My dear fellow redeemed,

As many of you know, my wife Judi recently made a trip back to the Midwest to visit some dear friends, and I had to endure seven challenging days of bachelorhood. Judi doesn’t especially care to travel by air because of all the hassles connected with flying these days, like being groped from her head to her toes by the TSA as she’s going thru the check-in line. But some people actually have a morbid fear of flying, don’t they? The story is told, for example, about two men who were sitting on a park bench, and one of them said to the other, “I’m deathly afraid of flying. In fact,” he said, “I always take the train on all of my long trips.” “That’s silly,” the other man replied. “Besides, didn’t you hear about those 300 people who were killed on a train just recently?” “Three hundred people?” said the fearful one. “Three hundred people?! How could 300 people get killed on a train?” “Well,” the first man said, “it happened when an airplane crashed on them.” I’m guessing that probably didn’t do much to quell the man’s fear of flying, did it?

In reality, the fear of flying isn’t the only kind of fear that many people struggle with, including you and me. Many times in life, we find ourselves in a situation very much like that of the first disciples of Jesus in this portion of Scripture which is now before us. We find ourselves in the midst of some kind of “storm,” so to speak, and it’s a real humdinger. I think you’ve been there, haven’t you? I know I have. In our lesson for today, however, our Lord Jesus is teaching us some important truths about all of those times when the storms of life are raging, and this morning we’re going to focus on this thought, namely, “WHEN THE STORMS OF LIFE ARE RAGING.” First, we are reminded of I. THE REALITY OF STORMS. Then II. THE REACTION OF US SINNERS. And finally of III. THE RELIABILITY OF OUR SAVIOR.

Let’s begin with THE REALITY OF STORMS. Some of the first disciples of Jesus were seasoned, professional fishermen, and from their experience they knew the reality of storms on the Sea of Galilee. But this particular storm we are told about was going to have a really memorable impact on them. It was something they would probably reminisce about later on, like us old-timers do today when we recall the big fire of ought-nine, or the heavy rains of ought-four, or Grandma’s latest birthday party. As Snoopy from the Peanuts cartoon would say when he’s sitting on top of his dog house, with his manual typewriter in front of him, making still another attempt to write a book in his novelist persona – as he would say as he begins each of his books, “It was a dark and stormy night...”And this particular night on the Sea of Galilee truly was “dark and stormy.” Listen, we are told, “A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped,” v.37.

Maybe we ought to back up a little. At the time of this account, our Lord Jesus had been teaching all day because crowds of people were very interested in hearing Him, and by the end of the day He was really tired. And quite understandable so. Imagine teaching hundreds of people with no microphone, no sound system, no cushy theater seats to sit in, no McDonald’s to grab a snack, no port-a-potties, and out under the blazing sun to boot. A daunting task indeed. Now it was evening and Jesus decided to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee with His disciples, probably to get some rest after His strenuous day. On the way over He was taking a nap on a cushion in the stern of the boat. That voyage, however, was interrupted by a sudden storm – “a furious squall,” St Mark reports....a dangerous evening storm with raging waves that threatened to swamp the boat. And mind you, this was the same boat that was carrying not only the disciples, but our Lord Jesus Himself. That raging storm struck those disciples even when their Master was with them.
Do you see the lesson in this, my friends? To put it very simply, there are times in our own lives as Christians when we also face situations that threaten to overwhelm us. Despite the fact that we are people of faith, these storms can come into our lives so suddenly and with so much fury that we’re just not prepared for them. There are the storms of sickness, disease, and even death. There are storms involving fractured relationships, parenting issues, employment woes, and a host of others. These storms come no matter how faithful we are in our service to God. They come no matter how perfect our attendance in church may be. They come no matter how well we know our Bible and no matter how close we are in our relationship with Jesus. The Apostle Peter, who was probably a passenger on this harrowing cruise, later wrote to his fellow Christians who were being persecuted and said, “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.” Storms in life are a reality... even for us Christians.

II.

Now secondly, in this account we are also reminded of THE REACTION OF US SINNERS when the storms of life are raging. I think it can safely be said that we often react like these first disciples of Jesus did that night on the Sea of Galilee. Listen, Mark tells us, “Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?‘” v.38. This is actually a rather common reaction of us sinners when the storms of life are raging. For one thing, like these first disciples, we often react with great concern, which sometimes even borders on full-blown panic and even fear. From our perspective, it sometimes seems that Jesus is sound asleep in the “storms” that hit us too. “Why doesn’t He intervene?” we cry out in our distress. “Why doesn’t He do something?” Our Lord, however, is not sound asleep. He’s not oblivious to our problems or unaware of our needs. No, the Bible assures us that “He who watches over you will not slumber... The Lord will keep you from all harm – He will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”

Then too, when the storms of life are raging, we may also be tempted to question our Lord’s love and concern for us, like these first disciples did. “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” they said. What a foolish question that was! It was foolish for the disciples to ask, and it’s foolish for us to even think. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Jesus is the Son of God who left His throne of glory in heaven and came into this world to be our Savior. He’s the One who from eternity “was rich,” the Bible tells us, and “yet for our sakes He became poor so that we thru His poverty might be rich.” Does that sound like He doesn’t care about us? Does that sound like He’s unconcerned about what happens to us? Jesus is the One who went to the cross for us. He’s the One who sacrificed Himself for us. He’s the One who lived and died as our Substitute to pay our enormous debt of sin so that we might live with Him and never die. Does that sound like someone who doesn’t care about us? No way! The devil would like us to believe that when the storms of life are raging, but it simply isn’t true. Jesus does care. He always has, and He always will.

Deep down in our hearts we know and believe that our Lord is good, don’t we? — that He really does care about us. Yet when the storms of life are raging, we see things which seem to deny His goodness and contradict the fact that He cares about us. I think the sainted Corrie ten Boom has clarified this issue rather well in one of her books when she says, “Often I have heard people say, ‘How good the Lord is! We prayed that it wouldn’t rain on our church picnic, and look at the lovely weather we have!’ Yes, the Lord is good when He sends good weather,” says Corrie. “But the Lord was also good when He allowed my sister Betsie to starve to death before my eyes in a German concentration camp,” she continues. “I remember one occasion when I was very discouraged there,” she says. “Everything around us was dark, and there was also darkness in my heart. I remember telling Betsie that I thought the Lord had forgotten us. ‘No, Corrie,’ she said, ‘He hasn’t forgotten us. Remember His Word: ‘As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him.’” There
is an ocean of God's love and goodness," Corrie concludes, "an inexhaustible ocean that will
never run dry. May God grant that you never doubt this love and goodness — no matter what
your circumstances may be." That says it well, doesn't it! Our Lord Jesus is good, both when
our life's weather is lovely and also when the storms are raging. He does care about us. He
always has, and He always will.

And one thing more. From this account we also see THE RELIABILITY OF OUR
SAVIOR. He has what it takes to get us thru all the raging storms of life. St. Mark says,
"The disciples woke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?' He
got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died
down and it was completely calm," v.38b,39. This is the reliability of our Savior when we
find ourselves caught up in whatever storm may be threatening us in life. That night on the
Sea of Galilee, that night when a squall arose so furious that it panicked even those veteran
fishermen who undoubtedly had weathered many a storm in the past, that night the Man in
the boat with them simply spoke to the inanimate forces of nature...and they obeyed Him!
You couldn't do that, could you? But He did. "Quiet!" Jesus said. "Be still!" He
commanded. And immediately the roaring wind ceased and the raging waters became
completely calm.

This tells us something, doesn't it? This says something very important about the Man in
the boat with these disciples that night. It provides a clear answer to the question they were
asking each other, namely, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!" v.41.
With the kind of power Jesus demonstrated and with the awesome miracle He performed,
there is only one obvious answer to this question. Jesus is God. He's the Lord of all. He's the
King of creation. He's the One who holds the history of the world in His hand. That's who
Jesus is! And the best part of all of this is that He is the One who's in "our boat in life" too,
so to speak. This Jesus who with a mere word quieted the gale-force winds and calmed the
turbulent waters is the same One who changed water into wine, and fed the multitudes, and
healed the sick, and drove out demons....and even raised the dead. Is there any doubt about
what He is able to do for us? Is there any question about His power and ability when the
storms of life are raging? No — none whatsoever. He definitely is reliable.

And we in turn, my friends, must learn to always actually rely on Him. After commanding
the forces of nature, Jesus turned to His disciples and said, "Why are you so afraid? Do you
still have no faith?" v.40. Jesus was disappointed. He had expected a greater faith from His
disciples, and He lovingly chided them for not truly trusting Him. By this time they certainly
should have known that with Him on board they were perfectly safe. They had called Him,
"Teacher," but they hadn't really taken His teachings to heart. Does this sound familiar, my
friends? Maybe we should take a good look at ourselves. In spite of what Jesus has taught us
plainly in His Word, in spite of the "storm-stilling" He has already done for us in the past,
we're still often like these first disciples, aren't we? — fearful, doubting, questioning....with
"no faith." What we must learn to do instead when the storms of life are raging is to humbly
trust our Lord's saving love and His mighty power. We should live each day with the
conviction that no matter how dark the clouds may be, behind those clouds the sun of our
Savior's love is still shining brightly. We should live each day with the confidence that just
as He allows storms to come into our life, so He will also still them when they have served
His purpose. Then our own hearts will become like the raging storm on the Sea of Galilee —
"completely calm."

In his book entitled, "Stay Alive All Your Life," Dr. Norman Vincent Peale tells about
encountering a hurricane out in the Atlantic Ocean and how — fortunately — they were able to
sail around it. Afterwards Dr. Peale was visiting with the ship's captain, and the captain said
that he lived by the philosophy that if the sea was smooth, it would get rough; and if the sea
was rough, it would get smooth. And then he added, "But with a good ship, you can always
ride it out." This, my friends, is true for us in life as well. If our life is smooth, it will
undoubtedly get rough at some time or another; and if it's rough, it will get smooth – permanently smooth when we reach the eternal harbor in heaven. Until that time, we do have what we need to “ride out every storm.” His name is Jesus. He loves us dearly. He’s our mighty Savior – the One whom “even the wind and the waves obey.” He’s our completely reliable Shelter in the time of every storm – even when the final storm of death is raging. Let’s continue to trust Him.

AMEN