

THE BOAT ROCKER
MATTHEW 11:2-6

C229
4/1/18

Years ago a United States Navy submarine cruising off the coast of Massachusetts was rammed by a ship.

The sub sank immediately trapping the entire crew in an iron grave. All attempts at rescue proved futile.

Toward the end of the operation one of the divers placed his ear next to the submarine's iron hull. He heard a tapping noise. It was Morse Code. Slowly the message formed, "Is... there... any... hope?"

And this is the plight of the whole human race. The world we live in has fallen from what it was intended to be. It's now a *sunken sub*. People live their lives in an iron hull of emptiness and despair. There's no escape.

Thinking folks look for the hatch - a way to rise to the surface - but to no avail... Mankind is trapped in a *sunken sub* called **sin**. Put your ear to the hull, and you'll hear the tapping, "Is there any hope?"

I'm sure you've noticed, **life is hard!** If life were all fastballs we'd bat a thousand. But just about the time you get use to the velocity - life throws you a curve, or tosses you a change-up. And you're whiffing again...

Circumstances leave us desperately confused...

The best team doesn't always win.

The cheater gets the highest grade.

The unethical businessman receives the promotion.

Good people end up sick.

Little babies are born with disabilities.

Innocent women are abused.

Life is hard, and each generation faces the same old enemies. *Injustice mocks us... Sickness diminishes us... Acts of nature torture us... Evil preys on us... Sin stunts what could have been...* All the while, death sits back smugly, knowing it will get the *last laugh...*

Life never seems to behave itself. It won't follow the rules. And every generation taps, "[Is There Any Hope?](#)"

Yet, for one brief moment, long, long ago, the situation was different. A ray of light shined into the deepest ocean. God sent a diver down from heaven.

This heavenly frogman found the hatch to this hopeless world and popped it open. He shined a light to those trapped in the darkened hull. *He showed us the way out!* For one brief moment *hope* opened the *hatch* and people could see salvation bubbling up on the surface. And this hope's name was "[Jesus.](#)"

A man named "*John*" first saw the light. He sensed in Jesus the opportunity to escape from the hull of sin.

He even baptized heaven's frogman in the river.

But when John was tossed into prison he became puzzled. He knew Jesus was sent to free us. He came to offer a real alternative to life in the iron hull. But if Jesus brings hope... *why was John stuck in prison?*

John was jailed in the Dead Sea Fortress of Machaerus - the Jewish Alcatraz - a dungeon just as confining as the iron hull of a sunken world.

How could John now be sure that Jesus was the deliverer, if he was left trapped in a prison of despair?

John's faith had a serious challenge. It had begun to wobble. So John sent messengers to question Jesus...

We read of *John's inquiry* and *Jesus' reply* in Matthew 11:2, "And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: the blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

And as Jesus answered the messengers, *I'm sure He laughed*. In essence He's saying, "Look around! Pay attention to what's happening... Every day blind eyes see. Paraplegics walk. Leprous skin becomes as new as a baby's behind. Corpses are raised to life and funerals turn into parties. The poor have plenty. *What do you think? Does this look like business as usual?*"

In the Gospels we read about Jesus entering the Temple, and turning over tables - but **Jesus spent His entire ministry turning over tables!** Jesus come into this world to rock the boat and shake things up!

Iron chains that had never been broken... *Jesus snapped in two!* Big bullies - like leprosy, and demons, and paralysis, and

death - vicious gang members who had ruled the hood for millenniums were suddenly tucking tale and running at the sight of the Lord Jesus.

I wish we had time to review Matthew 8, 9, and 10, which recounts the previous 12 months of Jesus' life.

For in the annals of history there's never been a year as exciting - and as surprising - as the year 30 AD...

Everything Jesus had described to John's messengers had occurred in droves. All mankind's evil enemies were getting cut down, and put back in their place. The boat rocker was setting things right again.

In 1961 the Museum of Modern Art in New York City hosted an exhibit showcasing the artistic talents of the famous French painter, Henri Matisse. But one of the paintings, entitled "*The Boat*," hung upside down for forty-seven days before anyone saw the mistake.

Imagine, a masterpiece on exhibit, hanging upside down, and none of the city's art connoisseurs noticed.

Yet this was the state of the world for thousands of years before Jesus came. Life was upside down and no one noticed. But Jesus saw the evil, injustice, prejudice, pain - and flipped the pictures topsy-turvy.

Jesus pointed to **a sinner who beat his chest and was truly sorry for his sin**, and said his prayer would be heard over the self-righteous hypocrite who acted like God owed him... Jesus counted **the widow's mite** as more valuable to God, than the rich man's tip...

Jesus saw that **death had robbed a woman of her son.** He resurrected the boy and returned him to his mom... The priests **painted God as harsh, and petty, and vindictive.** But Jesus displayed a vision of God as a Father rushing to welcome his wayward son home.

Jesus turned what was upside down, right side up!

Don't look for Jesus to prop up the status quo. Our Lord Jesus **rocks the boat and makes a better world.**

And this is what Jesus is about today! When He enters a life He turns it on its ear. He takes *hopeless*, and *hapless*, and *helpless* lives and flips them around.

The risen Lord Jesus doles out new love, new desires, new direction, new perspective. He puts *a smile on your face - a bounce in your step - a laugh on your lips - and a joy in your heart.* Jesus establishes new ties, and embellishes you with new gifts.

He forgives. He heals. He restores dignity.

Jesus opens spiritual eyes and ears as well as physical ones. He fills up our emptiness, and causes love to overflow to others. Jesus brings us out of *death and darkness* into His marvelous *life and light!*

My point is, Jesus doesn't care much for the status quo! **Jesus is a boat rocker!** He knows this world is an iron hull stuck on the bottom and we desperately need fresh air. Jesus wants to *help you out, and pull you up!*

Here's some good news for a change... Jesus loves you so much He invites you to come to Him just as you are, but He

loves you so much He doesn't let you stay that way for long.

The *status quo* has got to go.

He wants to flip your life right-side up.

But there were folks in Jesus' day who resented the Boat Rocker. They were protectors of the status quo.

Take for example the powerful priests in Jerusalem. They were making a handsome living off Jewish religion. They controlled a Temple Tax, and they made money off the common people's sacrifices to God.

That's why Jesus cleansed the Temple. He put an end to the charade and drove out the moneychangers.

In doing so, Jesus cut into their profits, and the priests realized that Jesus was a threat to their power and the lifestyle it financed. That's why the chief priests hated Jesus. He was a threat to their power-grab.

And not much has changed today. For power-hungry people, Jesus is still an obstacle. For folks who aspire to be on top, Jesus gets in the way. You can climb over everyone else, but not Jesus. For people who style themselves as the captain of their own ship - and like to call their own shots - *Jesus becomes a problem.*

He's an uninvited intrusion. There's only one Lord. Either it's Jesus, or it's you - *but it can't be both.*

For many people today, Jesus cramps their style and nags their conscience. He's a burr under their saddle.

Jesus comes along with His *absolutes* and His insistence on "*truth,*" and He makes us uncomfortable.

People pretend to be Christian as long as its “cool.” *As long as Jesus is a positive add-on. As long as He’s bringing joy and peace to my life why not welcome Him?* But the moment Jesus initiates change, or makes hard demands, we want to seek some distance.

Jesus rocks the boat just a little too much! For some people the idea of worship is like a tip of the hat on holidays - not the laying down of one’s life everyday.

When our first son went off to college he got use to living on his own. He set his own hours. He came and went as He pleased. Hey, that’s what college is about, but when he came home we had to have a talk...

If he wanted the benefits of living under *our roof* he had to abide by *our rules*, and live under our authority.

We were happy to have him as a family member, but Kathy and I weren’t interested in a roommate.

And neither is Jesus! Jesus is Lord! On Heaven’s 1040 Form Jesus is listed as *the Universe’s head of household*. Jesus calls the shots. And He will never allow anyone to *use Him OR excuse Him away*...

This means where Jesus moves in He takes charge and makes changes. *All for the better, mind you*, but don’t ever think He’s just going to drift into the woodwork, and keep a low profile, and mind His manners, and take out the trash when He’s told, and only speak when He’s spoken to, and politely do His chores, and clean up the spilt milk... *That’s not Jesus!*

It's ironic, how many supporters of the status quo there really are in the world today. *Folks who don't want change.* They prefer for Jesus to leave life alone!

I'm sure everyone wants Jesus to add good stuff to their lives... But before He reshapes the course of their life they'd really like to approve the new direction!

It always surprises me, that when the rubber meets the road, most people are content with things just as they are. Oh, they'll whine and complain about certain circumstances, but we tend to get accustomed to the rut.

Many people would rather hold on to the familiar, even if it makes them miserable. Most folks will resist change, even when it's a change for the better.

Once we had a homeless man come to the church.

One night the mercury dipped dangerously low. I was concerned for our newfound friend. I went to the shack in the woods where he was living to pick him up and bring him to my house. But he refused to leave.

That night he chose a *frozen hut* over a *warm house*, because he didn't want to be inconvenienced with change. At my house he'd have to smoke on the porch... and that was intolerable. The man's own vices had created a prison, that kept him trapped in the hull.

There are people today who've accepted the pain and emptiness of a life trapped in sin. It's the only life they've ever known... It's all they think there is...

Along the way, folks accumulate toys and diversions that break up the monotony, and muffle the rumbling of an empty soul. They busy themselves with amusement so they don't have to ponder the real meaning of life.

Survivors can get so use to the sunken hull of the sub, *that even though they're dying on the inside*, they've created an artificial life - and for the short time it lasts they're naïve, but happy campers. It's the brave, relentless few that keep tapping, ["Is There Any Hope?"](#)

Most people are leery of the boat rocker! Even so-called Christians who claim to be devoted to Jesus, are devoted only on their own terms. They'll follow as long as its convenient or advantageous. [They don't mind being a Christian as long as they can stay in control.](#)

But that's not the way Christianity works. When Jesus climbs on board your boat, He takes charge.

Understand, there were people who got so tired of the Boat Rocker, they wanted to throw Him overboard.

When it became apparent to the Jewish hierarchy that they couldn't control Jesus, they plotted to kill Him.

The establishment was scared of His power, and when they realized they couldn't *back Him down*, they tried to *put Him down*. In the end, they crucified Jesus.

While Jesus was alive the powers-that-be were never able to *nail Him down*. He was too wild, too heavenly, too unpredictable, too dangerous for their tastes. So they *nailed Him* to a cross... Jesus never wore *the crown of political clout*

the Jews ordered for Him, so they thrust on His head *a crown of thorns*.

Jesus was a free spirit, like a bird soaring in the sky, but the Jews didn't like Him flying over their heads. He was a reminder of what they had chosen not to be. They couldn't capture the bird, so they shot Him down.

Its been said, "Each of us is born with a body, a mind, a soul, and a handful of nails. And when a man dies he's never found with nails left clutched in his hands, or stuffed in his pockets." When we resist the *gentle ways and loving changes* Jesus desires to work in our lives we're pounding in another nail. Are we *followers of Jesus* or *defenders of the status quo*?

I'm sure when they laid Jesus in the tomb and rolled the stone over the mouth of the grave, they said to themselves, "*That's it, we've put Him in His place!*"

The stone was the same as "*throwing away the key.*"

Everyone assumed they would never have to worry about this Jesus upsetting the apple cart, ever again. "*Now we can get back to business as usual!*"

But Jesus wasn't finished shaking up the status quo.

In His lifetime Jesus had boxed a few rounds with death, illness, paralysis, blindness - and He wasn't finished with the fight. When Jesus rose from the dead He not only rocked the boat - *He totally capsized it!*

This time Jesus knocked out death. Three days after they killed Him, the Boat Rocker was back on deck!

And after His resurrection, the world was never the same! Death had been declawed. New hope was born. New power unleashed. Now Jesus began to populate eternity. **The risen Lord came out of an *empty tomb* to fill our *empty hearts*!** And He keeps rocking the boat.

All over the world today - in China... in the Islamic world... in Japan... all across Latin America... even in Atlanta, Georgia... Jesus is alive and well! He's changing lives - shaping culture - building His kingdom.

Jesus still turns lives topsy-turvy. He *blazes new trails* and *teaches new ways*! The Risen Lord will never be *manipulated* or *intimidated* - much less *annihilated*.

You can't *manage Him* - *mar Him* - or *murder Him*.

Jesus isn't a man you can *tone down* - or *tie up* - or *turn off*... You'll save wasted years if you realize Jesus won't let you get comfortable without Him.

Did you hear of the little girl who was thrilled about Easter? For weeks it was all she could talk about.

She couldn't wait to go to church.

Finally, her father wanted to know if she knew the meaning of the special day. She said, **"I sure do!"** He asked her, **"Well, Honey what does Easter mean?"**

She cupped her hands around her mouth - and yelled as loud as she could, **"Surprise!"** *And that's it!*

What does Easter mean?

It means *surprise death... surprise sin... surprise illness... surprise depression... surprise wicked world... surprise status*

quo... it means Jesus has beaten you all! Our Lord Jesus now gets the last laugh!

Easter means *surprise everyone who tries to control Jesus... you can't! Surprise everyone who wants Jesus to back down... He won't! Surprise everyone trapped sin and looking for a way out... Jesus lives!*

Jesus told John in Matthew 11:6, "*Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.*" In other words, happy is the person who doesn't mind letting Jesus call the shots! Happy is the man or woman, boy or girl, who is willing to let Jesus board their life and really take over.

Happy is the person who's not ashamed to admit their trapped. Life is hard, and we all need some help.

Happy is the person who welcomes Jesus - and His changes. Don't be afraid to let Jesus overturn a few apple carts in your life. He knows what He's doing!

Today, invite the Boat Rocker to take charge!

Perhaps you're *not a Christian*, but you *want to be*.

Maybe you *are a Christian*, but haven't been what you *ought to be*... Let's pray together, and ask the Boat Rocker to shake things up in your life. Let's ask Jesus to come on board and be the captain of your ship...