

Facing The Storms of Life

Does God Really Care?

Mark 4:35-41

Crossroads, April 25, 2010

- **Next 5 weeks: Fear and Faith**
 - o *Facing our deepest fears and most troubling anxieties*
 - o *See Jesus as he deals with people's fears in Mark 4-5*
 - o *Pray that we see God and our strengthened in faith*
- **Pray**
- **Skit** – Each week begin with a skit on the passage

READ Mark 4: 35-41 {5 min. for skit prep while everyone else read passage}

1) Facing the Storms of Life

- **Observations**
 - o Mark just completed “parable” or kingdom ... what does it look like in life to be “those that hear”
 - o Disciples in boat – many **fishermen** by trade
 - o Storm so bad they fear for life – fisherman fear down!
 - o **Jesus asleep** – so tired sleep through storm!
 - o Jesus **rebukes** storm – not pray, he simply rebukes
 - o Storm stops ... **completely calm** (seas don't just 'calm!)
- **Implications for Storms**
 - o Jesus has the power to not just stop storm, but to bring peace, to bring calm
- **Application to Storm in Life**
 - o Most of us don't face **physical storms** like this – some do – boat or plane in storm, Katrina, Earthquakes, Volcanoes and other Physical 'storms' of nature
 - o But we each face things that threaten to **upset our lives**
 - o Sometimes there are **situations we would like to see changed** – Car breaks during trip or busy week, upheaval at work, angry parents or roommates ... places big or small when life around us becomes a storm that threatens our wellbeing
 - What do we do – become **frustrated** and **discouraged**, even depressed ... try to **fix** ...
 - Or do we **turn to Jesus** to calm the storm?
 - o Other storms also come, things we cannot change but that have thrown us into **upheaval emotionally** – like when the woman I wanted to marry ended our

relationship – I would wake up in the middle of the night with my emotions in storm that threatened to wreck me ... for others it might be other **dreams lost**, or maybe there is abuse, or maybe mental issues, or maybe just that life seems to have you caught in **boring, pointless job** with no end in sight – emotional and personal storms

- **What to do?** Again we can become **discouraged** or depressed, or **angry** and bitter, or **dysfunctional**, or simply **numb**
- Again, do we **go to Jesus** – at 2am as I am laying in bed crying do I ask God to calm the storm that is my life? And **not just to change the external**, not just to take away the wind and rain – but to bring a great calm, **to bring that peace** that passes understanding!
 - o Early church saw self in boat, battered by the world around it – and took comfort that Jesus was in the boat!
- **Phil. 4:6-7 - Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

2) Don't You Care If We Drown?

- But this story goes **far deeper** ... the **disciples are actually more like us** that we might think – look back at the story and what they say when they wake Jesus
 - o Not: Jesus, you can stop this storm, so please do
 - o Not: Jesus, can you ask God to stop this storm
 - o Not even: Wake up and join us in our misery as we drown
 - o Rather they being an accusation – “**Don't you care if we drown**” – you care so little you will sleep while we die!
- And that is really our **deeper fear** isn't it – **we fear God just does not care about us** – our deepest fear is not that we might die, or even that life might suck for us ... the deeper fear is that this is yet another indication that God really does not care about me!
- And this can come in both the **big and small things in life** ... the last few Sundays I had gotten to bed much later than I wanted to. But last Sunday was different, I wrote my Crossroads talk Friday, I came back from the game club I was at on Saturday early, and I was in bed ready to sleep over 8 hours before I was to get up ... but **I could not sleep**. I wasn't even thinking about anything, I just could not sleep. I remember looking at the clock at 4am and saying to God – listen, I did everything right this week, how can you not give me sleep – if I am tired in church it's your fault ... i.e.

- “don’t you care enough to give sleep when I need it – especially since I did so good for you this week!”
- Maybe you wouldn’t say it out loud, but **isn’t that the real fear behind so many of the struggles in our lives – the fear that God has abandoned us**, that the storm itself is proof that either God is out to get me or that he is simply not all that concerned about me.
 - I may even **choose not to pray**, or to **pray with a hopelessness** about the prayer, because at the end of the day I am just too insignificant, or too sinful for God to actually care about
 - And to **pray with faith is even more scary** – what if God does not come through, that will be even more proof that he does not care – I mean which is worst, for your best friend / parent to not come to the big play because you never asked them to, or for you to ask them and to believe they will come and then have them not show up? Some of us are so afraid God will let us down we will not even ask him for anything anymore
 - Maybe we would not go so far as to say “God is dead”, but rather we say “**God is asleep**”, or to ask as the disciples did “Don’t you care is we drown?”
 - Note **Jesus’ answer** – he stands up and **rebukes the waves!**
 - But here is where we need to be careful – we **don’t want to draw false conclusions ...**
 - o Jesus **not save disciples from the storm**, but through it
 - o Here the **calm is immediate, not all** stories in scripture / life have the wind stop immediately ... but again, even in storm Jesus can bring peace and calm to us
 - o And the very fact that Jesus can calm the storm instantly should tell us that **if he does not there must be a reason**
 - **The ultimate proof** Jesus cares for you – **he died for you!**

3) Are You Terrified of the Right Thing?

- There is a 3rd lesson for us – look at Jesus comment to the disciples AFTER he has calmed the storm – “**Why ARE you so afraid**, do you **STILL have no faith**” – after the stopping of the storm the disciples were afraid, after the sea was calm they still lacked faith ... why?
- The disciples tell us – they were **terrified** now not of the storm, but **of Jesus** – “**who is this** that even the winds and waves obey him” – what is more fearful than a violent storm that we have no control over and is about to destroy us – one who with a word can stop it!
- What is the **real message** of this passage – not that God can deal with the storms in our life, not even that Jesus cares for us – both are true and both are important – but the key message is the one the disciples were just starting to realize – the key message is that

the guy asleep in the back of the boat is the creator, God of the universe, who is both in control of all things and is to be feared above all else!

- *{note: Psalm excerpts on next page}*
- This story should lead us back to **Psalm 107 (23-32)**, **Psalm 65 (5-6)**, the **parting of the red sea** - there is a **God far greater** than anything the physical or spiritual world can throw at us ... **He is the one we should fear far more than we fear anything else!**
- In a very real way this disciples here see an **epiphany** – a time when God unveils a part of himself for us to see – like Moses on the mountain – so now Jesus is showing himself to be Lord of all
- And that is the **larger goal of the storms** in our life – they are places where **God wants to reveal Himself** causing us to fear Him
- **Read Tozer Quote on next page.**
- The calm in the storm should lead not just to peace, but also to fear – **a reverent, bowing our life before this God of all creation**
- Notice Jesus **challenges the disciples to have faith** – faith in what – He has already calmed the storm – so what do they need faith for?
- They need to couple their newfound fear of God with faith – getting a **glimpse of the power** and might of God can be a very **fearful thing** – God could just as easily **use that power against you** as for you! – and that is where we need faith the most – faith that **Jesus really does care** for us and has **decided to act for our good** – even if we don’t always understand it all
- Someone once said: “**When you fear God, you have nothing else to fear.**” – *God is so much bigger beyond even our worst fears*
- *There is an inscription in Westminster Abbey to Lord Lawrence that reads: “He feared man so little, because he feared God so much.”*
- **What do you fear – the storm or the man in back of the boat? Do you know Jesus cares for you and has the power to act on that care, whatever it takes?**
- A.W. Tozer puts this fear and faith together with joy as he says: “**The fear of God is ... astonished reverence. I believe that the reverential fear of God mixed with love and fascination and astonishment and admiration and devotion is the most enjoyable state and the most satisfying emotion the human soul can know.**”
- **Today**, will you **fall on your face** before this God who is to be feared ... and then amidst the storms of your life, will you **believe this same God truly cares for you**, and **bring your burdens to Christ**, the only one who can bring true calm, the **one who promises peace beyond our comprehension!**

- Psalm 107 (23-32)

²³ Others went out on the sea in ships;
they were merchants on the mighty waters.

²⁴ They saw the works of the Lord,
his wonderful deeds in the deep.

²⁵ For he spoke and stirred up a tempest
that lifted high the waves.

²⁶ They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths;
in their peril their courage melted away.

²⁷ They reeled and staggered like drunken men;
they were at their wits' end.

²⁸ Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out of their distress.

²⁹ He stilled the storm to a whisper;
the waves of the sea were hushed.

³⁰ They were glad when it grew calm,
and he guided them to their desired haven.

³¹ Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for men.

³² Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people
and praise him in the council of the elders.

- Psalm 65 (5-6)

⁵ You answer us with awesome deeds of righteousness,
O God our Savior,
the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas,

⁶ who formed the mountains by your power,
having armed yourself with strength,

⁷ who stilled the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
and the turmoil of the nations.

⁸ Those living far away fear your wonders;
where morning dawns and evening fades
you call forth songs of joy.

- In his book, *Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer writes: *In olden days men of faith were said to “walk in the fear of God” and to “serve the Lord with fear.” However intimate their communion with God, however bold their prayers, at the base of their religious life was the conception of God as awesome and dreadful. This idea of God transcendent runs through the whole Bible and gives color and tone to the character of saints. This fear of God was more than a natural apprehension of danger; it was a nonrational dread, an acute feeling of personal insufficiency in the presence of God the Almighty. Wherever God appeared to men in Bible times the results were the same—an overwhelming sense of terror and dismay, a wrenching sensation of sinfulness and guilt. When God spoke, Abraham stretched himself upon the ground to listen. When Moses saw the Lord in the burning bush, he hid his face in fear to look upon God. Isaiah’s vision of God wrung from him the cry, “Woe is me!” Daniel’s encounter with God was probably the most dreadful and wonderful of them all. Conversely, the self-assurance of modern Christians, the basic levity present in so many of our religious gatherings, the shocking disrespect shown for the Person of God, are evidence enough of deep blindness of heart. Many call themselves by the name of Christ, talk much about God, and pray to Him sometimes, but evidently do not know who He is. “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life,” but this healing fear is today hardly found among Christian men.*