



Summer Family Reunion

Part 4 – Crazy Boat Ride with Jesus

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Let me ask you a question. Have you ever heard somebody pray and thought, *Oh, man, they're good at that. I feel like they are connected to God. Or, I heard that man pray and I thought why do I even try? Or that amazing woman of God; she voiced that prayer. And I don't know what I'm doing with God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food kind of prayers.* Here's the truth. I think I can say this with assurance in a room like this that 100% of you are going to say yes to this question regardless of your spiritual maturity. Even though 10 of you agreed to move to another service, I think 100% of you will agree with this sentence. If I ask you how many of you want to improve in your prayers, how many of you would say yes? We're all going to say yes regardless of our spiritual maturity. Jesus talked a lot about prayer. He taught a lot about prayer and then he told stories about prayer. One of the most interesting stories about prayer is found over in Luke 18. I want to read it to you, but we are going to jump into Mark 4 & 5 in a minute.

Let me just read you this out of Luke 18: ***Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.*** By the way, we see the message from Jesus in this story right out of the shoot. We don't have to guess what it is like we do guess in this story. ***2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought.*** Those that will only stay in 10:00 neither feared God nor cared about people, right? That's not a good indictment on you, right. You don't want that on your tombstone – They neither feared God nor cared about people. But that's what Jesus says about this guy in this particular story.

3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' I love that Jesus doesn't tell us what the dispute is. Because inquiring minds want to know. If you're like me, you're like, *what was going on and what was the dispute that she needed resolution in.* Jesus doesn't include that. I'm sure Thomas was like, "Hey Jesus, what's the dispute?" and Jesus is like, "It doesn't matter; just listen to the story Thomas." And as we move through this... ***4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"*** She drove him crazy because she wouldn't shut up and she went on and on. All of us know somebody like that, right? Don't look at them now. You know what I'm talking about. You see them coming when you're out on a walk and you'll turn and go the other way. You'll add a mile to your walk to avoid a five-minute conversation with them.

6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. Now, what is the lesson that we need to learn in this story? A lot of times, we read this, and we think the lesson is God will answer me if I use a lot of words. Or if I draw my prayer out... I better pray for hours. But here's what I've found to be true. God actually responds to short prayers. He responds to prayers even when they're short. Nowhere does Jesus say, "Use a lot of words to impress your father." In fact, he says the opposite over in Matthew 6: **7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.** The lesson that Jesus wants us to learn is that there is power in prayers that are persistent even when they are short. They don't have to be long and they don't have to last hours. It can be short and to the point and full of passion. God will hear it and will respond.

Some of you follow me on social media and we have a relationship socially on an app. If you do, you know that about six weeks ago, I lost my mom suddenly. I just want to share with you that I've been in a very reflective state for the last six weeks. My dad is 87 years old. He's 10 years older than my mom, so we thought he would go first, but he's going to outlive all of us, I think. But in this season, I've been thinking about a lot of things in life. One of the things I've been evaluating is my own prayer life. As I've evaluated my own prayer life, I've thought about it and even prayed about it. I've come to the conclusion that Jesus will answer short prayers. I've never heard anybody talk about it, but I think he will answer short prayers.

Let me just call your attention to some of them in scripture. The Lord's Prayer is only 68 words long, the whole prayer. And by the way, the disciples looked at Jesus and knew there was something different about him and they pegged it to his prayer life. I think it's interesting that they didn't say, "Teach us to walk on water." Or "Teach us to raise the dead." Or "Teach us to heal the sick."

They pegged Jesus' life as different because of his connection with the heavenly Father, so they said, "Teach us to pray." And when Jesus taught them to pray, it was only 68 words. Hezekiah's prayer in Isaiah 38 is only 29 words long. By the way, that added 15 years to his life; 29 words added 15 years to his life. The prayer of Jabez is only 30 words long. Paul cast out demons in Acts 16 with only 14 words. Acts 3 – Peter heals a lame man with only 11 words. Now what do all those prayers have in common? They are short. But they are also full of passion, and they reach the very heart of God, not because of long, eloquent speech, but because they meant what they said.

When you're driving a car and somebody pulls right out in front of you and you have to slam on the brakes and all you can say in that moment is, "Jesus." For some of you, that is blasphemy because you just took the name of the Lord in vain, but for many of you, it was a one word prayer because that was what was in your heart. And in that moment, that's all you knew to say in that moment of fear.

Years ago, I was a youth pastor. We had one child at the time. She's 23 and the next one is 21, so somewhere around 21 years ago... because the next one wasn't born yet. She was pregnant with that baby. My in-laws took the one baby for the night and so we went out on a date. She met me at the church where I was on staff. I was a youth pastor at a church in Springdale. It was a big, big church with a big, big campus, like a shopping mall. The parking lot was like 20 of these parking lots here at this church. She picked me up and we went out to eat. She dropped me back off at the church and I got in my car to go home. It was raining. It was dark. As I was getting into my Honda Accord, I got water on my glasses. I was drying them off on my shirt while I was driving in the dark, pulling out of the church

parking lot at 40 mile an hour. It's not as bad as it sounds. It's a really big parking lot. You can get going and there was nobody there, no cross walks, no children, so don't judge me. I'm driving 40 miles an hour in the parking lot to get out of the church parking lot and get home when I hit a light pole. I had no idea what happened. But I hit the light pole and my keys went into my knee joint, ruined my favorite pants. My ankle was badly sprained because it was going 40 miles an hour and then it just stopped on the gas pedal (not the brake pedal, but on the gas pedal). I had a Miss USA bruise across my chest for about six weeks from the seatbelt. That was the last time as a youth pastor that I ever went to a see you at the pole event.

I tell people about that and as I tell people it's not as bad as it sounds, one of buddies was like, "Why? was the pole moving? What do you mean? You hit a pole in a church parking lot." There's a reason I'm telling you this story and it's not so that I look like an idiot. It's so that you hear that in that moment, before I knew what happened... I didn't see the light pole. If I had seen it I would of steered around it. I didn't see it, I had no idea what happened, I just knew the car had stopped and I was in pain. The words that came out of my mouth were, "Jesus, help me." Just "Jesus, help me." Before I knew what happened, before I knew what was going on, just in that moment, "Jesus, help me."

I didn't get out, get on my knees, ask for music to be played in the background, and to say "Lord, I want to begin with worship and I want to confess some sin to you today. And I want to mention the missionaries. I didn't do any of that; I just said, "Jesus, help me" in that moment and he did help me in that moment. I'm just convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt if you want to improve in your prayer life, you don't have to start with long ones. Start with some short ones and pray them on a regular basis and begin to get connected to our heavenly father. So, in a split second in that moment, you find out where your heart really is.

Listen to what James says in Chapter 5: 16 ***The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.*** One translation says "availeth" much." That's the way I memorized that verse. Another translation says it's "powerful and effective." In other words, there's power in prayer even when it's short, when you pray with passion and when you pray on purpose. So, don't spend so much time on it because you think that's what God wants – a lot of words. What God wants is to hear your heart. And he wants you to know his heart.

Now, turn over to Mark 4. I want to show you a story – *a crazy boat ride with Jesus* – where you see this playing out in the life of Jesus. Mark 4: 35 - ***35 That day when evening came...*** Take note of that. It's getting dark. ***he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."*** So, it's night, it's dark, and the disciples are tired because it's the end of the day and they've been working all day. ***37 A furious squall...*** It's not just a storm. There are storms on the sea of galilee all the time, but this one has an adjective It's a furious storm. Some translation say a great storm.

Those of us who live in the area of storms do not like them for them to be referred to as great. In Tulsa last week, we had a great storm – 100 mph winds. It looked like a bomb went off in Tulsa. There were 150,000 people without power all week long. It was a big deal. None of us would call it great, but it was fierce. ***37 A furious squall came up and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.*** It's so fierce that the waves are breaking into the boat and began to fill the boat with water. Now, you've heard before that the Sea of Galilee... Some of you traveled with me to the Sea of Galilee.

By the way you know your family... Don and his wife traveled with me to Israel a few years ago. Yesterday, I'm on Buffalo Ridge Golf Course and Don pulls up with a hat on and he says he's the Marshal. He said, "Quit hitting into that crowd in front of you." And I said, "I haven't hit into them one time." He said, "Don't be saying that you haven't hit into them. They told me you hit into them. Something happened.... I don't know if he saw it in me, but it happened. I started marching toward him and said, "I don't know what they are saying, but they are liars; let's go talk to them. Then I saw it was him. That's when you know you're in the family.

But we've been to the Sea of Galilee. You should go with me. I'm going in January. But the Sea of Galilee sits in a basin 680 feet below sea level, surrounded on three sides by mountain ranges that are as high as 2,000 feet above sea level. So, when the air from the cold mountain up at 2,000 feet, descends onto that dry, warm air on the top of that sea, collision happens. When you are in a place of the country like I live in Tulsa, Oklahoma, you know exactly what happens when cold air meets hot air. A storm can come out of nowhere. We walk out of our doors at night, and you know it, you know it when you know it when you see it – it's green outside. You're like, "It's about to get wicked.

But even when you see a storm coming in life or it surprises you in the middle of the night, the punch that it delivers is still the same. Now, what was Jesus doing in the midst of this storm. Let's look at what Jesus was doing. **38 Jesus was in the stern** (back of the boat), **sleeping on a cushion**. One of you study that for me and send me what that means about the cushion. How would you sleep without a cushion? I'm not sure. But I travel with my pillows. In fact, my friends call one of them "my friend."

But he's got a cushion and he is asleep. The disciples are scared, the storm is raging, the boat is creaking, it's about to fall apart is what it feels like, and here is Jesus taking a nap, out like a light. **The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"** You should underline that question in your Bible. It's amazing to me what, in that moment, the disciples became certain of and what they became uncertain of. And isn't that what happens to us in the middle of a storm? They were certain they were going to drown. We know they didn't, but they were certain they were going to drown. And they were uncertain as to whether or not God cared.

Isn't that amazing what happens to us in those moments. The reality in their minds was they were about to die. And that belief had lodged its way in their brains. And like a snake, it had wrapped its self around their souls and it was affecting their belief and it was choking out their ability to believe in the goodness of Jesus Christ.

So, picture this. the disciples are freaking out, Jesus is asleep, they wake him up, he kind of stretches and rubs his eyes, finally he feels the rock of the boat, and says, "shh." And the storm stops. Then he lays his head back on the pillow and goes to sleep. It's freaky. In that moment it is freaky. In fact, look at what he says. **39 He got up, rebuked the wind...** Now, don't miss this because we kind of tie these things together. I hadn't seen this before, but I want you to see that before he spoke to the waves, he rebuked the wind. What's the application? He's rebuking the cause. He's rebuking the spirit behind the storm. He's speaking to the symptoms. He's not focused on the symptoms. By the way, we spend all of our energy on the symptoms. Jesus knew what the cause was, and he rebuked the cause and then he spoke to the symptoms. Now watch. **...and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!"** Two words in the Greek. One is in the present, one is in the imperfect, which means a present reality with ongoing affect.

In other words, he said, "Be quiet and stay quiet" Which is a weird thing to say to the weather. But what's even weirder is that it obeyed in that moment. And you watch this play out. In fact, Tim Keller says this, "*Here we see the prerogative of nature bowing to the prerogative of God, which takes away the ability for you to read a story about Jesus and evaluate whether you like it or not. He's Lord whether you like it or not. Jesus as the creator speaks to the creation and the creation obeys him because it's created by him.*"

Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. 40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" 41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Then Jesus turns to his disciples and basically says, "Seriously? I don't care? What do you mean I don't care? Where have you been? When are you going to stop doubting and start believing. And the disciples are looking at one another going, "Who is this man?" I think some of them begin to know in that moment who this man is. Maybe a few had suspected it before, but I think some of them are having a conversation on the back of the boat saying, "The weather obeys him. I know it's crazy, I know it's outlandish, but do you think that this Jesus is somehow God?" Because in that moment, he didn't just calm the sea, he calmed their doubts and he cleared up their faith. They knew Psalm 89 says, "God is the one who rules the raging sea." And they just watched it live and in person. They knew who they were dealing with now.

God answers prayers. Even short ones. Even in a short prayer, Jesus will reveal his power. He demonstrated his ability over nature and nature itself bowed to him. But when you and I are in the middle of a storm, it feels like all we can see is the storm. There are moments where we just can't get our head above water. And let me just say to you the only thing more scary than a storm that can kill you is the one who can control the storm that can kill you. He has complete control over every aspect of our world. If he can calm a sea with waves that crest at 100 feet and wind that blow at 100 miles an hour, he can take care of whatever you're facing today. Whatever storm you are walking through today, he can handle it.

But if it wasn't enough, the crazy boat ride with Jesus continues and they arrive at the other side of the lake and they see this dude who is naked, wrapped in chains, screaming, running right at them. Let's look at it. Mark 5: 3 – ***3 This man lived in the tombs...*** You're in big trouble when you live in a graveyard or you're a meth addict. ***...and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.*** They regularly put him in chains, which means they knew him, they knew his name, they knew his parents, they knew what school he went to, but one day something got into him. He could no longer be restrained. What does that mean. One day he could be restrained and one day they could control him, but now they could not control him. Why? Because what he is messing with is now controlling him. He was playing with something that ended up playing with him.

That happens to us. We think we are in control of something that ends up controlling us all together.

4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.

5 Night and day, among the tombs and in the hills, he would cry out and cut himself with stones. If one of the disciples had an iPhone in that moment, this video would have gone viral. You and I would be sharing with the hashtag # nekkid. We wouldn't say naked because this is happening in a graveyard. The redneck naked is nekkid. This is playing out right in front of them like a scene right out of live PD. This man falls at the feet of Jesus and then Jesus again, prays this short prayer. **8 For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!"** The word *evil* is unclean, which means something impure got into him. When we embrace things that are unclean, we don't turn them clean, they get on us. Even if you are a blood bought believer in Jesus, a child of God, you can still get something dirty on you. And you have to be careful because this type of unclean spirit is real and in the world today.

Now, what does Jesus do? He doesn't just reveal his power. Watch this. Jesus reveals his purpose even in short prayers. Again, get the picture. The disciples had ridden all day. They got in the boat, this huge storm happens. You have to think this is going to be the story for the week. But then they get to the dock, they get out the boat and demon possessed naked man is running right at them. I wouldn't blame any of them for thinking, *I'm getting back in the boat.* But Jesus, at all times, is about his purpose. He saw a man who was spiritually bound. He stopped what he was doing, reached out to set him free. Why? Because it was his purpose. He came to set us free, and I need you to hear me today. If your purpose lines up with the purpose of Jesus, you don't have to convince him. All you have to do is ask him. A short prayer will do. And Jesus sets this man free, and they left there. They get back in the boat. The boat ride continues. By now, the disciples are like, "Whatever, Jesus. Whatever you say, whatever you want just say the word and we'll follow."

They get to the other side and another man runs up to Jesus and bows at his feet. The second man in one narrative to bow at the feet of Jesus. And what you see is that both the demon possessed man and the ruler of the synagogue need Jesus. And they both bow at the feet of Jesus. They both understood his power and his authority, and they acted on it. This man's name is Jairus, and he needs Jesus, in the story. Look at it, Mark 5: 22 - **22 Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. 23 He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying.** In the Greek, it says "My little daughter is at the point of death. What a terrible string of words to have to put together. "My daughter is at the point of death." It's a horrible reality for this man. **...Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."** "She's almost dead Jesus and all you need to do is lay your hand on her. I believe you can do it." And what's amazing is Jesus says, "Let's go. **24 So Jesus went with him.**

They start on that journey and on that journey, on the way to save the little girl, Mark just starts describing the medical condition of a lady who has been sick for 12 years. If you're like me, ADD, you're reading that and going, "What's happening, Mark? They are on the way to save this little girl. Why are you telling us the medical condition of this lady who approached Jesus?" It's unbelievable. It's like, "You're messing up the drama here, Mark. Move on with the story. Does the girl live?" But he begins describing this lady. And this lady comes to him, and Jesus stops and says, "Who touched me?" The disciples are like, "What are you talking about? There's a whole crowd here. Everybody touched you." Jesus is like, "No, there's one who touched." And sure enough, there was a woman who had been sick

for 12 years with an issue of blood with no doctor and no medicine and no treatment could cure her. Jesus stops on his way to this little girl. He stops. Why? To show his priorities. Even when he's busy about the business of creating or spinning the world into motion or directing world events, he's not too busy to stop and listen to you.

She says, "I've got this thing that's been bothering me for 12 years and Jesus says, "Today, you are healed. Your faith in me did that." I think maybe she was in danger of some shallow relationship with Jesus where she tried everything for 12 years and she's just going to tag Jesus on too. " Maybe that will work. I'll just touch his garment." Jesus is like, "You can't do that. You need to understand it's your faith in me that did that." And he stopped to make sure that she understood that his priorities were evident that day.

Look what happens in Verse 35. **35 While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"** I don't know if you do this when you read the Bible, but I do this. I try to imagine each of the disciples' reaction. I think James just kind of turned and looked away; he couldn't watch. Maybe Thaddeus put his hand over his mouth because he couldn't believe it. Can you imagine the face of the messenger who is delivering this news? Can you imagine the stare that Jairus may have given Jesus at that moment. "We were on our way and you stopped. You could have done something about this, Jesus." But Jesus doesn't miss a beat. Look at Verse 36 - **36 Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."** It's not in the text. This is not thus sayeth God. This is thus sayeth Alex; you don't have to write it down, but I think that Jesus may have insinuated you need to have faith like her and pointed at that woman. "You need to have faith just like her in the story you just watched with your eyes." He wanted her to know that her faith was not just random. It was her faith in him that healed her, and he wanted to see faith in Jesus, in the flesh, in front of his eyes before he took him to his daughter's house.

Now, track with me because when he shows up at the girl's house, Mark makes note of the prayer. He writes it down word for word. In fact, he tells it to us in two different languages so that we don't miss it – English and Hebrew. In Verse 41, he says, **41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").** In the Greek, by the way, two words. Maybe the shortest prayer ever. "Get up." And it worked for Jesus. Even short prayers can reveal the power of Jesus, can reveal the purpose of Jesus, and they can reveal the priority of Jesus.

I want to show you this today, that what appeared to be callous, almost negligent, in the form of delay, led to the very same question the disciples had in that boat. Jesus, don't you care? Because in the middle of the crisis, it's amazing what we've become certain of and what we've become uncertain of. Jairus just wanted the healing of his little girl but he got to see her raised from the dead. That woman just wanted a little bit of healing, but she got an audience with the King of Kings.

Here's the truth. What we settle for sometimes is the power of God on display. We just want the power of God to be on display when he wants to demonstrate his purpose and his priorities. He's not content with simply displaying his power or putting it on display. He's completely committed to his purpose and his priority. And it doesn't take the right prayer all drawn out, it can be short prayers, prayed with

passion and persistence. So, I just want to lead you in three prayers today, three short prayers. Really want to have three response times today.

There is a section of you here today who have come, and you don't have a relationship with Jesus. You don't know him yet. Can I say to you, "We're so glad you're here, even at 10:00. In fact, 10:00 was built for you so that you could come into a relationship intimately with Jesus. If that's you today, would you just pray this prayer: "God, save me." You can add whatever other words you want, but that's enough. Just say, "God, save me." If you prayed that prayer today for the first time in your life, at the end of the service, we are going to have men and women standing here at the front. They'll have lanyards on to indicate they are a part of the Prayer Team. They would like to know that you prayed that prayer. They would like to encourage you in your new relationship with Jesus Christ and help you along the way in that journey.

There's another group here today and your heart has been a bit rebellious to the Lord. A few weeks ago, on easter, we had this family over to the house. They have a baby that is 1 ½ . her name is Eva Kate. You've heard me talk about Eva Kate before because we kind of feel like Eva Kate is ours because they struggled with infertility for years. We prayed this baby into this world. So, we have this relationship with Eva Kate. She comes in my office between services on Sunday and gets in the candy jars and just kind of takes over. I'm sitting in my chair next to the screen door to the back porch. She walks by on Easter Sunday at lunch time. As she's going out the door, her Momma says, "Eva Kate, don't go outside, stay inside. Eva Kate said, "No." I looked up... My kids are older; I have some parenting advice.

She said, "You don't say no to mommy." And Eva Kate turned and said, "I say no to you." I've repeated that phrase 10,000 times. On a regular basis, my wife will ask me to do something, and it's I say no to you. Every time I see Eva Kate's mom and dad, it's I say no to you, like I'm rubbing it in.

We may not say it to our heavenly Father like that. As cute as that is in the life of a 1 ½ year old, it's not cute in the life of a believer, with our heavenly Father. And maybe we don't say it out loud, but we say it. And the way that we live and the way that we believe and the way that we think and the places we go, and maybe just as a confession today, your short prayer just needs to be, "I say yes." It's amazing what that prayer will do in your life. With your heavenly Father, for you just to, on a regular basis, say, "Lord, I say yes." Not long. But it's powerful.

There's another group of you and actually what you need to do is see the power of God on display in your life today. You've committed to his purpose and you've committed to his priorities, but what you need today is his power and you need healing. It may be physical, it may be spiritual, it may be emotional, it may be relational, it may be financial, but you need healing. If that's you today, would you, just as a moment of confession, would you just stand up. I want to lead you in prayer. I need healing, in one way or another, just stand up. Wherever you are, just stand up. It's amazing to me that several people stand together on a regular basis. I need healing. If you're standing, would you, just with faith, pray this short prayer. Just say, "God, heal me." He can do that. He's that big, he's that powerful, he's that good, and he can do that today. Would you just pray that prayer, in whatever words you want.

If you are seated next to somebody who's standing, would you just stand up and put your hand on their shoulders and just echo the prayer. Just pray over them, "God, heal them."

There is something about a midst where two or three gather together. There's something about that. Jesus says, "There I am in the midst of them." I don't know why he loves a midst, but he loves a midst. So, would you just make it a midst around each of these who were standing and just put your hands on them. In fact, if you are seated near them, around them, would you just turn and just look at them with faith. Whatever faith God gives you, would you pray over your church family and say, "God, would you please heal them today."

Could we all join them standing together today across the room.

Father, today, we love you. We thank you for meeting us today. We thank you for using us today, we thank you for loving us today. In Jesus' name we pray, and together we all say... Amen.