

This past week I experienced what may have been my first tornado. I was at home, and because the water was so quiet, I walked out to the end of our pier to fish for a bit as I watched a storm approaching. Living in Indiana, summer storms are quite common, and I enjoy watching them come and go. They are a magnificent study, as are watching the birds, the trees and the water react to them. This particular one seemed to be no different than others, perhaps a bit bigger, but much the same nonetheless.

Marlene was watching the scene from our deck. It must have thundered and lightened for at least 25 minutes before I thought it prudent to leave the pier and join her on the deck. By that time lightning bolts several miles away appeared to reach from the sky to the ground. The clouds looked menacing and confused, as though they couldn't decide which way they wanted to go. Throughout this extended period of time the water was as quiet as if it were ice. Not a breath of wind, not a ripple was to be seen upon the surface.

As I neared the deck, Marlene suddenly called out, "Robin, listen!"

I responded, "to what?"

"To the wind!" she said.

I climbed up the steps to the deck, turned around and continued to watch as the storm neared. And then I heard "it"! Though there are not tracks near us for miles, I heard a train coming! A huge loud roar as of a train seemed to be racing towards us. It was a most amazing sound. It was at one and the same time great – and terrible. I have seen interviews of people who have experienced the devastation tornadoes often bring, and not infrequently they mention they heard a sound like a train coming just before the tornado struck.

Suddenly I realized this was no ordinary storm; this was huge. We quickly scanned the skies above us and towards the west from whence "the train" was coming, but could see no funnels, no vortex of clouds forming. By now the thunder was deafening and lightning was getting dangerously close. We decided to go into the safety of our manufactured home. **AND STILL THE WATER WAS AS CALM AS GLASS!**

Fifteen to thirty second later, I saw something I have never seen before, even having lived here right on the lakefront. I saw a sheer wall of terror in the form of monstrous winds carrying blinding water. And it was charging across the lake like a jet plane taking off down a runway. Racing from our left to our right, we watched winds that clocked in excess of 70 miles per hour descend upon our peaceful little place we call home.

Within seconds, the water had turned from a deep blue to gray to black; from glassy calm to hissing with angry rain as it was battered by an incredible wind, causing it to churn with black and green foam churning up 2-3 foot waves.

Amidst all this, lightning was crackling accompanied by deafening thunder; electrical power blinked off and on several times in the house and hail pummeled down for a short time. Our cat, who had been asleep a short time before, dove under one of the beds. Even though I was unafraid, I must say I stepped back some 4 steps from the French doors that open onto our deck just in case they were blown open by the ferocity of this storm. And then we both saw another “it” at the same time.

This time “It” was a neighbor who had been enjoying the lake on his pontoon, who for unknown reasons, ignored all the warning signs of the approaching storm and opted instead to stay out on the water with two other people including a woman and a small child. With the full fury of the storm tearing across the water, this unfortunate soul was doing his best to reach the safety of the harbor channel just past our house. He was running his motor running full force INTO the storm, trying to prevail against this monster which was upon him.

We watched in amazement as the pontoon struggled, heaving and quaking against the sheer force of a storm that was plainly stronger than the boat’s motor! All three lives in that boat were in great danger! They were a virtual lightning rod on the lake at that point! Try though he did, straining forward as hard as his engine could, the pilot was unable to reach the safety of home. He had no choice but to turn his boat around and go WITH the wind, hoping to be able to turn in some other place, or just gut out the storm in the middle of the lake until it abated. We watched them until they disappeared from view.

After perhaps 10-15 minutes, the storm was gone. Remnants of it continued for awhile, but the danger had passed. Eventually a double rainbow appeared in the sky East of us.

Soon neighbors began emerging from their houses to see how everyone made out. I suddenly felt a bit like a refugee, although I guess that is a politically incorrect term to use these days. We realized how helpless we had been against the fury of nature. Much to our relief, no one was hurt and miraculously no houses were lost. (We found out later that five homes at a lake not far from us were destroyed.) A neighbor’s flagpole snapped off at the base and now lay in our front yard. We were grateful it was there and not through the French doors or one of the windows. A couple of folks lost the skirting to their houses. One massive branch of a tree was snapped off and slammed down on the ground EXACTLY in-between two mobile homes. Tree damage was everywhere. I believe every bird in our trees lost their nests along with their babies.

As I have processed the events of that day, I believe the Lord has spoken to me in a manifest way. I am very aware that He has already told us in His Word that His return to earth will be like a thief in the night. He has told us to be ready for His coming. He has told us that we should be like wise virgins with our lamps trimmed, waiting for His coming “at midnight!” He has said He never does things without telling his prophets.

Three evenings ago, we were all warned of an approaching storm in this part of Indiana. Television and radio reports warned all day long that conditions were ripe for severe weather.

For 30 minutes before “the train” roared through, thunder and lightning announced a coming storm. All of us here had ample, very ample warning.

So what is the lesson here? I believe the Lord prophesied three nights ago. At least He did to me. I think He spoke in nature what He has declared in His Word. I believe that message to us today is:

“Awake, church! Awake, church! Awake! The Great and the Terrible Day of the Lord is not far off!”

“Can you not read the signs of the times? Can you not hear the approaching storm, the sound of “the train?” Oh wake up, my Bride! Arise! It is nearly midnight! Trim your lamp! Your Bridegroom is coming and is almost at the gate!”

Right now Scriptures flood into my memory. So many are appropriate, but I will share just one:

Luke 17:24 For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. **25** But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. **26** "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. **27** People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. **28** "It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. **29** But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. **30** "It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. **31** On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. **32** Remember Lot's wife! **33** Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

So what have I learned from all this?

1. I believe the Lord is calling us to wake up from the spiritual coma many of us are in. I believe we are on a fast track to Great and Terrible things. Having said that, I obviously don't have a clue as to the when or the what, but I'm convinced He is, as it were, scooting His chair back and is about to “stand and deliver!”

2. When the Lord speaks in His Word about the “Great” and the “Terrible” Day of the Lord that is coming, I believe that the “Great” aspect of this awesome day will be a time of a great harvest of souls! I believe His disciples, His Bride, His Church will (at least parts of it) be like Noah was prior to the flood, like Anna and Simeon before the birth of Jesus, like John the Baptist before the public ministry of Jesus. I believe they will be spiritually astute and dynamically alive in Him, able to read “the sign of the times.” I believe they will be people of intense prayer and fasting; they will be people of the Word of God; they will be people who will love the Lord ferociously, disciples who will give themselves without reserve to God's purposes on the earth and without regard to the cost. I want to be part of this remnant. And I want to begin to prepare for that day NOW. Even as I write these thoughts down, I am reminded that the Lord says four times in His Word, “If today you hear (My) voice, do not harden your heart!” In other words, respond to My Word! Respond to Me!

3. I am reminded that it is a foolish person who ignores the warnings to prepare for the day of trouble..... My neighbor received both grace and mercy that evening.

Finally, I have heard some folks suggest that God is so kind He would never do anything that would hurt anyone. But the Word that I read presents a very different God; it shows me a God who is fiercely holy; it reveals a God who is unflinchingly loyal to Himself and to His Word. He is a God who has sworn to Himself that He will have a people for Himself. He has shown Himself in His Word as a God who was willing to die to save the Bride whom He so loves. I believe He is playing for keeps. And I am absolutely decided that I want to be His.....

So might you and I make the decision to be wise virgins, with our lamps lit, with our wedding garments on, and with extra oil with us in case our Bridegroom is delayed in coming. Let us sleep ever so lightly, with our doors wide open, so that when He comes by to pick us up for the Wedding Feast, we'll be altogether ready to join Him!

