think like them, “Jesus, don’t you care for me! What are you doing now, sleeping?” In that time, we need to remember Jesus cares us. Even if it seems our situation is not getting better much, we need to trust Jesus who is with us in the same boat. We can’t know why we face many stormy situations. But one thing for sure is that our God is always good. He works for the good of those who love him. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Joseph was sold as a slave to Egypt by his half-brothers. It was so terrible, miserable and long-term hardship. But he patiently endured his slave life. And God exalted him highly. Because of him, not only his family but so many lives survived from the terrible famine.

Sheila dreamed a professional career woman with high salary after her prestigious master program at UofT. But she couldn’t get a job. She had to get a labor job which does not require any degree. However, she served many Bible students faithfully. But recently she had a car accident and got a lot of expensive tickets. However, in the middle of horrible situation, she confessed that she has peace, not bitterness or frustration. It’s because she has faith that Jesus cares for her and has a good purpose in all these things. Praise God who gave her such amazing faith!

They needed faith to fix their eyes on Jesus. They already knew that Jesus is the Son of God and the promised Messiah. With their eyes, they clearly witnessed that Jesus healed many sick, drove out demons. They were with Jesus when he changed water into wine. Can we say that they doubted Jesus’ power to save them from the squall? When their boat was almost swamped, fear of death came into their hearts. They totally forgot that Jesus was with them even though he was sleeping in the boat. When we allow fear to come into our hearts, we totally forget what God has done us until now and are engrossed in the problem itself. And we say to God, “Don’t you care if we drown?” But it is us who do not involve God in our stormy situation. We exclude God and struggle and wriggle in panic.

Many people believe that God exists. I don’t think that they doubt that. But how many of them believe that God loves them? We believe that God is a God of love. But that’s our head knowledge. When our knowledge moves out of our brain and moves in to our hearts and souls, it becomes real and living faith.

Peter loved Jesus. However, he did not know how much Jesus loved him. Peter denied Jesus three times the night when Jesus needed him most. But the risen Jesus loved him with unchanging love and helped him to recover his love for Jesus. After Jesus’ ascension, Peter was threatened by the religious leaders not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. He said to them, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” What made him so fearless and bold?

1 John 4: 9-10 say “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.

Here we can learn that we may meet some unexpected problem which is beyond our control. After we believed in Jesus, we may desire that no bad thing or hardship or failure encounter us. If we have such an idea, we will be disappointed soon. Jesus is the one who is with us in the middle of the storm. Jesus cares us in the middle of the storm. What Jesus wants us to do is trust him and believe that he loves us. No matter what causes a storm, he works hard for good of those who loves him. As we see, after the storm, the disciples realized who Jesus was. They saw that Jesus had a power to save even from natural disasters. I think after that, they did not fear anything because they trusted Jesus who ruled even nature and also cared them. May God give us this faith so that we may not fear anything! I pray that we may boldly overcome many storms in life and mission together with Jesus.