**Mike Hipes – Facebook Lesson, November 11, 2020**

Good afternoon!

When you are over 7 miles offshore in a boat and are unable to see land anymore it is a bit unnerving! While living in NY, after traveling from the south side of Long Island out into the ocean, to go fishing with a friend on his cabin cruiser along with a few others we were suddenly enveloped with a thick fog and could see nothing. After two hours and no change, the seas began to become unsettled and we were now rolling up and down on some very large swells. Just as we decided to slowly navigate, by way of the compass, back through the dense fog, we heard in the distance the sound of large engines heading in our direction. With every moment that passed the sound increased. In the next instant, the bow of a very large charter fishing boat appeared through the fog! The large 300 passenger fishing charter boat was not only moving very quickly but it came cruising by us on our port side nearly colliding with us. We were all dazed with fright as we watched this large craft move past us. George, whose boat we were in, quickly fired up the twin small block chevy engines and put our boat in the wake directly behind the charter boat and followed it back to port safely. Talk about perilous times at sea! Gladly, our captain’s quick thinking and his decision to follow the ship that was bound for safe shores provided a sense of peace in the midst of peaceless times.

Psalm 46:1-3 tells us: “God is our refuge and strength, a very ready help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth shakes and the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.”

It has been about 10 months now since the virus hit us and put us all in a thick cloud of fog for the longest time. Can you believe we are still dealing with this? The waves of the COVID numbers continue to rock our boat up and down on uncertain seas. There are sounds of concern in the distance that has followed the election last week. But suddenly while afloat in uncharted waters without any certain direction, what emerges from the dense fog is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble! It is our sovereign God who is in total control and leading us in a direct path to a safe port at shore. All we need to do is fire up the engines of our heart and follow in His wake to spiritual safety! The result will be no more fear but only internal peace regardless of the external peaceless times around us.

We have all heard of the phrase, the calm before the storm! Never mistake the silence we may experience at times for the true peace we can have instead. I read a story about a married couple who were going through a stormy time in their marriage. The wife said to her husband that she was not going to talk to him anymore! They shared silence but had no peace. While he was on a business trip out of town on one occasion, he received a card from his wife. When he opened it, it was blank! He had external silence but still internal unrest.

We need to know that peace really has little to do with the external circumstances and storms of life around us but all about the relationship with God that we have within us!

Psalm 46:4-10 continues. “There is a river whose streams make the city of God happy, the holy dwelling places of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth quaked. The Lord of armies is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Come, behold the works of the Lord, Who has inflicted horrific events on the earth. He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire. “Stop striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted on the earth.”

There are two types of storms. The kind like Jonah experienced when he was running away from God. And the storms we face even when we are doing the right thing before God and following His instructions as the disciples were doing in Luke 8:22-25. Regardless of which storm you may be experiencing, remember what the psalmist said to us. “The Lord of hosts is with us... and to “be still and know that I am God.”

During stormy times as these, let’s remember that God is our refuge and strength and that we can have inner peace within us regardless of the peaceless times around us!

Blessings,

Mike