

1  **In the Midst of the Storm**

Psalm 46:1-3 NLT

2  **God is our refuge and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble. ² So
we will not fear when earthquakes come and the
mountains crumble into the sea. ³ Let the oceans
roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the
waters surge!**

Psalm 46:1-3 NLT

3  **Not long after we arrived in the Philippines we
experienced our first strong typhoon.**

- It was July of 2001 – the middle of rainy season.
- Typhoons weren't unusual – an average of 26 struck each year.
- But this was the first to come directly towards Baguio City.
- The rain started coming down in buckets.
 - Soon the hills beside our home were cascading water falls.
 - The ditches became gushing streams.
 - Fascinated, 9 and 6 year old Chris and Ben wanted to go out and play in the water.
 - It looked like the log ride at Six Flags.

4  **Soon the power went off.**

- We looked outside at trees bent by the wind.
- The terrific wind howled and sometimes screamed.
- The rain poured down for almost 3 days straight.
- We sat in the dark at night, using candles and the glow of our fireplace for light.
- Instead of TV for entertainment, we took turns reading Harry Potter by firelight.

5  **When we could finally go outside, we were**

stunned by the devastation.

- Hillsides had collapsed with the rain.
- Two people in our neighborhood had died when a mud slide covered their home.
 - homes made of thin wood and corrugated steel, built on flimsy foundations couldn't withstand the constant rain, the soaked earth, and the violent wind.
 - As is often the case, it was the poor who often suffer the most at such times.
- After five days power was restored and things began to go back to normal.
- But after living through such a storm, you're never quite the same.

6 **Most of us have been touched by calamity in one way or another.**

- Just before we moved here in 2008, Moline was blasted with straight line winds of 100 mph that toppled trees and tore off roofs.
- As a boy growing up on the gulf coast of Texas, I still have the vivid memory of looking out the back door of my neighborhood friend's garage.
- On the horizon was a twister inching along.
- What did I do? I made a bee-line for home 5 houses away.
- All I could think was I wanted to go home!

7 **When I was 3 or 4, Hurricane Carla struck the Texas coast as a category 5 storm with winds in excess of 175 mph.**

- Our family drove north toward Nagadoches to escape the storm.
- We arrived on a Saturday night, and stayed in a motel.
- But, of course we were in church on Sunday morning.
 - Nothing – not even a Category 5 hurricane - could

make my parents miss church. If it was Sunday or Wednesday, we were at church.

- The pastor of the First Baptist Church, Nagadoches introduced us to the congregation as “refugees from Port Arthur”.
- My 12 year old brother as a pre-teen was mortified!

8 **There’s something “just not right” about such storms.**

- It’s as if nature has totally lost control.
- Our world – so beautiful at times – can also be a terrifying place.
- In our gut we know this is not the world as it was intended to be.
 - But the world crumpled and twisted by raw power.
 - One is apt to wonder, “Where is God in the midst of all this?”

9 **On one hand some say “No where.”**

- Such calamities are reason for protest against God or denying his existence.
- If God is all powerful and all good, how could he allow such blind destruction.

10 **Eric Zorn, an unabashed, agnostic wrote in the Chicago Tribune following the Tsumami of December, 2004.**

11 **Did the tsunami reflect the will of God? Or was God powerless to stop it? If it was God’s will, what moral lessons can we possibly accept from that impiety (God), for whom individual life is evidently expendable? Why isn’t constant fear the only sensible attitude towards such a Being? Either way, what does it mean to trust God and have faith in God, when in seconds on a sunny day a crashing wave from the deep can snatch loved**

ones from our arms and drown them?

12  **So here's the question we ask today: Where is God in the midst of the storm? Jesus would say, "He is with us".**

- The same letters that spell "nowhere" also spell "now here".
- Though this answer seems incomplete and not wholly satisfying, this is God's answer.
- Here's the simple truth: God never promised us immunity from the calamities of life – whether people of faith or not, whether good or bad – as Jesus put it – "the rain falls on the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).
- Jesus himself experienced the unfairness of life.
- But this He did promise: he promised to be with us always with unfailing love.
- He promises to be with us through the storms of life.

13  **God did not even spare himself from such disasters when he came as a man to live among us.**

- When a storm raged around the tiny boat on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples cried out in terror to Jesus – who of all things was asleep in the boat.
- That's blows me away! (no pun intended).
- That's astounds me in several ways.
 - First of all I think – incredible – what a sound sleeper! I can't even imagine staying asleep in the midst of such a squall.
 - Second – I think – what a metaphor for life. All hell is breaking loose, and we naturally assume that God is absent or asleep or nowhere – certainly not caring for me.
- But then we find that God is present – he is now here.
 - To get back to Jesus awakened in the boat, and

perhaps to pull the curtain back a bit on God's constant love and power, Jesus commands the wind and waves to be still and they obey!

- Jesus' words and actions provide a glimpse forward, to a world and kingdom that is coming, and will one day fully come.
- A world where all things, even the violence of nature, is fully healed and restored.

14 **But in this life, there is no guarantee of immunity from calamity. The disciples asked Jesus about a recent disaster. Jesus replied,**

15 **Luke 13:4-5 NLT ⁴ And what about the eighteen people who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them? Were they the worst sinners in Jerusalem?⁵ No, and I tell you again that unless you repent, you will perish, too.**

16 **What's Jesus saying?**

- We tend to want to find some reason – some cause and effect – for bad things that happen.
- And, in the Old Testament, to be sure, we find that sometimes God did punish people through disasters for their evil.
- We all remember the story of Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by a hail of fire and brimstone. Yet there is no simple correlation that always applies.
- Jesus says "no" – there's no cause and effect relationship, no good karma, bad karma arrangement that guides everything.
- Bad stuff happens to us all and we wonder why. Why? It's part of living in a world that is broken and bent by sin – distorted and disfigured through and through by our original fall – even to the level of nature.
- Adam and Eve's sin not only effected them. It's effected all of us – indeed all of nature.

- 17 **Here's the hard truth: We will all suffer – no control over that.**
- Here's the hard truth: We all start to die even from the moment we are born. No control over that.
 - But Jesus says there is something we CAN do. Something we do have a choice in: TURNING TO HIM.
 - It's called repentance.
- 18 **We tend to live as if we have lots of time.**
- We tend to live as if we can put off turning to God, and getting our life right.
 - But the fact is none of us know that.
 - We play Russian Roulette with time, thinking we'll always have a little more of it.
 - Yet, none of us is guaranteed another day of life.
- 19 **The Psalmist wrote, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."
Psalm 90:12 NIV**
- 20 **Have you heard of the little book, Tuesdays with Morrie? This little book is the story of an old man, Morrie Schwartz, a young man, Mitch Albom and life's greatest lessons.**
- Morrie Schwartz was for many years a teacher at Brandise University.
 - He contracted ALS – Lou Gehrig's disease which is a slow and painful way to die.
 - But Morrie determined he would not be ashamed of death.
 - He would face it bravely and triumphantly.
- 21 **Ted Koppel did a TV interview with Morrie. And Mitch Albom, the former students, saw the interview and reestablished relations with his old and treasured teacher.**

- They met together on Tuesdays and discussed life and death.
- On one of their Tuesdays, Morrie said to Mitch, "Everyone knows they're going to die but nobody believes it.
- If we did, we would do things differently."
- "So we kid ourselves about death," he said.

22 **"Yes, But there's a better approach. To know you're going to die, and to be prepared for it at anytime. That's better. That way you'll actually be more involved in your life while you're living."**

- "How can you ever be prepared to die?" Mitch asked.
- Then Morrie offered this suggestion. "Have a little bird on your shoulder that asks, 'Is today the day? Am I ready?'"
- "Am I doing all I need to do? Am I being the person I want to be?"
- He turned his head to his shoulder as if the bird were there now.
- "Is today the day I die?" He said.

23 **God does not promise us immunity from the storms of life.**

- In fact, Jesus says the storms of life will surely come – in fact he guarantees it. Jesus promised, "In this world you will have tribulation."
- But Jesus continues – "Be of good cheer for I have overcome the world."
- And that is the good news. In the midst of the storm, God is with us – Emmanuel.
- We can have courage and strength for this life, and the hope of eternal life in the next.

24 **Are you ready to place your trust in the one who is there to see you through the storms of life?**

- Are you ready to turn from yourself and turn to him – to repent – and to say to him, “I want to follow you today and every day as my Lord and Savior.”
- Maybe at one time, you trusted in him as Lord and Savior, but you’ve got away from him. Your faith has lost it’s meaning.
- Are you ready to renew your trust in him, and say “Today and from this day forward, for the rest of my life, I want to follow you and live for you. Renew my faith, O Lord, I surrender and promise to follow you.