



Peace, Be Still

By Lisa L. Harkness
First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

The Savior teaches us how to feel peace and calm even when the winds blow fiercely around us and billowing waves threaten to sink our hopes.

When our children were young, our family spent a few days at a beautiful lake. One afternoon some of the children put on life jackets before jumping off a deck and into the water. Our youngest daughter watched with hesitation, carefully observing her siblings. With all the courage she could muster, she plugged her nose with one hand and jumped. She immediately popped up and with a bit of panic in her voice yelled, “Help me! Help me!”

Now, she was not in any mortal danger; her life jacket was doing its job, and she was floating safely. We could have reached out and pulled her back on the deck with little effort. Yet from her perspective, she needed help. Perhaps it was the chill of the water or the newness of the experience. In any case, she climbed back onto the deck, where we wrapped her in a dry towel and complimented her on her bravery.

Whether we are old or young, many of us have, in moments of distress, uttered with urgency words such as “Help me!” “Save me!” or “Please, answer my prayer!”

Such an event happened with Jesus’s disciples during His mortal ministry. In Mark we read that Jesus “began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude.”¹ The crowd became so numerous that Jesus “entered into a ship”² and spoke from its deck. All day long He taught the people in parables as they sat on the shore.

“And ... when the [evening] was come,” He said unto His disciples, “Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude,”³ they departed from the shore and were on their way across the Sea of Galilee. Finding a spot in the back of the ship, Jesus lay down and quickly fell asleep. Soon “there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was [nearly] full”⁴ of water.

Many of Jesus’s disciples were experienced fishermen and knew how to handle a boat in a storm. They were His trusted—indeed, His beloved—disciples. They had left jobs, personal interests, and family to follow Jesus. Their faith in Him was evident by their presence in the boat. And now their boat was in the middle of a tempest and on the very verge of sinking.

We don’t know how long they battled to keep the boat afloat in the storm, but they woke Jesus with a bit of panic in their voices, saying:

“Master, carest thou not that we perish?”⁵

“Lord, save us: we perish.”⁶

They called Him “Master,” and that He is. He is also “Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning.”⁷

From His position in the boat, Jesus arose and rebuked the wind and said unto the raging sea, “Peace, be still. And the wind [did cease], and there was a great calm.”⁸ Ever the Master Teacher, Jesus then taught His disciples through two simple yet loving questions. He asked:

“Why are ye so fearful?”⁹

“Where is your faith?”¹⁰

There is a mortal tendency, even a temptation, when we find ourselves in the middle of trials, troubles, or afflictions to cry out, “Master, carest thou not that I perish? Save me.” Even Joseph Smith pleaded from an awful prison, “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”¹¹

Certainly, the Savior of the world understands our mortal limitations, for He teaches us how to feel peace and calm even when the winds blow fiercely around us and billowing waves threaten to sink our hopes.

To those with proven faith, childlike faith, or even the smallest particle of faith,¹² Jesus invites, saying: “Come unto me.”¹³ “Believe on my name.”¹⁴ “Learn of me,

and listen to my words.”¹⁵ He tenderly commands, “Repent and [be] baptized in my name,”¹⁶ “Love one another; as I have loved you,”¹⁷ and “Always remember me.”¹⁸ Jesus reassures, explaining: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”¹⁹

I can imagine that Jesus’s disciples in the storm-tossed boat were, of necessity, busy watching the waves crash onto their deck and bailing out the water. I can picture them handling the sails and trying to maintain some semblance of control over their little craft. Their focus was on surviving the moment, and their plea for help was urgently sincere.

Many of us are no different in our day. Recent events around the globe and in our nations, communities, and families have buffeted us with unforeseen trials. In times of turmoil our faith can feel stretched to the limits of our endurance and understanding. Waves of fear can distract us, causing us to forget God’s goodness, thus leaving our perspective short-sighted and out of focus. Yet it is in these rough stretches of our journey that our faith can be not only tried but fortified.

Regardless of our circumstances, we can intentionally make efforts to build and increase our faith in Jesus Christ. It is strengthened when we remember that we are children of God and that He loves us. Our faith grows as we experiment on the word of God with hope and diligence, trying our very best to follow Christ’s teachings. Our faith increases as we choose to believe rather than doubt, forgive rather than judge, repent rather than rebel. Our faith is refined as we patiently rely on the merits and mercy and grace of the Holy Messiah.²⁰

“While faith is not a perfect knowledge,” Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, “it brings a deep trust in God, whose knowledge is perfect!”²¹ Even in turbulent times, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is gritty and resilient. It helps us sift through unimportant distractions. It encourages us to keep moving along the covenant path. Faith pushes through discouragement and allows us to face the future with resolve and squared shoulders. It prompts us to ask for rescue and relief as we pray to the Father in the name of His Son. And when prayerful pleas seem to go unanswered, our persistent faith in Jesus Christ produces patience, humility, and the ability to reverently utter the words “Thy will be done.”²²

President Russell M. Nelson has taught:

“We do not need to let our fears displace our faith. We can combat those fears by strengthening our faith.

“Start with your children. ... Let them feel your faith, even when sore trials come upon you. Let your faith be focused on our loving Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. ... Teach each precious boy or girl that he or she is a child of God, created in His image, with a sacred purpose and potential. Each is born with challenges to overcome and faith to be developed.”²³

I recently heard two four-year-old children share their faith in Jesus Christ when they responded to the question “How does Jesus Christ help you?” The first child

said, "I know Jesus loves me because He died for me. He also loves grown-ups." The second child said, "He helps me when I'm sad or grumpy. He also helps me when I'm sinking."

Jesus declared, "Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God."²⁴

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."²⁵

Recently, President Nelson promised "that decreased fear and increased faith will follow" as we "begin anew *truly* to hear, hearken to, and heed the words of the Savior."²⁶

Sisters and brothers, our current challenging circumstances are not our final, eternal destination. As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have taken upon us the name of Jesus Christ by covenant. We have faith in His redeeming power and hope in His great and precious promises. We have every reason to rejoice, for our Lord and Savior is keenly aware of our troubles, cares, and sorrows. As Jesus was with His disciples of old, He is in our boat! I testify He has given His life so that you and I will not perish. May we trust Him, obey His commandments, and with faith hear Him say, "Peace, be still."²⁷ In the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.