

They don't expect him to *do* anything – they just want him to care.

“Do you not care that we are perishing?”

It's so accusatory. So angry.

But Jesus sees past their words to the core of their emotions, and he returns a question:

“Why are you afraid?”

I don't know about you,

but if I'm in a little tiny boat being swamped by a rampaging storm –

or if I'm in a little tiny car surrounded by lightning and other frightened drivers –

I *know* why I'm afraid:

I could die! Painfully. Fearfully.

“Why are you afraid?”

seems an absolutely ridiculous question to ask.

Until, of course, the squall has ended.

And all is peaceful once more.

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After that fear-filled ride on I-25 – and after admitting to Jamie that, yes, it was an awesomely, stunningly beautiful scene – afterward I took the time to ask myself that question:

What was I really afraid of?

Logic tells me that, *if* there actually were a tornado, its chances of touching down near our car were slim.

Our greatest danger was other drivers and the rain – which any of us faces on a regular basis.

So why did I fear?

I considered some other natural forces I'd weathered –

hurricanes and blizzards on the east coast,

earthquakes on the west –

and wondered why these didn't inspire nearly so much dread in me.

The answer came down to one word:  
control.

In each of those other scenarios, I imagined I had *some* sense of control:

by preparing enough food and water to wait out the blizzard

or heading inland to avoid the worst of the hurricane

or living in a well-built home and securing my furniture and other belongings

in such a way they'd remain stable through most minor earthquakes.

Again, logically I know that's not true – none of us has any control over mother nature – but I've clearly fooled my fear-meter into thinking I do... and I haven't yet managed that in regards to tornadoes.

Neither have the disciples, it seems, as they rage in their own fear.

They struggle against the idea that they have no control over their very lives...

and it's the first thing they comment on after Jesus stills their storm:

“Who then is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?”

How did *he* get *control* over it all?

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All of us have times when we feel we have no control – like nothing we do can make any difference.

When your teen or young adult child is making poor decisions, and you've bailed her out of too many situations; she's going to have to face the consequences sometime, and your heart is going to break as you watch, helpless.

Or as cancer or heart disease or some other illness invades your body; and you try all the drugs and procedures, but it just keeps spreading, depleting your energy and your time.

When you're working the Homelessness Prevention interviews, and you know the applicant doesn't qualify for funds, and the church reserves won't nearly cover what he needs to keep his family from being put out into the street – you really want to, but you can't *do* anything.

Or the very fact of bodily aging: first noting your vision or hearing fade; not being able to take part in long-cherished activities like hiking or gardening, knitting or playing a musical instrument; eventually having to leave your own home or give up driving.

Truly, we try to maintain control in as many ways we can, and we often *think* we have more than we actually do.

Like the disciples, we struggle against the idea that, in the end, we have no real control over any of these storms.

And our *individual* tempests don't nearly include all the world's many sorrows.

Looking at everything at once,
swirling in stormy, unending chaos,
we *are* helpless, out of control.

And in our helplessness it is natural
to shout or cry or quietly wonder of our Creator:

“Do you not care that we are perishing?”

And what do we hear as God's response?

I wish I had the answer for what God might say, but I don't.
And I won't offer the often-heard platitude about “never getting more than we can handle” –
because sometimes people *do* drown in their storms.

So what response does God give us?

Today, God lays before us this particular passage of scripture; and with it, not words, but an image.
We have a picture of calm *within* the storm.

“[Jesus] woke up...and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’
Then the wind ceased, and there was dead calm”.

I don't interpret this passage as a suggestion that
we await a saving miracle in the midst of our own storms –
because our storms won't always come to such a peaceful end.

Rather, I see this image as a call to transform *ourselves* –
the one and only thing we actually have some control over –
to transform our responses *within* the storm into the same peace and calm that Jesus modeled.

Yes, he quieted the tumult as well,
but even when it was in full force
his response wasn't to rage against it:

he napped!
Even as the boat was being swamped.
He had peace.

This is *faith*.

This is the faith he points the disciples toward when he asks them:

“Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?”

I wish I had remembered to draw on that peace the other day on I-25.

I wish I had remembered to breathe more deeply,
had quietly talked my chaotic mind into slowing down,
and had prayed for more faith.

I wish that I had remembered:

I am *not* in control of this storm;
but I *am* in control of my faith;
that in life and death, in calm and storm,
I am God's;

I may not be safe –
but ultimately I am secure.

It is okay to be afraid sometimes – Jesus is not scolding the disciples for that.

But he does ask them to recognize *why* they're afraid...
and to *choose* how they might respond.

None of us is Jesus – fully transformed and able to call on inner peace at the most fearful moments.

But because we are his followers, it is a part of our journey to keep *trying* –
to seek that peace within ourselves;
that peace which is not disconcerted by life's changing weather.
It is a part of our journey
to keep striving for *more faith*
rather than *more control*.

Like the disciples, when we feel out of control in our lives we tend to lash out,
hiding our fear and frustration about not being able to *do more*.

We do it to our families,
we do it at church,
we do it in our places of work and study.

We are not in control.

But we *are* followers of Jesus.
And by his own actions, he ever invites us to step *out* of control...
and *into* faith.

So the next time we enter a new storm, may we try to find Christ's calm center...

and perhaps, some time,
we might be the calm
for our fellow travelers.

Amen.