

Know Him, Know Yourself

Just then he cut the motor, its sure hum suddenly gone. We heard the loud slap of waves against the side and the mad flapping of the canvas window covers. No one dared speak. All of us looked at Saia or stared blankly outside, our souls in turmoil like the sea. Was there something drastically wrong? We were dead in the water, at the mercy of the churning sea all around us. What could Saia possibly be thinking? Why would he cut the engine at such a critical time? Trying to sound calm and controlled I asked him.

He did not reply in words, but stooped and pointed through the windscreen to a swell bearing down upon us. It was by far larger than anything we had yet encountered. As it moved closer I could see how huge it was, rearing up as it neared, and for a moment I thought we would be completely covered. Saia cranked on the wheel -- for despite our dead engine we still had momentum -- forcing the bow to turn away from the giant wall of water that was upon us. Our precarious boat floated up with the swell and rode smoothly over the top before sliding down the other side. Some of us watched the great rolling bank of sea continue on behind as it sped across the surface, as though seeking out others, less well prepared, to overwhelm.

This all happened in an instant. As soon as the great swell had passed Saia began to speak. It took me a second to realize he was addressing me and answering my question. He explained that he had stopped the motor when he saw that our best chance would be to float over the swell with as little forward movement as possible. His explanation was born of years of sea-going experience. Here was a man who could not drive a car or even ride a bicycle, didn't have the benefit of modern education or any kind of technical training, yet in that moment, as the waves continued to slap angrily against the boat and I held fast to the cabin roof, I was *not afraid*. From an unspoken part of my consciousness I knew it would be all right with Saia at the helm.

The gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus wanted to get away from the crowd and go to the other side of the lake. Perhaps he was so tired that he just had to put his head on a pillow and sleep. The disciples seemed confident with him aboard, although they may have hesitated to leave shore so close to sundown. He slept in the stern, on a cushion. Things started to kick up a bit, still they sailed on. Only when the boat began to swamp, only when things were out of their control, did they call to him. After calming the storm He seemed to be so confident of the outcome that he put his head back on the pillow and again rested. I imagine the boat had to be rowed the rest of the way, what with no wind. Yet they were in awe of the one they carried.

Jesus calming the wind and waves: it's a metaphor of how he can calm the storms of our lives, yes. The boat is a symbol of the church carried safely through rough waters, calmed by our Lord. (The area in sanctuary where congregation sits is called the "nave" as in navy - nautical term.)

But prior to this metaphor, and more important, is this illustration of who He is. It says the disciples ". . . were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'"

They knew the Old Testament tradition telling of how God formed the earth, created the wind and waves; of how the Spirit of God moved over the waters of chaos to bring order. [God stills raging waters and prophets still storms (Jonah 1:15 "Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard,

and the raging sea grew calm.")] The Almighty - the One who created wind and waves; the One who can still the storm is standing in their boat! As he looked upon their stupified faces no wonder Jesus asked, "why are you afraid?" don't you know who I am? In those moments they began to know him as the living embodiment of the Sovereign of the universe. God stepped into human history in Jesus, who had the power to command wind and waves, and the power to call people to himself.

Canute, one of the Danish kings of England in the 10th century, had his throne brought to the seashore, where he could prove to his retainers that he was *not* divine, as some insisted. Sitting there he commanded the tide to roll back. It did not. Canute knew who he was, and who he was not.

Jesus knew who he was. He can say "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" because He rose from death and He carries the power of the Almighty. At his baptism his Heavenly Father had validated him, "This is my son in whom I am well pleased." Over the years we've often tried to make him into someone other than who he really is. We've tried to make him the embodiment of the all around "nice guy;" always there when you need him to wipe away a tear or put an arm around you in comfort. We forget that you don't get crucified for being a nice guy. He's actually rippling with power and is dangerous, a bit scary, oh yes, but good.

Before he can calm the storms that assail us, we must know His true identity. He's the One who can shape our identity. Who are you really? Who really do you belong to? Are you seeking validation from a parent, your spouse, your career, your hobby, your possessions, or your addiction? If you belong to any of those things you will still be searching for your true identity. If you belong to the Almighty, if you are in the company of the bravehearts with Christ, then your identity is made clear. We were all originally made in the image of the Almighty One; an image we can see fully in Jesus.

The power and wisdom in Jesus was born of His identity with our Heavenly Father. It is noteworthy, as we celebrate Father's Day, that Jesus called God "Abba" - Father - Papa. We cannot escape that. He understood himself as "the Son" of his heavenly Father. This is no accident. In Him human fatherhood has an example, a mentor, and model.

Whether you are a biological father or not, you have a role as a father in this church. "Men need a sacred role, one only they can fulfill. Fortunately, God gave men such a role. God calls every man to become a spiritual father. . . . It's a role that's not well understood because, like the Trinity, it's more implied than spelled out in Scripture. But the example of Jesus and the apostle Paul are clear; spiritual fathering is the only way to bring believers to maturity in Christ."¹

Boys can be taught to be true men only by other true men. Men must show boys that Christianity is not a threat to masculinity, but a fulfillment of manhood and responsible fatherhood. The purpose of the church is not to be a clinging mother. Girls need the example of strong, upright, and godly men in their lives to help them grow into free and faithful womanhood. Christian fathers should instruct their sons and daughters, primarily by example. *So I am asking each one of the men here to be regular in your church attendance and when you are here, participate, listen carefully, focus so that you can teach what is right to our children.* Surveys over the years have shown that fathers are the number one influence in the family in regard to church attendance and participation for both boys and girls. Fathers should lead family prayers and read the Bible, and take the lead in getting the family to church. The second thing I ask of all the men and women here is this: help me build a church where men - especially the younger men - really feel

¹David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2005), 215.

welcomed.

Knowing who *He* is gives us guidance for life:

1. *Know who you are.* Jesus said, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6); "I am the good shepherd" (10:11). Christ knew who he was! Before we can help others find themselves, we must know who we are. I know who I am by knowing *whose* I am. I am a son of the Living God. I was put on earth not by accident but for a purpose. Because God put you here, you are significant. We must know this so that we can help children discover this truth. So many lives wander in confusion and mediocrity when they do not know this basic principle of identification.

2. *Know where you are going.* Jesus said, ". . . for I know where I came from and where I am going" (John 8:14). By faith Abraham ". . . was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Heb. 11:10). You need to know the direction you're headed with your life. This isn't our final home - we're headed for our eternal home with God our Father and there are battles to be fought, adventures to enjoy before we get there, so we better keep our direction sure. Others are counting on us to know the way.

3. *Know what you are supposed to accomplish.* Unless you set priorities in your life, you'll be pressured by what other people think is important. Every day you either live by priorities or by pressures; there is no other option. Remember our priority in God's plan is to grow people, a task of eternal significance. In each and every encounter we have with children, be they in our own family or our church's family, we plant seeds of salvation; seeds of eternal significance.

In His company Jesus gave His disciples their true identity. Peter he named "the rock." James and John Zebedee, he called "the sons of thunder." These aren't shrinking violet kinds of names. He has names for each one of us who remain true, who belong to Him; true names, not names the world gives us, but solid names (Rev. 3:12), with the power of his purpose. Psalm 139 makes clear that we were personally, uniquely planned and created, knit together in our mother's womb by God himself. He had someone in mind when he made us and he has a name in mind for us.

He is calling us sons and daughters of the Most High and co-adventurers on a great quest: the salvation of the world. Yes, the mission is that big. What's your part in that big mission? Find your identity in Him, your true name, and you'll find your true purpose. True purpose is what brings you through the storms of life.