

**Sudden Change**

**Theme**: Facing the uncontrollable, unexpected.

**Teaching**: One of my favorite terms found in the new jargon of NFL football is the term “sudden change.” It speaks to that moment when a turnover occurs, whether it be by way of fumble or interception, for, in that moment, the team must regroup. For the team that has given away the ball, it is the sudden change for the defense as they must come in sooner than expected and try to minimize the damage of the turnover. For the offense, they must come on the field ready to try and turn that gift into points. In both cases, however, these players must be ready to respond to the unexpected and do so in a way that will be of most benefit for their teams.

It is this element of the unexpected that can often knock us off our pins. We find ourselves caught off-guard by the suddenness of the events and we are unprepared to respond to the impact of that experience. It was what Job faced when, on an otherwise normal and unremarkable morning, his world caved in on him with a ceaseless wave of reports of the demise of his fortune and the death of his children. Sudden change. It was what Joseph experienced when, unexpectedly, his brothers turned on him, beat him, and sold him into slavery. It is not merely the occurrence of such events, but their unexpectedness that makes them so crippling. Jesus’ disciples experienced this as well:

**Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” But He said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” (Matthew 8:23-27)**

The suddenness of the storm caught even these seasoned fishermen unprepared for the danger they faced. That’s life. Sudden change is always difficult, and, no matter how prepared we think we are—we are never fully prepared for the anguish, fear, and heartache sudden changes can bring to us. The dreaded phone call in the middle of the night, the unexpected health problem, the unwanted loss of a relationship. They all reek of pain—and they often strike suddenly and without warning, leaving us shell-shocked and questioning where God is in all of this. But, like the disciples, we can be confident that we do not engage the sudden changes apart from our Shepherd. He is right there in the boat with us—and His is greater than the storms that feel so threatening. Sudden change is best answered by a full embrace of the presence of the Master. Because, for Him, even our most unexpected trials are not unexpected. And even more, He is fully able to carry us through.