

Title: Calming your storms
Pastor: Fred May
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Mark 4:36-40 (NLT) "So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind ... But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?" When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

a] maturity outcomes

- * intimacy > surrender - sensitivity and responsiveness to God's love,
[in stages: tender love> tough love> furious love> injured love]
- * Self-Awareness > self-knowledge and acceptance > (self) living sacrifice
- * Competency > skills and tools to love and obey appropriately
- * Joyous endurance > in the face of death/ fear/ suffering/ pain or loss
(the ability to withstand hardship or adversity - Merriam-Webster)

b] in the quiet, the stillness – comes the knowing

Psalms 46:10 'Be still and know that I am God'.

*There's a certain 'knowing' that's possible only when we learn to practice the disciplines of stillness and solitude [aloneness with Him]:

- to shut out the outer world and all distractions - declare the time of your Sabbath-rest which you come to enter.
- to listen/ become attuned to your inner world; to practice an awareness of the pressing/ intense emotions. Reflect on and record/ journal your inner journey and events
- Speak to your heart - thoughts of comfort, encouragement or correction.
- Prepare it for the Presence of God.

Psalms 4:4 (NKJV) "Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah"

Ephesians 4:26 HCSB "Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger"

- * Discover your own secret place/ still space that works best for you - and contend for it.
- * Bring the negative emotions into order before you enter His Presence by addressing them.

Psalm 116:7, 8 (MSG) "I said to myself, "Relax and rest. God has showered you with blessings. Soul, you've been rescued from death; Eye, you've been rescued from tears; And you, Foot, were kept from stumbling."

Psalm 62:5 (ESV) "For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from Him."

* Train your inner world/ emotions to worship - to bring a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise to Him in contrition and humility.

Psalms 103:1, 2 (ESV) Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Psalms 43:5 (ESV) Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

c] self- awareness

*One of our greatest obstacles in knowing God is our lack of self-knowledge
[Scazzero]

*Augustine wrote [Confessions A.D. 400]

"How can you draw close to God when you are far from your own self? " He prayed: "Grant, Lord, that I may know myself that I may know thee".

*St Theresa of Avila wrote [The Way of Perfection]

"Almost all problems in the spiritual life stem from a lack of self-knowledge".

*James said that to remain merely intentional without proceeding to action is as bad as being out of feeling with one's self or one's own person.

James 1:23,24 (NLT) "For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like."

'Ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality. Listening to our emotions ushers us into reality. And reality is where we meet God... Emotions are the language of the soul. They are the cry that gives the heart a voice. In neglecting our intense emotions, we are false to ourselves and lose a wonderful opportunity to know God. 'We forget that change comes through brutal honesty and vulnerability before God'

[*The Cry of the Soul* - Dan Allender and Tremper Longman]

'The call of discipleship also includes experiencing our feelings, reflecting on them, and then thoughtfully responding to them under the lordship of Jesus'.

[Scazzero- pp71]

The quest for self-awareness is the pursuit of the authentic self where Christ has brought inner peace and victory over the 'natural self' which is trapped in prison of fear where we rely on our own survival skills and the many defence mechanisms of self-consciousness and self-obsession. This conflict between the authentic/ recreated self and the natural one is bitter and demands resolution.

Romans 7:23-25 (ERV) "But I see another law working in my body. That law makes war against the law that my mind accepts. That other law working in my body is the law of sin, and that law makes me its prisoner. What a miserable person I am! Who will save me from this body that brings me death? I thank God for his salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord! So in my mind I am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful self I am a slave to the law of sin."

Mark 8:36-37 (NEB) Jesus put the challenge of the struggle of the true over the false/ natural self as follows - "What does a man gain by winning the whole world at the cost of his true self? What can he give to buy that true self back? "

This victory over the 'false self' is possible only where one has had an intimate, personal experience of the Father's affirmation of one - as happened to Christ with His baptism at the Jordan River before he embarked on His earthly ministry where He had the following words imparted to His heart.

Matthew 3:17 "This is my Son, whom I love: with Him I am well pleased"

The Father, in other words said to Him:

'You are loved and loveable. I'm proud of who you are. You are good. I'm glad that you exist. I celebrate your person. You're my treasure.'

Satan's temptation of Christ was aimed at disrupting the security which the Father's affirmation had brought to His authentic self - by posing these three enticements

- [Matthew 4:1-10]

* I am what I do - my performance (CV) accomplishments and achievements validate me.

* I am what I have - my possessions and resources validate me

* The opinions of other validate me - reputation, popularity, fame.

d] affirm yourself

*Now thank the Father for His unconditional love and acceptance of you and that He deems you worthy, simply because He created you and called you to be His own.

***Declare the following affirmations over your identity in Him and in this life:**

- ✓ I hold myself in high regard despite my imperfections and limits
- ✓ I am worthy to assert my God-given power over the world
- ✓ I am entitled to exist
- ✓ It is good that I exist
- ✓ I have my own identity from God that is distinct and unique
- ✓ I am worthy of being valued and paid attention to
- ✓ I am entitled to joy and pleasure
- ✓ I am entitled to make mistakes and not be perfect
- ✓ I am anchored in the love of God and affirm that I am worthy of feeling, worthy of being alive and lovable even when I am brutally honest about the good, the bad and the ugly deep inside of me.