

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

MARK 4:35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they

awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

NOTES

Jesus Calms a Storm

Lesson Text: Mark 4:35-41

Related Scriptures: Psalm 107:23-32; Jonah 1:1-16;
Matthew 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25; Acts 27:13-44

TIME: between A.D. 26 and 30

PLACE: Sea of Galilee

GOLDEN TEXT—"And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:41).

Lesson Exposition

THE SETTING—MARK 4:35-36

This passage comes immediately after a series of parables (vss. 1-34). Jesus had been teaching about the kingdom of God, and now He was about to demonstrate its power. Sometimes, when the crowd was thick, Jesus would get into a boat and put off from the shore, continuing to teach from there. That way, He would not be tightly surrounded and could preach more easily (cf. Luke 5:1-11).

The remark that other boats were with Him has no real bearing on this story, but it does have importance for us precisely *because* it has no real relevance to the story. If you were devising a clever myth in the first century (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16), you would not throw in details like this. This throwaway line is the mark of an eyewitness account, not a legend.

The disciples got into the storm because they obeyed Jesus' command to cross over. Some difficulties come because we obey God. When we suffer, we sometimes examine our lives to see whether we have sinned and are being disciplined. That is not inappropriate, because sometimes we are being disciplined. But sometimes our dif-

ficulties are because of our obedience, not our disobedience (cf. 1 Pet. 3:17).

THE STORM—MARK 4:37-38

A great storm arose, shaking the boat. A number of the disciples were former fishermen, yet they were frightened. Meanwhile, Jesus was fast asleep! This highlights Jesus' true humanity. He experienced weakness and needed rest, just as we do.

Only once the waves were filling the boat did the disciples wake Jesus. They seemingly had not wanted to bother Him before, but now they needed Him. How often do we do the same thing, only coming to God as a last resort?

When the disciples asked whether Jesus cared about them, they were questioning His character, not His power. They seemed to believe that He could do something—that was the whole point of waking Him up, after all! It is not clear what they expected Jesus to do given their fear when He responded, but they seemingly expected Him to do *something*.

JESUS' RESPONSE—MARK 4:39-40

When Jesus woke, He rebuked the storm, and it died down. He did not repeatedly pray as Elijah had (1 Kgs.

18:41-46) or respond to a command from God as Moses had (Ex. 14:15-22). He simply commanded the storm. Before, the disciples' fear had been for their lives. Now it was from their realization of Jesus' tremendous power. They had seen Jesus miraculously heal people and cast out demons (Mark 1:29-34; 3:7-12), but this miracle had an epic scope. Jesus displayed power that belongs to God alone (cf. Ps. 107:23-32).

The apostles woke Jesus because they believed He could do something, but He rebuked them for having no faith. They might have thought, *Wait a minute, we do have faith—that's why we woke you!* But faith involves both belief in Jesus' power and trust in His love. When we believe that God is powerful but question His love, we are not displaying faith. If the disciples had believed that Jesus was the Messiah, they could have had confidence. The right action may still have been to wake Jesus up, but they should have asked for His help differently. We all too often question whether God loves us when He allows difficulties in our lives.

After calming the storm, Jesus asked the disciples why they were afraid. He rules over all of creation. He commands storms, demons, disease, and death. We do not need to fear other people (cf. Prov. 29:25) or circumstances. If God is for us, who can be against us? Nothing can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:31-39).

Jesus calmed the storm even though He rebuked the disciples for having no faith. Even when our faith is weak, He hears us. We do not need to waste time worrying whether our faith is strong enough. If we come to Him, He will answer.

THE DISCIPLES' RESPONSE— MARK 4:41

The disciples' question is the main point of the story. While it is right to say that Jesus can calm the metaphorical

storms in our lives, the focus of this story is Jesus. All of Mark's Gospel demonstrates that Jesus is the Son of God (1:1), which becomes increasingly clear throughout the book. This story shows that Jesus is a real man who gets tired. Jesus is also fully God, able to command creation. No one else possesses that power. He is not partly divine; He is completely God (cf. Col. 2:9). He is fully human and fully divine. Early heresies denied that Jesus was human. Today, no credible historian questions Jesus' existence as a historical figure, but many deny that He was God. We must affirm both Jesus' humanity and divinity.

Before we allegorize this story and say that Jesus can guide us through the storms of our lives (which He can), we first need to answer the question the disciples asked: Who is Jesus?

—Tom Greene

QUESTIONS

1. What happened immediately before this passage?
2. How did Jesus sometimes preach to crowds?
3. How is the detail that there were other boats helpful to us?
4. Why were the disciples caught in the storm?
5. What does Jesus falling asleep demonstrate?
6. Why did the disciples wake Jesus in the storm?
7. What did Jesus' calming of the storm demonstrate?
8. What two things does genuine faith involve?
9. How did Jesus respond to the disciples' lack of faith?
10. What is the main point of this story?

—Tom Greene

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Sometimes obeying Jesus will lead us into difficulty (Mark 4:35-37).
2. Jesus understands our needs, so we can pray confidently (vs. 38).
3. When difficulty comes, sometimes we doubt God's goodness. But even when we only have a little faith, Jesus answers prayer (vss. 38-39).
4. Jesus has power that belongs to God alone and is fully God (Mark 4:39; cf. John 8:58; Col. 1:15-20).
5. Doubting God's goodness shows we lack true faith, even if we believe in His power (Mark 4:40).
6. God is to be feared (Mark 4:41; cf. Deut. 10:12; Eccl. 12:13).

—Tom Greene

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Do you tend to emphasize Jesus' divinity or humanity more than the other? Why is that?
2. How does it negatively impact our lives if we forget Jesus' humanity? What are some verses that clearly teach His humanity?
3. How does it negatively impact our lives if we forget Jesus' deity? What are some verses that clearly teach His deity?
4. If God still answers the prayers of those who have weak or no faith (Mark 4:40), what are we to make of calls to pray in faith, such as James 1:6-8?
5. What does a proper fear of God look like (cf. Ps. 130:3-5; Prov. 9:10)? How does this fit with 1 John 4:18?
6. If you don't fear God in your daily life, what can you do to help change that?

—Tom Greene

Golden Text Illuminated

“And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:41).

Paul declared, “Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). This mystery is on display in Mark 4. With Jesus asleep, a great storm arose. The disciples cried out to Christ. Christ arose and silenced the winds with a word, “and there was a great calm” (vs. 39). Then Christ rebuked them. Their panic revealed they did not yet understand the Master. “And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him” (vs. 41). This reveals two principles that help us worship Christ and trust Him.

Principle #1: The fear of the disciples reveals the faith they should have had. The disciples had great fear *after* Jesus calmed the storm! This was not fear for their safety but fear of majesty. Faith in Christ and fear of Christ are intermingled and inseparable.

Principle #2: The question of the disciples contains the theology they should have had. The answer to their question is the profound truth that Christ is fully man, yet He possesses the divine right to command the elements. The disciples' amazement after Christ calmed the storm revealed why they should have trusted Him before He calmed the storm.

We must search the Scriptures and meditate on the glory of Christ. The more we see His infinite power and matchless authority, the more we will fear Him and have unwavering faith in Him to do the impossible.

—Jerod A. Gilcher