

## You Asked For It...Purpose Under Pressure!

Mark 4:35-41

July 28, 2019

Most of us have probably never experienced the kind of boat ride the disciples had that evening with Jesus. The ride started off smooth. Jesus fell asleep. No problem letting Jesus sleep on the job when it's smooth sailing.

But, let the winds pick up. Let the white caps start breaking over the bow and the boat start taking on water. **"WAKE UP JESUS!!!"**

And follow that up with that lame brain question from the panicked disciples:

***"Don't you even care that we are about to die?"***

Jesus brings the boat ride back to calm waters and then has his own questions for the disciples, ***"Why are you such cowards? Don't you have any faith at all?"***

The disciples are shocked and amazed that Jesus calmed the storm and got them through it.

I don't know about you but I have never had a boat ride or a cruise quite like that one. However, I have had flights on a plane that were similar. The flight was not smooth and uneventful.

It was near the end of this particular flight that I discovered a great lesson of faith...God will get me through it.

The flight started out like I hoped it would. I had a window seat and the weather was sunny and clear. I am still amazed that a big piece of machinery can get off the ground smoothly in less than 30 seconds. The buildings and ground grew smaller as the captain informed us we would be climbing to 40,000 feet. I try not to think how high that is as I enjoy the view.

The plane leveled off...the snacks and beverages were handed out by the flight attendants. The captain flipped the switch in the cockpit and the flight attendant announced after the "bing" that the "FASTEN YOUR SEATBELT" sign has been turned off and you are free to move about the cabin.

I like it when that "FASTEN YOUR SEATBELT" sign is turned off. Of course I like it so I can get up and go check out the spacious bathroom. More importantly I like it off because it indicates there is smooth flying ahead.

I was enjoying my cookies and coffee and the amazing view out the window when I heard the "bing" sound again. The flight attendant told us that the captain had turned on the "FASTEN YOUR SEATBELT" sign and that we were no longer free to move about the cabin.

There was some turbulence ahead and for our own safety we needed to remain in our seats with our seatbelt fastened. I didn't sign up for minor turbulence. However, I'd been through some minor turbulence before so I was good.

So I thought...the captain himself, came on the speaker system and told the flight attendants that they were to discontinue service and take their seats and buckle their seat belts.

I don't know about you but I have flown enough to know that when the flight attendants are told to go to their seats we are in for a rough ride.

The next announcement from the cockpit was that we were going to be in for a rough ride. Ground control had informed the captain that it would last about 15 minutes. Ground control was spot on!

The sunny clear view out the window suddenly became dark, cloudy, flashes of lightning and rain.

It was interesting to watch how people handle the real pressure moments of flying. There are the death grips of white knuckles on the armrests.

Others grab the arm of the loved one or friend next to them. Some are reaching for one of these (hold up a "barf bag") This is not a souvenir gift bag. It is a convenient collection container for whatever snack you recently enjoyed!

As the plane started bucking like a wild horse I closed my eyes and talked to the PILOT. Not the one in the cockpit. Then I imagined, that instead of being 40,000 feet in the midst of a storm, that instead, I was riding along a bumpy back country road.

When I opened my eyes and looked around I noticed that some passengers were actually able to sleep through the storm. I wanted to wake them up and ask them if they were Jesus! Or to ask, "Don't you even care that we could crash?"

It was almost 15 minutes to the second when the rough ride stopped, the sun appeared in the window, and the "Fasten your seatbelt" sign was turned off. We had made it through the turbulence and about an hour later we landed at our destination.

Anyone ever experienced one of those kinds of flights?

What about our daily "flights" in life?

There are days we take off in the morning and our whole day goes just the way we wanted...smooth and sunny.

The "fasten your seatbelt" sign is off and we are free to move about life as we want and desire.

We really are not thinking too much about the pilot of our lives... Jesus. We click on autopilot and give him a break. We've got this!

Sometimes that attitude in life, that flight in life, can be more turbulent or dangerous...Just let Jesus sleep...I got this!

Then there are days that start out as planned and suddenly we find ourselves in some minor turbulence. The "fasten your seatbelt" sign is on and we are in for a few bumps. Nothing major! We've been there, done that before.

However, we all have been on those flights in life where the flight attendants take their seats, the skies grow threatening, and life gets rough. We have no idea how long it will last. It is then we get the disciples cry..."WAKE UP JESUS! I NEED YOU NOW!" And we too ask that ridiculous, rough road in life question, *"Don't you even care about what I'm going through here?"*

How do you handle the pressure? How do you get through the rough rides of life?

Can Jesus do anything to help us in the midst of the raging seas or the turbulent times in life? Does He have something to offer us besides a "snack souvenir collection bag?"

Is there a purpose for the pressures and rough times in our lives? There is!

Through out the scriptures we find the people of God experienced rough, turbulent flights in life. We find different ways the people responded. In each scenario, we find a God, who is there with His people, and who will bring purpose to their lives, if they will call upon Him and trust His guidance through the storms.

Jeremiah, the prophet, spoke such a promise to the people of God in exile. It is a promise we can apply to our rough rides as well. Their rough ride was to last 70 years! He came over the faith speaker system and shared these words from God:

***"For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:11-13 NIV)***

God did not forget about his people, even though they were in captivity in Babylon. He planned to get them through this rough storm with a purpose. The purpose in the pressure was to give the people a new beginning with a new purpose in life.

In times of pressure we can freak out and cry out whether or not God even cares about us. We can think he has forgotten us, fallen asleep on us, and we are left to our own demise. But God told the people to do what?

Call on him...Pray! He will listen. Seek God in the pressure moments of life with all your heart.

It is often in the pressure moments of life that God will use them to encourage us to cry out to him from our hearts. He has a plan and a purpose. What that is often is only revealed when we humble ourselves and truly seek him with all our heart. We may not have ground control telling us how long this turbulence might last. We do have a God who is riding through the storm with us and will get us to our final destination with a purpose.

Isaiah the prophet echoed this promise with these words from God to the people going through some pressure times:

***"Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you. I've called your name. You're mine!"***

***When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you.***

***When you're in rough waters, you will not go down.***

***When you're between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end---***

***Because I am God, your personal God..."*** (Isaiah 43:1-3a  
Message bible)

This promise was given to the people during a turbulent time in their lives. They were in a foreign land feeling forgotten by God. They were wondering if God even cared about them? How long would the storm last? They sought a renewal of relationship with God. This promise, this word from God, was just what they needed to hold on to during the pressure time in their lives. He kept His promise and delivered them to their final destination.

Going through difficult waters in life, pressures of life, will either cause you to drown in self-pity, or will give you a strength to get through with God at your side.

Often the purpose of pressure times in life is to draw us closer to God and to make us stronger in our faith and walk with Jesus. We are to stay in touch daily with God's promises, His Word. We are to draw near to him with our humbled hearts...no matter what the day may bring.

That had to be humiliating for the disciples to have Jesus call them **"cowards in their faith!"** Ouch!

"Don't worry, I have a plan and purpose for you..." are not easy words to snack on when the boat you are in is taking on water and the future looks bleak. The question we ask ourselves is, "What do we do, or focus on, in the pressure moments in life?"

Is our focus or gaze on the turbulence or the one with us? To focus on the rough waters we get anxious and wonder, "Why me? What can I do?"

To focus on Jesus daily, with faith, reminds us that there is a purpose in the midst of all this pressure. We are to listen daily to the voice of God. He will see us through.

I would like to think that the disciples looked back on that pressure moment and it helped to get them through some of the other pressure times in their lives. They could look back and remember that God kept his promise to see them through.

James, the half brother of Jesus, a disciple, understood this purpose and promise when he wrote:

**"Blessed is the person who perseveres under trial (pressures), because when they have stood the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."** (James 1:12 NIV)

God's crown of life is not about here and now. It is the final destination of life forever with God on the other side. He promises to those who persevere in their faith to see them safely to the shore of His kingdom. No matter the pressure, His purpose is to see us through to our final destination....life eternal with Him.

In the pressures of this life we are encouraged to persevere. We don't usually think of the pressures of life to be good for us. However, they can build our character and our patience and strengthen our faith. It is often during the times of stress and pressure that we sense God's presence more clearly and discover He is with us. We look back on the past turbulent flights of life and realize that He has made something good out of it because of our putting our trust and faith in Him. (Romans 8:28)

God is fully aware of our pressured lives. He has called us by name. He has redeemed us. He has bought us back from sin through Jesus' death on the cross. No one saw the purpose of Jesus' death...they only experienced fear. But when Jesus was raised from the dead there was a plan and purpose of God that no storm has been able to destroy.

***"Long before He laid down the earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ."*** (Ephesians 1:4-5 Message bible)

God's purpose for us all along has been to be whole and holy in His love...salvation! No matter the rough water, the turbulent flight, the pressures of life...God's purpose, His love for us, is still the same! He desires us to love Him with all of our heart and to be guided by His presence daily...no matter what the day may bring.

I realize that whatever future airline flights I may book, I am not guaranteed a smooth sunny flight.

I realize that each day I wake up and step out into the day, I am not guaranteed smooth sailing or a pressure-free day.

However, I know that no matter what pressures may come my way, I am not alone. God is with me and will get me through it, no matter how long the storm may last.

Challenge:

When you hear or see an airplane flying overhead, let it be a visible reminder to you that God, Your Pilot, is right there with you in your daily flight. When your life gets pressured with turbulence, He is there to get you through the storm's pressures with a purpose.