



Daily Bible readings, a memory verse and a prayer for individual contemplation
 Weekly worship song, reflection and small group questions

ARE YOU GOING THROUGH A MID-FAITH CRISIS?

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Sunday 4 July
 Week 5
 The church has lost the plot.

BIBLE READING:

Sunday 4 July Jonah 3:1-4:10; Mt 7:1-12; 2 Pet 3:1-9

PRAISE AND WORSHIP:

 Come, Thou Almighty King: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDijlmdcKY>

Reflection by Rev Kedibone Mntambo
 Mark 4: 35-41

Fear is an issue in today's Gospel lesson from Mark, though not the crucial issue. Today we know and understand what took place that day; we know the end of the story; we know who Jesus is; but the disciples then, did not know and they really just don't get the whole picture. Mark says that waves were beating into the boat and the boat was in danger of being swamped. And yet, somehow Jesus manages to sleep through this pounding storm. We know that some of the disciples were experienced fishermen.

They understand the lake. They understand its perils. They had most likely experienced storms before and had come through them successfully. So, if they were afraid of what was happening, it must have been one incredible storm.

Doesn't he care?! Just when they need him the most, Jesus is basically not around! You can hear the accusations in their voices: "*Teacher, don't you care that we are dying?*" (Mark 4:38).

Those words of the disciples reflect just how far the disciples really are from understanding who Jesus is. Jesus did not create that storm. Nor did Jesus leave the disciples alone. Jesus was always right there. Jesus has certainly been "performing miracles", at least that's what the disciples saw as "performing miracles." That is why they aren't sure; they don't believe that Jesus can save them. So, what happens? Does Jesus rebuke them? No, Rather, Jesus calms the storm. "*Peace. Be still!*"

Had the disciples made the request to Jesus believing, 'Teacher, save us as we know you can,' it would have been an acknowledgment of their understanding of who Jesus is. Today, we know without a doubt that Jesus is the Son of God. The disciples didn't know. You'd think that after a sign like this, there would be no room for doubt. But listen again to the end of this text: "*They were greatly afraid, and said to one another, **who then is this**, that even the wind and the sea obey him?*" (Mark 4:41).

Surely, you've heard similar accusation in the voices of others. How many times have you heard someone say, "I've always been a good Christian, why is God letting this happen to me?", "Where's God when I need Him?" Or maybe you've heard someone say, "How can God let such terrible things happen in the world?"

The reality is that the disciples' situation is a mirror into which we can look and see ourselves reflected. Are the disciples wrong to be fearful? Not at all! Their fear is normal and it's to be expected. Did they lose the plot? No, what they are going through it's understandable, where is their Messiah in this storm! But how could Jesus possibly NOT care? He's in the same boat with them; but you might say he's the Son of God; he doesn't have to worry. Yes, and that's exactly the point. You see, in order to get past their fear, the disciples have to first recognize that Jesus is not some ordinary human being who just performs miracles; they have to understand and acknowledge through that understanding that Jesus IS the Son of God.

Just the same as we accuse God of not caring when we ask, "Why is God letting this happen to me?" or "Why does God let people die of Covid-19, look at the number of those being sick? Doesn't God care?" Today, we ARE those disciples in the boat when we ask such questions because God's right here in the boat with us. God's right here in the midst of all the suffering.

All we have to do is to accept Jesus into our lives, to accept that the church didn't lose a plot. God has saved us through Jesus, and we are still God's children and God's church. God is right by our side, not just when things are good or when things are bad, God is by our side ALL the time. Don't accuse God of not caring. Just ask, and then listen to God's Word. God says, "*Be at peace. Be silent . . . and know that I AM God.*"

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. What is it that makes you feel anxious these days? How do you deal with that?
2. Can you remember some moment when you really felt that lost and alone? What was happening?
3. How do you respond to lockdown levels and the on and off of physical church shutting down?
4. Have you ever asked yourself where is God in this time of this pandemic?



Monday

Memory Verse: Mark 12:9 - *“I am the owner of the vineyard. I am the rightful heir to it. I am the beloved Son whom the Father has sent.”*

Prayer: Father Lord, you have blessed me so incredibly. I know that I'm where I am because of your undeserved grace. My spiritual blessings in Christ are beyond description. Thank you. Please help me always to remember that my finances, my opportunities, my abilities, even the air I breathe, all are from you and help me to use them to your glory. In Jesus' name, I pray. **Amen.**

Tuesday

Memory Verse: Job 2: 10 – *“Job responds to the loss of all he holds dear by praising the One who gave him those gifts. Stripped of all that gave his life meaning, Job clings to the God who gave him life in the first place.”*

Prayer: In all things I desire to praise You, Lord, may I be like Job and praise You in the storms of life. I'm desperate for Lord. You deserve my praise even when I don't understand what is happening around me. May I be an example to my children and those who look up to me, of praising You no matter what. You are worthy. Blessed be the name of the Lord! **Amen.**

Wednesday

Memory Verse: Phil 4: 12 – *“Being able to fight is God's grace. I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.”*

Prayer: Father God, thank You for your son Jesus Christ. I thank You for the many mercies that you have bestowed on me in this life, and I pray that nothing will ever hide my position in Christ and I pray that like Paul, whatever gain I have I may count as loss for the sake of Christ Jesus my Lord, in Whose name I live and pray. **Amen.**

Thursday

Memory Verse: Ps. 23:4 – *“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”*

Prayer: Lord, thank You for being my Shepherd, the One who leads my life. I ask that you stand on the hillsides where I can see, let me not miss You even for a second. As a sheep, help me look to You, listen to Your voice, and follow Your leading. In Jesus' name I ask. **Amen.**

Friday

Memory Verse: Mark 7: 28-30 – *I may not have a place at the table but there's more than enough on that table for everyone in the world, and I need mine now (paraphrased)*

Prayer: Lord, your love and mercy know no bounds. May I trust you always and pursue you with determined persistence as this woman did. Increase my faith in your saving power and deliver me for all evil and harm in this time. **Amen.**

Saturday

Memory Verse: Psalm 22: 24-25 – *“Praising the God who answers the forsaken”*

Prayer: Oh my God and my Lord, I cannot comprehend what my Jesus had to go through to pay the price for my sins, I praise You, I praise You God in the midst of my situation, because I know you will never leave me nor forsake me, in Jesus' name I pray, **Amen.**



It is important for parents to take time to lead the conversations of family time and to be honest with their children in these conversations.

BY JENNY BLAKE – CHILDREN'S PASTOR
jennyb@bmc.org.za

Sunday 4th July

Pray daily: Set up family time for prayer and devotions and stick to this arrangement. All devotions should always begin by with a prayer. Ask a family member to pray or one of the children.

Scripture Reading: Jonah 3:1-4:10

Allow children/teens to read out loud for the family.

Activity/Family Moment

Think about the times in your life where things just weren't fair. How did it make you feel? Have you ever been angry at God? Perhaps you didn't make the sports team you wanted or failed a test. When were angry at God and for what reason?

Maybe you were upset, and you wanted to put the blame on God instead of someone else. There are times when we feel angry at God for very good reasons and other times not so much.

In the last verse God asks Jonah if he did anything for the plant that gave him shade but then died, which Jonah knew he did nothing for it.

God gave Jonah compassion and grace just like Jonah knew God would, but Jonah didn't do much with what he had been given.

Sometimes we need to figure out where to take our emotions. If we did all we could and still don't succeed, take that pain to God, rather than blaming God. It's easy to blame God and say it's all Gods fault just like it's easy to say I failed the test because of the teacher.

What are you doing with God compassion and God's Grace?

Just like Jonah's story, he didn't have an easy time, we too aren't promised an easy time, but we are promised God's presences with us at all times.

How does that make you feel when you look back on your angry times?