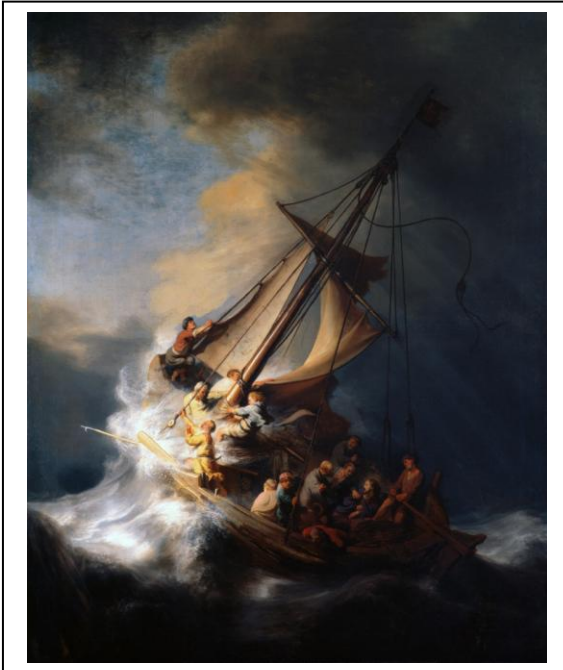


# Christ and the Storm

## Rembrandt, 1633

### Introduction

The Storm on the Sea of Galilee is the only seascape ever painted by Rembrandt. It depicts Jesus calming the waves of the sea, saving the lives of the fourteen men aboard the vessel. Of these fourteen men, it is said Rembrandt included a self portrait of himself in the boat, next to Jesus and his twelve disciples. On March 18, 1990, the painting was stolen by thieves disguised as police officers. They broke into the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, Massachusetts, and stole this painting, along with twelve other works. The paintings have never been recovered, and it is considered the biggest art theft in history. The empty frames of the paintings still hang in their original location, waiting to be recovered.



### Reflection

Take some time to study Rembrandt's painting. It depicts a group of individuals in the midst of an overwhelming crisis. Wind and waves beat against the hull and the boat is in danger of capsizing. The main mast bisects the canvas which measures five feet by four feet. The cross member forms a cross. The right side of the painting is shrouded in darkness while light breaks through on the left side, suggesting a possible break in the storm.

The disciples are grouped. Those in the bow are trying to gain control of the rigging. Those in the stern are gathered around Jesus imploring him to help. One man in the middle of the boat and another terrified figure in the hold are either praying or resigned to their fate. Finally one man leans over the side seasick.

### Questions

Think back to a stressful time in your own life. Which disciple depicted by Rembrandt do you most identify with and why?

Notice the emotions on the faces of the men? When have you felt similar things?

In those times when you have struggled, where was Jesus and how did you engage him? How did he engage you?



# Wind Talker

**Introduction:** Jesus had spent the day teaching and healing at the Sea of Galilee. Late in the afternoon, he said to his disciples in the boat with him, "Let's go across to the other side of the lake." He then proceeded to fall asleep in the back of the boat. Here is what I think happened next.

From his perch on the mountain peak,  
Ruah<sup>1</sup> looked out. Then he roared.  
His breath surged down the canyons and  
blew across the surface of the sea.

Trees fell.  
Dust flew.  
Wind howled.  
"Who dares cross me without asking my  
permission?" said He.

Seas swelled,  
Waves crashed and seamen screamed,  
As their tiny boat was tossed like a cork  
In an angry caldron.

Some men prayed,  
Others puked,  
Still others pulled vainly  
On tattered ropes and sails.

All the while, one man slept.  
Unperturbed, unafraid,  
At ease in slumber  
While elemental forces raged all around Him.

"Who is it who sleeps?"  
Said soaked sailors to one another,  
"Does he not care that Death  
Shall swallow us whole?"

"Sleeper! Awake from your repose!  
Cry with us to the gods for mercy.  
Leave us not alone in the dead of night.  
Awake that we may perish together!"

Dream Maker opened his eyes to see  
Twelve men whose hearts heaved with  
Helpless fear, hopeless despair,  
Angry anguish.

Looking skyward he said,  
"Lord of the Lake, what upsets you?  
It is I, do you not recognize me?  
We pass in peace. Calm down.

Then the winds ceased.  
The sea settled.  
All became quiet as the glow of dawn  
Slowly appeared over the hills.

But twelve speechless men stood stunned.  
Faces white with fear and awe,  
Knocking knees  
Trembling hands.

Who is it who talks  
To wicked winds and surging seas?  
Who is it who commands the breath of chaos,  
And it obeys? In his presence are we safe?

Who is safe with one who dangles death  
Like keys on a chain?  
Who is safe with one who talks to the wind?  
Who is safe?

By Steven Stuckey 2017

<sup>1</sup> Ruah is the Hebrew word for breath or wind. I have personified it here in the same way that we might call a storm *Harvey* or *Irma*.