

## **JESUS: THE “I” OF THE STORM (Mark 6:45-51; John 6:16-21)**

How many of you were born in Oklahoma and have lived in Oklahoma just about all of your life? If that describes you, you can relate to the following clues that you are truly from Oklahoma. You are from Oklahoma if:

1. You can properly pronounce Eufaula, Gotebo, Miami, Okemah, and Chickasha.
2. You think that people who complain about the wind in their states are sissies
3. Your idea of a traffic jam is ten cars waiting to pass a tractor on the highway.
4. You’ve ever had to switch from “heat” to “A/C” and back again in the same day.
5. You refer to the capital of Oklahoma as “The City.”
6. It doesn’t bother you to use an airport named for a man who died in an airplane crash.
7. Little smokies are something you serve only for special occasions.
8. You listen to the weather forecast before picking out an outfit.
9. Someone you know has used a football schedule to plan their wedding date.
10. You aren’t surprised to find movie rental, ammunition, and bait all in the same store.
11. A Mercedes Benz is not a status symbol, but a Ford F350 4x4 is.
12. A tornado warning siren is your signal to go out in the yard and look for a funnel.

As Oklahomans, we are familiar with tornadoes. The most tornadoes we have ever had in a single year in our state was 149, and those took place in 2019. Of that number, 105 of them occurred in the month of May. May is the most active month for tornadoes. Here in Oklahoma, we average more than 24 tornadoes every May. The most tornadoes we have ever had in the month of January was 5, and the year we had 5 in January was 2023. The most tornadoes we ever had in the month of February was 12, and the year we had 12 was 2023. I don’t know how many we will have in March, April, and May, but I would suggest that you keep your eye on the sky.

We know about tornadoes, but living as we do in land-locked Oklahoma, we are much less familiar with hurricanes. I did a little research on the subject. The hurricane season usually runs from July through October. A hurricane develops when a tropical storm intensifies. The winds of a hurricane travel at speeds of at least 74 mph. The winds travel in a circular motion, extending as much as 500 miles in diameter. At the center of the hurricane is what is known as the eye of the storm. The eye is usually about 15 to 20 miles across, and it is a place of relative calm and peace. The eye is a place of safety in the midst of great turbulence.

You and I may never face a hurricane, but all of us can and will be hit by the gale force winds of life in one way or another. The storms come in a variety of ways.

- Your **Boss** says, “The company is having to cut back.”
- A **Spouse** says, “I just don’t love you anymore.”

- The **Doctor** says, “I got your test results back; I’ve got some bad news.”

You and I are no strangers to storms. From the many storms we’ve weathered, we have discovered they come in various shapes and sizes. There are **financial** storms, **health** storms, **marital** storms, and numerous **other kinds** of storms. Storms come in varying intensity and with great frequency. At any given point in time, you are either experiencing a storm, exiting one, or entering one.

The Bible talks about storms. Scripture records one particular storm that Jesus’ disciples faced. Three out of the four gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, and John, each recorded that storm. Because of the actions Jesus took, the disciples came away from that storm having learned some important lessons. When you and I face storms, we can learn those same lessons. I want us to read both Mark and John’s account of the same incident. Let’s look first at **Mark 6:45-51** and then **John 6:16-21**.

I want you to notice what Jesus said to His disciples as He came walking to them on the water. All three gospel writers, Matthew included, recorded the same thing. He said, “It is I.” The Greek words were *ego eimi*, and they literally mean, “I Am.” Seven times in John’s gospel, Jesus made an “I Am” statement. He said, “I Am . . .

1. the Bread of Life,
2. the Light of the world,
3. the Door of the sheep,
4. the Good Shepherd,
5. the Resurrection and the Life,
6. the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and
7. the true Vine.”

In John 18, Jesus was arrested by temple guards. Jesus asked them, “Whom do you seek?” They answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus replied, “I Am.” John tells us the guards backed up and fell to the ground. I think they caught what Jesus was saying.

In the OT, when God came to send Moses back to Egypt to free His people, Moses asked who he should say had sent him. God answered, tell them “I Am that I Am” sent you. As Jesus approached His disciples during that great tempest, He said, “I Am.” In effect, He claimed to be God. Then, what He proceeded to do backed up His claim. Jesus, literally, is the “I” of the storm.

When you find yourself in a storm, the thing to do is to go to the “I” of the storm. Jesus is the “I.” He is the One in whom you and I will find peace and safety in the turbulence of the storm. I want you to see five truths about the “I Am.”

### **Jesus Is the “I AM” Who Sends Us into the Storm**

This may shock you, but sometimes Jesus sends us right into the teeth of a storm. The disciples would not have found themselves in the middle of a terrible storm had not Jesus sent them to the other side of the lake.

Let me pause to remind you, however, the Bible does not say that Jesus caused the storm. Often, God gets blamed for things with which He had nothing to do. God doesn’t cause all the storms we face in life. Usually, there are other causes.

**Sometimes, Satan causes storms.** The Bible teaches that Satan is a destroyer, a

murderer, and a liar. He wants to take life. The Bible depicts him as a roaring lion who goes about seeking whom he can devour.

But sometimes, even Satan gets blamed for things he had nothing to do with, because **quite often, we cause our own storms** by making bad decisions, by doing things we should not do, and by doing things we know better than to do.

Finally, there are times we find ourselves in a storm because of **the bad decisions of someone else**. Sadly, we sometimes are the victims of someone else's mistakes and someone else's sin.

Be assured of this: God doesn't go around igniting storms in the lives of others. He doesn't go around:

- firing people from their jobs,
- infecting their bodies with cancer,
- wrecking their marriages, and
- causing accidents.

We and Satan do a good enough job of bringing heartache upon ourselves.

Sometimes, just sometimes, we find ourselves in a storm precisely because we were obedient to the Lord. The disciples would not have been out on the lake in a storm had they not obeyed the Lord by getting in their boats and heading for the other side of the lake just as He instructed them to do.

Don't be surprised if when you say "yes" to the Lord, you find yourself embroiled in controversy and crisis. Jesus forewarned His disciples, "You do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you" (John 15:19). When you take your stand for Christ, you will not become the best-loved and the most popular person around. Instead, your commitment to Christ will earn you the hatred and opposition of the world. Saying "yes" to Christ involves saying "no" to the world, and the world does not treat kindly those who refuse to go along with its standards and practices.

The well-respected scholar, J.I. Packer, once remarked, "Opposition is a fact: the Christian who is not conscious of being opposed had better watch himself for he is in danger." If you are not encountering opposition and even persecution, something is terribly wrong with your Christian walk.

We who live in America have the mistaken notion that God's primary concern is our safety and comfort. We obviously believe that because that is what we pray about most. We pray for our health and the health of our family members and friends. We pray for our safety—to be kept from injury or danger. We pray for the absence of trials and for life to be easy.

I want you to know this: God's greatest concern is not for your safety; it is not for your ease and comfort. What He desires most is His glory: your growth and the growth of His kingdom will serve to bring glory to Him. Be assured of this: growth always necessitates storms and trials.

Have you noticed that unless you water your yard, during a hot, dry summer the grass in your yard becomes brown and dry? Then, after a summer rainstorm, the grass revives and turns green again.

Just as perpetual sunny days causes your yard to turn brown, nothing but stress-free, care-free living is detrimental to the soul. We need the occasional storm to keep us alive,

healthy, and dependent upon the Lord

Remember this, write it down if you need to: **“When you receive Christ into your life, He doesn’t promise you smooth sailing, but He does promise He’ll get you to the other side.”** He will get you to the final port, but you will have to encounter some fierce storms along the way.

### **Jesus Is the “I AM” Who Watches Us in the Storm**

Mark tells us in His account, in Mark 6:48, “He [Jesus] saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them.” From his vantage-point atop the mountain, Jesus could see the whole scene. He saw the clouds roll in, the waves began to rise, the disciples straining at the oars. His eye was on them.

One of my favorite songs is, “His Eye is on the Sparrow.” It is true that God’s eye is on the sparrow, and it is also true that He watches you and me. There is no place that we can go where God is not aware of what is taking place in our lives.

When you find yourself in a storm, do not make the mistake of thinking God is somehow either uninformed or unconcerned. He knows exactly what is going on, and He cares for us more than we will ever understand. We may not be able to see God, but God sees us.

In the cartoon, “Dennis the Menace,” Dennis was sitting in a car with Joey. He turns to his friend and explains, “Air bags are kinda like God. You know they’re there to protect you but you can’t see them.”

You and I need never doubt God’s presence. The “I Am” watches us in the storm, but He does more than that . . .

### **Jesus Is the “I AM” Who Prays for Us in the Storm**

Read Mark 6:46. What do you suppose Jesus prayed about or for whom He prayed? I have no doubt that Jesus prayed for His disciples. Be certain of this: **In your deep, dark, difficult days, Jesus is praying for you.** The Bible teaches that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father, and He intercedes for us, which means He prays on our behalf.

I have many reasons to be thankful to God for this church, but one of those things for which I am most thankful is those members of our church who are faithful to pray. I am thankful for the wonderful prayer warriors of our church who pray for me and who pray for others. Don’t stop; keep praying. God is listening, and God is answering.

I once read about a pastor who reported that he had a prayer partner named Bill. He said that whenever Bill prayed, he would begin by praying, “Dear God . . .” He said that Bill was such a powerful man of prayer that whenever Bill said, “Dear God . . .” he just felt that God sat up a little straighter and replied, “Yes, Bill.” He said that when he prayed though, he had to introduce himself. I feel much the same way. When I am in need, I want some of you who know how to pray to pray on my behalf.

Keep in mind, however, that no matter who you have praying for you, no one can pray for you more effectively than Jesus, the very Son of God. When you are in a storm, you can know Jesus, the “I Am” is praying for you.

### **Jesus Is the “I AM” Who Comes to Us in the Storm**

Jesus wasn't just aware of their storm. He prayed for them, but He did more still. Jesus went to them.

When the disciples were out there on the middle of the lake in the middle of the storm, what do you suppose they were afraid of? They were afraid of the water. If too much water got in the boat, the boat would sink and so would they. How did Jesus go to His disciples? He came walking on the water. Do you see the significance? By His actions, Jesus is saying, "Hey, fellas, the thing you fear most, that is what I keep under my feet."

What is the greatest storm in your life? What do you fear most? **Is it sickness?** Jesus is the Great Physician. **Is it Death?** Jesus is the resurrection and the life; He conquered Death; He emerged victorious from the grave. **Is it loneli-ness?** Jesus promises that if you trust in Him, He will never leave you or forsake you. During His earthly ministry, Jesus was faced with physical limitations. He could only be in one place at one time. But when He returned to heaven, He sent His Spirit. When you ask Christ into your life, His Spirit comes to indwell you, and He will never leave you. Jesus went to His disciples when they were in the storm. Now, He stays with us through the storm.

I used to have a book entitled, *Unsolved Miracles*. I looked for it and couldn't find it, but it is a collection of stories written by people like Billy Graham, James Dobson, Henry Blackaby, Corrie ten Boom, and many others. Each contributor told of a miracle that occurred in the life of someone they knew or had heard about.

J. Sidlow Baxter, a minister from England, told a story about Jim. Jim lived in a southern English town. One afternoon, the Anglican minister in that town looked out of his house and saw a rough-looking workman walk up to the main door of the church. The man looked around and then entered the church. The next day the minister noticed the same man doing the same thing. He did it again a couple of days later. Each time, the man entered the church about 12:30 in the afternoon.

The minister wanted to know what this man was up to; so, he had one of the church employees spy on the man. Later, the spy reported what he saw. The man entered the church, stuffed his cap in his pocket, walked down the main aisle, stood before the communion table, placed his hands on the communion rail, bowed his head, and said in a low voice, "Jesus . . . it's Jim." He did that every day.

A few days later, Jim was in an accident and taken to a local hospital. Jim was placed in a men's ward. The men in that ward were coarse, crude, and ungrateful. They caused all kinds of problems for the nurses. Before the week was out however, the nurses all noticed that a great change had taken place in the men's ward. The men were cooperative and even cheerful. One of the nurses asked the reason for the change. One man remarked, "Oh, it's that chap in the fifth bed. They call 'im Jim."

The nurse pulled the screen around Jim's bed and said, "Jim, you've made a wonderful change in this ward. Tell me how you've done it."

Jim's eyes moistened, and he answered, "Well, sister, I'm not sure you'd understand if I told you. But somehow, every day, just about 12:30, I see Jesus coming toward the end o' my bed. He stands there for a minute; then He just puts His hands on the bed rail, an' leans over and says: 'Jim . . . it's Jesus.'"

When you find yourself in the storm, don't fear. Jesus will come to you. He will come walking on whatever you fear most. God's word assures us that nothing will separate

from His love. His love is more powerful than any foe you have.

### **Jesus Is the “I AM” Who Saves Us Through the Storm**

Jesus won't save you from the storm, but He will save you through the storm. Jesus won't keep you from ever experiencing storms, but He will keep you in the storm. That was the experience of His disciples, and that will be your experience if you will become one of His followers.

According to Mark 6:51, when Jesus got into the boat the storm stopped, and according to John 6:21, immediately the boat reached the other shore. If you want relief from the storm, and if you want to make it safely to the other shore, you need to let Jesus into your boat. But remember, Jesus doesn't promise you smooth sailing. Instead, He promises you a safe landing.

But understand this, Jesus doesn't want to board your boat as a passenger. He wants to come on board as the Captain. Have you been trying to steer the vessel of your life on your own? Those who insist on being their own captain eventually capsize. It's just a matter of time.

I urge you, let Jesus board the boat of your life. Ask Him to be your Captain, and let Him take the controls.

In one of his books, Max Lucado included a chapter called, “The Laws of the Lighthouse,” in which he wrote, “Approach life like a voyage . . . Enjoy the view. Explore the vessel. Make friends with the Captain. Fish a little. And then get off when you get home.”

Jesus is the Captain. He will take us through the storm, and in the end, He will bring us to the shore of our new home.

Until then, there will be some storms to weather. When we are in a storm, our great need is to place ourselves in the protection of the “I,” the great “I Am.” Understand, if you have been obedient, it was the “I Am” who **sent you** into the storm. He is **watching you**. He is **praying for you**. He will **come to you**, and He will **save you**. Keep yourself in the “I.”