

# A Desired Haven

Psalm 107:23-32

Matthew 8:23-27

*With Study Questions*

*Pastor Paul Viggiano  
Branch of Hope Church  
2370 W. Carson Street, #100  
Torrance, CA 90501*

*212-6999*

*pastorpaul@branchofhope.org*

*[www.branchofhope.org](http://www.branchofhope.org)*

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Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters, <sup>24</sup> They see the works of the Lord, And His wonders in the deep. <sup>25</sup> For He commands and raises the stormy wind, Which lifts up the waves of the sea. <sup>26</sup> They mount up to the heavens, They go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble. <sup>27</sup> They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, And are at their wits' end. <sup>28</sup> Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, And He brings them out of their distresses. <sup>29</sup> He calms the storm, So that its waves are still. <sup>30</sup> Then they are glad because they are quiet; So He guides them to their desired haven. <sup>31</sup> Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the Lord *for* His goodness, And *for* His wonderful works to the children of men! <sup>32</sup> Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, And praise Him in the company of the elders (Psalm 107:23-32).

Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. <sup>24</sup> And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. <sup>25</sup> Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" <sup>26</sup> But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. <sup>27</sup> So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Matthew 8:23-27).

## Luther's Lightning

He could not have anticipated how a single lightning bolt would change the course of human history. It was 1505 and young Martin Luther had just completed his Master's degree and would begin his studies in law. After visiting his parents, he was on his way back to school when he was caught in a thunderstorm and a bolt of lightning came fearfully close to him. It is likely true that he had, at some point, considered a life of ministry rather than law, but it wasn't until the lightning struck that he

committed to become a monk-a decision his father was not at all happy about.

Of course, other events followed in his life which led to the Protestant Reformation. The single bolt of lightning had universal impact, touching the spiritual lives of billions. This was not a plan devised in the chambers of clergy. It was an act of God's nature (not an attribute, but the nature God created), which caused a single man to reconsider his vocation. Luther's routine was interrupted.

## **Life Interrupted**

Sometimes our lives get interrupted. We tend to fall into patterns-patterns which accommodate our likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. These patterns are found in how we approach work, relationships, our spiritual disciplines, exercise, hobbies, speech, etc. Recently our family spotted a dog with only three legs. I'm guessing the dog, at one time, had four legs, then something happened. His life was interrupted and now he has to do things differently.

It is often through these interruptions that we take inventory. The bolt of lightning didn't speak to Luther. It motivated Luther to reevaluate what he would spend his life doing.

The world is in the midst of an international interruption with this Coronavirus. What will we learn about ourselves? Where will this lead us? The first time I went to a grocery store after the news of the virus I had two main concerns: one was to provide for my family; the other was not to end up on a viral video fighting for wipes or toilet paper.

I've heard the interruption in terms of the way people have patterned their marriages may lead to increased divorces. Or in nine months there will be an increase in births-but only firstborns. Teachers are speculating that parents will discover that it is not always the teacher's fault. What are you finding out? Not about others or your environment-but about yourself??

The interruption can be a crucible. The way the heat of a furnace reveals and removes the dross/rust/scum from a precious metal. The difficulties of our lives are the means by which the Lord tests our hearts.

**The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts (Proverbs 17:3).**

What will we find when the dross is removed? What if there is only dross? What if, being forced to examine our foundation, we find only sand.

**But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: <sup>27</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall (Matthew 7:26, 27).**

## **Destroying the Interruption**

For the Christian, this can be a valuable interruption and for those who have not yet called upon the name of Christ, it can be of even greater value. It is my prayer that it be of value to us all. At the same time, there is one who seeks to steal, kill and destroy, who would seek to remove any redeeming quality from the current storm.

It should not surprise us that national or international calamities will bring out the darkest of religious charlatans. For some reason our nation is notoriously vulnerable in this category. Jude speaks of them.

**These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving *only* themselves. *They are* clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; <sup>13</sup> raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever (Jude 12, 13).**

A friend, who I would love to see in church, posted a brief YouTube video exposing counterfeits. There are few things that irk me more as a pastor than being linked with these deplorable false shepherds. I fight off a fleshly indignation when I hear them spew things like:

- Put your hand on the tv set and receive the healing
- The lord woke me up at 2am and said the virus is nothing
- Turn around and greet (even though you're not supposed to)
- Go to church...if you die, die for Christ, live, live for Christ

- Take off the mask and declare victory over the virus
- No plague will come near you when you're in Him
- I consider not symptoms in my body
- Communion will give healing power from top of head to soles of feet
- Anointed handkerchiefs

Let us be wise as serpents when confronted with false teachers. Let us critique without being viciously critical.

## **A Desired Haven**

Where is this all to lead us-being under house arrest, unable to find the normal zones of comfort-unable to escape? My youngest son and I went for a beach run last week. As we walked down the stairs and caught sight of the water, he told me that he finally understood why I enjoyed going down there. For me, there is a psychological respite that comes when I see the water and put my feet in the sand. Now signs have been put up denying me that little pleasure. How will I respond? What will I learn about myself?

The Scriptures are not silent when it comes to have to engage trials. We are to approach them with joy. But not a 'grin-and-bear-it' joy. It is a hopeful joy. A joy which recognizes that God is producing something in us.

**My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,  
<sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.  
<sup>4</sup> But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be  
 perfect and complete, lacking nothing (James 1:2-4).**

Assuming that we do not "grieve" or "quench" the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19) through a grumbling attitude and a catering to sinful thoughts and deeds, we have the joyful expectation that Christ is being formed in us (Galatians 4:19). We are being conformed into His image (Romans 8:29). We must let patience have its perfect work as the Lord bring us to completion, lacking nothing. It is a lifelong quest and there is nothing on this earth of greater value. And if our eyes could be truly opened to perceive that hand of God in our current difficulties, these difficulties would be embraced delight.

A story is told of a man walking down the street and noticing men at work in the arduous task of constructing a building of bricks. They are tired, sore and sweaty. The man stops and asks one of the workers what he is doing. Frustrated at the interruption of his work, the man with a grimacing face states the obvious, "I am laying bricks." The pedestrian goes a bit further and sees another worker, but this one is whistling and working with enthusiasm, productivity and purpose. So, he takes the risk of asking this other worker the same question. The answer was quite different. With joy in his face and conviction in his voice, he answers, "**I am building a cathedral.**"

There is something bigger going on. We must seek never to lose sight of the big picture in our little travails. And the big picture requires we take refuge in the vastness of the incomprehensible sovereignty of God. And to take it a step further, let us recognize that it is God who is building His cathedral, and each of us a brick-a "**living stone**" (1 Peter 2:5) in His hand.

Psalms 107 does not merely speak of God making use of a storm, but raising a storm (Psalm 107:25). It is one of many difficulties, ordained by God, with the expressed purpose of bringing our eyes and hearts to a "**desired haven.**" The refrain we see repeated in that Psalm (in 8, 15, 21 and 31) is.

**Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the Lord *for* His goodness,  
And *for* His wonderful works to the children of men (Psalm  
107:31)!**

Similar to the way the Lord's Day is designed to bring our minds and hearts to our eternal sabbath rest, God ordains storms to rescue us from our mundane and deadly patterns. It is His way of getting us to "**lift our eyes to the hills-from whence comes (our) help**" (Psalm 121:1).

The storm in Psalm 107 caused the souls of the sailors to melt, to reel to and fro, stagger and come to their "**wits' end**" (Psalm 107:27). They then "**call out to the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses**" (Psalm 107:28). We read,

**He calms the storm, So that its waves are still.<sup>30</sup> Then they are glad because they are quiet; So He guides them to their desired haven.<sup>31</sup> Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the Lord *for* His goodness, And *for* His wonderful works to the**

**children of men! <sup>32</sup> Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, And praise Him in the company of the elders (Psalm 107:23-32).**

Of course, every sailor ever comforted by this passage eventually met another distressing circumstance which brought their earthly existence to an end. We would be very short-sighted in our study of Scripture to view God's deliverance as a mere deliverance of the storms of life.

What God is demonstrating in His power to deliver us from earthly storms (whatever they may be) and guide us to a desired haven, is that He is the one who overcomes our greatest foe—the storm of sin, death and judgment. The crew delivered from the storm in the story of Jonah, recognize now, from a heavenly eternity, that their belief in the God of Jonah is what delivered them from the greater storm.

It is the height of blindness to enjoy a haven, with no thought toward the One who guides us into that haven. We read of another tempest in the New Testament. Similar to the ship in Psalm 107 and Jonah, the boat is about to sink when a fearful, panicking crew of disciples wakes up a sleeping Jesus (Matthew 8:23-27).

First, they are chastised for their lack of faith – and this before He calms the storm! You would think He would calm the storm then give the lesson, but sometimes it takes more than mere information for a true lesson to be learned. Some lessons will only be learned during the storm.

Secondly, as their fear of the storm subsides, another fear takes its place – they “**marveled**” at who was with them in the boat. They went from a fear, astonishment or marveling at the storm to a marveling at the Christ. Or to put it another way, they shifted their focus from the creation to the Creator.

Revisiting the Psalm, we see this purpose here as well – to “**see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep**” that they might “**cry out to the Lord in their trouble.**” The Psalm is not unclear regarding the desired purpose of the entire enterprise. May our thoughts/fears of the creation, lead our hearts to the Creator.