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Navigating Life – Keep Calm and Sail On

He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!”
Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.

Words of Jesus
Mark 3:39 (CEB)

A few years ago the t-shirt market was flooded with Keep Calm statements on the back of Margaritaville shirts. For Christmas, it is not unusual for my family to give me a gift that is related to sailing. I have sailing story books, brass sail boats, and pictures of ships on water.

One year my favorite gift was the t-shirt that read “Keep Calm and Sail On.” I expressed so much glee over the new shirt that for the following Christmas, I was rewarded with another shirt that read...you guessed it, “Keep Calm and Sail On”...but in another color. Loved both of them and still wear one or the other regularly.

Although we have sailed aboard friend’s boats off the Santa Barbara coast, Sandy and I have never actually sailed the ocean on our own. The limited exposure we have with the Coastal Pacific Ocean was enough to know how wicked the waves and winds can be. We were happy to leave the helm and sail setting to more experienced sailors.

One of the most important lessons was learning to “Keep Calm and Sail On.” Being in control of the boat means sailors can move toward their destination no matter what the winds may be doing. We’re well aware Lake Grapevine is no Pacific Ocean. We know practice and on-board safety equipment is critical no matter the body of water when storms approach.

The Sea of Galilee according to the Gospel of Mark could be a rugged and, according to the Disciples, a frightening place to be. I love the scripture I cited above. Jesus... said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” That is all it took, three words with two exclamation marks to indicated he spoke the words with authority, and “the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.”

No single person has control over the sailing of a yacht. It takes a team of people who love and care deeply for each other. No single person has control over the events of the world. The year of our Lord, 2020, is a prime example of what it is like for the collective world population to feel out of control.

Intrinsically we know each of us has control over reactions to what happens within and outside personal challenges. Making this realization helps remain calm and peaceful in all situations. As in sailing, it is important to keep the bearings set on a protective harbor or marina. Knowing the destination determines what is required to reach a calming port. Year 2020 felt like the marina, harbor, or port was in storm and not reachable. In the face of all adversity, I am convinced Jesus awakes from a deep sleep in the middle of our storms. When he wakes, he confidently rises, looks us in the eyes and says: "Peace!"

Peace with an exclamation point is a directive related to what is important to us and how we are to react. "Peace" indeed!

Soon after "Peace," we hear the words "Be still!" Once we identify that Peace is what we sought in the midst of 2020 storms, we are told to "Be still." I believe the words tell us to stop our worries and consider the ways we can overcome anxiety and fear related to pandemics, riots, mayhem, and loss of lives from the many trials we faced.

Together we learn to "Be still" and believe we can overcome. In order to do that, I ask you to say the following 72 words aloud. Choose two or three times during the day to read them with conviction. Together we make 2021 and beyond peaceful and hopeful.

My calm manner has a pacifying effect on everyone I encounter.

I meet unexpected delays with patience.

I meet misunderstandings with humor.

I meet disappointments with confidence.

My spiritual tools of prayer, meditation, surrender, and forgiveness keep my mind and heart focused on my solidarity with God.

My open heart and trusting soul stimulate calm.

I focus my thoughts on the lasting reality of the Divine presence within and all around me.

Peace always,

Ted