

A Night on the Sea

Mark 4:35-41

In our verse-by-verse study of Mark's gospel, today we come to a new section that starts at Mark 4:35 and goes through Mark 5:43. We have the last few weeks looking at the four parables in Mark 4. This next part of Mark's gospel records four miracles of Christ.

First we have Jesus calming the storm in 4:35-41, which demonstrates His power over the forces of nature. Then in 5:1-20 Jesus delivers a man possessed by a legion of demons, demonstrating His power over the world of spirits. Third, in 5:25-34, the Lord delivers a woman of an incurable disease, demonstrating His power over physical illness. Then finally in 5:35-43, the Lord raises a young child back to life, demonstrating His power over death.

The common thread in these miracles is that in each case they are in a seemingly impossible situation. We have a storm that no seaman could overcome. We have a demoniac that no man could tame. We have a disease that no physician could cure, and we have a tragedy that no parent could avert. The people have exhausted all their resources--then Jesus steps in. He solves their problem when nothing else or no one else can. God loves to display Himself in the midst of our problems. These miracles authenticate—prove—the teaching of Christ about the Kingdom (4:1-34).

As we come to verse 35 of chapter 4, it had been a long and difficult day for the Lord Jesus. Remember back to 4:1 where Jesus got into a boat just off the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He used that little ship as His pulpit as He preached to the great multitudes that gathered to hear Him. When the day was over, He called His disciples to set sail for the other side of the lake.

Listen to Mark's account starting in verse 35:

35 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side."

36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him.

37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.

38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

40 But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

When darkness fell, the disciples were making their way across that little lake. While they headed for the other shore, Jesus lay fast asleep in the rear of the ship. He was weary from the business of the day. Most of these men were used to being on the Sea of Galilee at night. Several of them were, after all, fishermen. But, on this night these men found themselves in the storm of their lives.

In our Christian life we are all sailing toward an unseen port. As we sail, storms will arise and toss our lives. We will often think the storms are going to destroy us. I want you to know that your storms were not sent to destroy you, but to develop you. I hope you learn that from this night on the sea.

I. IT WAS A NIGHT OF GREAT DANGERS (4:35-37)

As Jesus and His men sailed across the Sea of Galilee that night, they found themselves engulfed in a terrible storm. First, let's think about:

A. The Suddenness Of The Storm – “And a great windstorm arose” –

Storms like this are very common on the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is an unusual body of water. It is relatively small (about thirteen miles long and eight miles wide); but it is 150 feet deep, and the shoreline is 680 feet below sea level. Because the Sea of Galilee is below sea level and is surrounded by mountains, it is susceptible to sudden storms. Winds sweeping across the land come up and over the mountains, creating downdrafts over the lake. Combined with a thunderstorm that appears suddenly over the surrounding mountains, the water stirs into violent twenty-foot waves. The sea can be calm one minute and violent the next. These storms usually do not happen at night. So, these men did not set out in a storm and they did not expect one either, but a storm came anyway!

That's the way life is too! One minute you can be enjoying fair weather and the next, you find yourself in the middle of a terrible and horrible storm. One phone call, one twenty-four hour period of time, one doctor visit, one tick of the clock, and there you are, in the storm of your life. This shouldn't surprise us. The Bible says that the storms will come our way, Job 14:1; Eccl. 2:23; John 16:33. In fact chances are, you are in one of three places today: You are either in a storm, just coming out of a storm, or headed into a storm.

B. The Severity Of The Storm – “and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling” – These seasoned fishermen are frightened by the severity of this storm. The ship is rocking and reeling; it is full of water and they are afraid it is about to sink. It was a violent storm and it was night time too. They could not see where they were or how close they were to the shore and the other ships around them. They were in terrible danger, and they feared for their lives.

Again, this is a lot like what we face in the storms of life. When they come, they are often severe and cause us great anguish and pain. The storms of suffering blow into our lives and devastate us with heartache, heartbreak and turmoil. One problem will arise after another and they overwhelm us to the point of sinking in hopelessness. Many of you could testify about the storms you have faced.

The lesson is that we will not be exempt from the storm. Even when we are believers, even when we are in the boat with Jesus. Storms will come and they bring with them fear, anxiety and pain. I just want you to know that there is no storm on earth that Heaven cannot calm! There is no problem so great that Jesus cannot get you through it. Bring that storm to Him and watch His deal with it!

C. The Source Of The Storm – Where did this storm come from? It may have been natural, after all, as I have already shared; the Sea of Galilee was susceptible to storms of this nature. However, it came at night and that was rare. God might have sent it. He could have sent this storm for the very purpose of teaching these men to trust in Jesus. Or, the storm could have been satanic in origin. When Jesus calmed the storm in verse 39 and said “**be still**”, it is the same word that is translated “**Be quiet**” in Mark 1:25. The word means “to be

muzzled". It has the idea of muzzling a violent animal. When Jesus used that word in Mark 1:25, He was using it to command demons to be quiet. Perhaps this storm was an attempt by Satan to destroy the Lord Jesus. The Bible does not tell us the source of this storm.

The same storms in our own lives can come from various sources too. Sometimes the storms are our own fault. We do things that get us into trouble. We sin and we suffer the consequences. If you don't believe me, just read the book of Jonah. God said "Go!" Jonah said "No!" God said "Woe!" Jonah said "Oh!" Sometimes we cause the storms.

Sometimes God sends the storms. Once there was a little boy who had a boat and he was sailing that boat out on a small pond. As he did, the boat got a little too far away from him; it was further away from shore than the boy was able to reach. So the boy took some rocks and started throwing the rocks just on the other side of his little boat and as he did he created waves and each rock brought the boat just a little bit closer back to him. Eventually, it was so close that he was able to reach out and claim the boat.

Why would God send a storm? Sometimes He does it to discipline us and draw us closer to Him. Sometimes He does it to teach us to trust His more deeply. This was the case with Job and all that he was forced to endure. God allowed Satan to send the storm to teach him and us more about God's nature.

There are times when the storms are satanic in origin. Satan will whip up a storm in your life to defeat you and drive you away from the Lord. He will do everything in His power to destroy you and your faith in God. We have a real enemy, who is seeking to defeat and destroy God's children and he will do whatever it takes to throw you off course with God, 1 Pet. 5:8. Thankfully, Satan is limited in his ability to torment us by the sovereign will of God.

I. It Was A Night Of Great Dangers

II. IT WAS A NIGHT OF GREAT DOUBTS (4:38)

The greatest storm that night was not on the Sea of Galilee, but in the hearts of the disciples. This storm on the sea whipped up a storm of doubt within them that threatened to drown them all. While the storm is raging around them, Jesus is fast asleep in the back of the boat. They run to Him and wake Him up. The word "awaken" means "to rouse from sleep". They went to where He was sleeping and they began to shake Him to wake Him up. These men are terrified and have lost all hope of ever surviving this storm.

A. They Doubted His Concern For Them – "Teacher, do You not care" –

They accused the Lord of not caring about what they were facing. Why this doubt? After all, they had already seen Jesus conquer demons and diseases. Now, they are faced with a storm and they are afraid. Do you know what their problem was? They were looking at situations and not at the Savior. They had their thoughts on the facts and not on faith.

Before we got too hard on these men; perhaps we should consider our own hearts. Have there been times, when the storms are raging in your life, that you have questioned God's concern for you? You might not have said it out loud, but I am sure there have been times when your flesh has cried, "Lord, don't you care about what is happening to me?!" We've all been there at times!

I just want you to know today that He does care! He cares more than you could ever know. He cares and He is doing something about the situation, even though you might not see it now.

B. They Doubted His Commitment To Them – “we are perishing” -

Remember, it was Jesus Who had sent them out onto the sea in the first place. These men had left everything to follow Jesus and now He has led them into an impossibly dangerous situation. They are afraid the Jesus is just going to let them all die.

Jesus did not save you to abandon you when the going gets a little tough. He is absolutely committed to you and will never leave you or forsake you, Heb. 13:5. The word “leave” means “to let sink”; the word “forsake” means that He won’t “abandon you or desert you”. When the storm is raging; when your boat is rocking and reeling; when the adverse winds are blowing; when the waves are crashing against your vessel; He will not let you sink! He will hold you up and never desert you under any circumstances. The Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely committed to you!

C. They Doubted His Comments To Them – “Let us cross over to the other side” – Jesus had already told these men what was going to happen. He told them before the journey started that they were headed to the other side of the lake. If they had believed His words, they could have shouted in the face of the storm.

A young military officer and his young bride were married. They sat out on a honeymoon voyage and while they sailed a violent storm began to beat against their vessel. The young bride became very frightened by the storm but her new husband was not afraid, and she became irritated with him because he wasn't afraid like she was. After a while, he took his sword, pulled it out of its sheath, and put the point of the sword on the throat of his new bride, and she looked up at him and she smiled. He said, "You're not afraid?" She said, "Oh, no. I'm not afraid of a sword when it's in the hands of one who loves me."

And then she got the point. You don't have to be afraid of a storm when it's in the hands of one who loves you. There is One Who rules over land and sea. There is One Who has the power to calm the storms that arise in your life. You and I need not fear the storm when our gracious, loving Heavenly Father is the One in control!

I. It Was A Night Of Great Dangers

II. It Was A Night Of Great Doubts

III. IT WAS A NIGHT OF GREAT DISCOVERIES (4:39-41)

When they roused Jesus from sleep, He began to work. As He did, they made some precious discoveries about the Lord.

A. About The Power Of The Lord – This storm that so terrified these men posed no problem for the Lord Jesus. He rebuked the wind and spoke to the sea. When He did, the winds fell silent and the sea became as a sheet of glass. Just as easily as He had healed the sick and cast out the devils; He was able to control the storm.

The Lord we serve still has that same power today. Your storm is no problem for Him! He can silence it with a word, if He so desires. He may, however, desire to allow the storm to rage. When He does this, He is well able to protect you in the midst of the storm.

B. About The Promises Of The Lord – Just as He said, they passed over, Mark 5:1. They learned that He was as good as His Word!

He still is! Everything He has promised He will do. He will not back away from any promise He has made in this book!

C. About The Presence Of The Lord – When the Lord is in your vessel, you have an advantage.

As we sail on the sea of life, we need to be sure that Jesus rides with us in our boat. Having Jesus in your ship makes all the difference. They were able to call on Him because He was with them. They were able to see Him move in power because He was with them. They were able to experience His peace because He was with them. Is His in your boat? If He isn't, how do you weather the storms that arise in your life?

D. About The Purposes Of The Lord – The storm taught these men something a lesson they could have learned no other way. It would have been nice if they would simply have believed Him after seeing Him do all the great things He did in chapters one and two. It would have been great if they could have taken the things the Lord did for others and applied it to their own lives. If they could have said, "You know, if Jesus can heal a leper, cure Peter's mother-in-law, cast out devils, heal that guy with the palsy and forgive his sins, then I am sure that He can take care of this storm too." But, they seemed unable to process that information and apply it to their own lives. So, He sent them into this storm to teach them to trust Him.

What about us? We have the Bible. It tells us all the things He has done and can do. We have the testimony of others around us. We have seen what He has done for them. We have even seen Him move in our own lives. Wouldn't it be great if we could just trust Him? We don't, so He uses the storms to teach us that we can lean on Him and trust Him to take care of us.

I think the storm increased their faith! That may have been the purpose all along. If it wasn't the purpose, the Lord surely used it in that fashion. He does the same for us!

E. About The Peace Of The Lord – While they are fretting and fearing, what is the Lord doing? He is sleeping! Why? He knows that He is in the center of His Father's will. He knows that He will die on a cross and not in a shipwreck. He can sleep during the storm because He trusts His Father to take care of Him.

If a situation doesn't rattle the Lord, we shouldn't allow it to rattle us either! And, nothing rattles Him.

F. About The Person Of The Lord – When Jesus calmed the sea, their first reaction was fear. Verse 41 says, "**And they feared exceedingly.**" A moment earlier they had been terrified by the storm; now they were more terrified! They saw the One who, with a word, banished wind and waves. That's what it means to have faith: to be more impressed with Christ than we are with the problems, to have a fear of God in the proper sense. Someone has said, "If we fear the Lord, then we have nothing else to fear."

They were amazed and said, "**Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!**" The question of the disciples is probably rhetorical, and the answer is left for us to supply. That answer is not difficult to arrive at. The Jews believed that only God had power over the winds and the seas. "**O Lord God of hosts, Who is mighty like You, O Lord? Your faithfulness also surrounds**

You. You rule the raging of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them.”
(Psalm 89:8,9).

They learned that He is the Lord, the God of Hosts. He is the One Who is in control of every puff of wind; every angry wave and every storm. He can corral the waves; lasso the winds and hog tie the storm. Do you know Him today?

I don't know what storm you are going through today, but I know Who can still it. If it is a storm of suffering; He can ease your pain. If it is a storm of sorrow; He can comfort your soul. If it is a storm of sin; He can deliver you and set you free. Do you need to hear Jesus say “**Peace, be still**” to your storm? Come to Him today.