

The Calm After The Storm

Mark 4:35-41 August 13, 2025

There's a movie trope where the taxi driver picks up a passenger, not realizing who they really are. *Usually* that passenger is a scary character. The plot unfolds with twists and turns, and you wonder how the driver will escape. By the end, they have gone from passive occupant to active courage, taking charge of the story, and realizing they had more power within themselves than they realized.

Our text tonight starts off with a routine commute across the Sea of Galilee. The disciples don't think much about it. But by the end of the night, their whole world has changed as they realize they don't really know Who this powerful Passenger in the boat with them is.

In the last few sections, we've seen a number of parables stacked together. For the next few sections, we have four of Jesus' miracles stacked together, to demonstrate once again that He was not just a wise man. He wasn't just an inspiring teacher. No, we'll see He had power over the creation *and* over demons *and* over disease *and* over death. But we'll find people had a hard time understanding Who Jesus was *even after* seeing these things with their own eyes.

Mark 4:35 - ³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he told them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the sea."

There were so many people coming to hear Jesus and have Him perform healings for them that He would often have to be in a boat a little off shore so He could preach the Gospel without being crushed by the crowds.¹ His days in Galilee were jam packed full of action and interaction.

It's hard to imagine what it would've been like to be one of the disciples. The miracles you saw. The truths you heard. To be *with* Jesus. But you also sense a growing jealousy and resentment from the Scribes and Pharisees. You've realized you can't predict what Jesus might say or do next. And *now* He does another surprising thing: He says, "Let's go over to *Gentile* territory for a bit." That's what was waiting on the other side of the sea.²

"Why would we want to go over there?" Jesus preached in Jewish regions *and* Gentile regions. He cast out demons in both territories. He performed a miraculous feeding miracle for a Jewish crowd and later a Gentile crowd. Jesus is the Savior of *all* people.

Mark 4:36 - ³⁶ So they left the crowd and took him along since he was in the boat. And other boats were with him.

There's a casualness here. Jesus was already in the boat, they don't bother gathering more supplies or anything, they just head out. The language there says they took Him, "just as He was."³

¹ Mark 3:9

² CSB Study Bible Notes

³ Robert Utey *The Gospel According To Peter: Mark And First & Second Peter*

The disciples weren't concerned about the trip. They had at least four experienced fishermen in the group. It was their boat. They knew this sea. They were very used to sailing after sundown.

Notice the vivid details in this story. The time of day, how other ships were tagging along. How they remembered Jesus didn't even get out of the boat after a teaching session. In a minute we'll see reference to a cushion. All of this indicates that what we're reading is a true, eyewitness account.⁴

Mark 4:37 - ³⁷ A great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.

Mark calls this a *mega* storm. Bible linguists use terms like hurricane,⁵ or "a violent upheaval like an earthquake."⁶ It's bad enough that we'll see the seasoned veterans in the group are just as convinced they're going to die as the land lubbers are.

Now, the Sea of Galilee was notorious for sudden storms,⁷ but was this just a coincidence? There's something unusual going on. Mark give us a few clues that there's more than a low-pressure system behind this cyclone.

Remember: After Jesus overcame Satan in His wilderness temptation, Luke tells us Satan departed for a more opportune time to attack again.⁸ And in chapter 5, *as soon as Jesus lands* He is confronted by a *legion* of demons. The devil knew He was coming to the region of the Gadarenes.

Linguists also point out that when Jesus calms the storm, He will use the same terms He did back in chapter 1 when casting out a demon. And Mark uses a word for storm which is the same word the Septuagint uses when describing the whirlwind Satan used to kill Job's children in Job chapter 1.

All of that suggests that this was not a coincidence, but that it was satanic artillery fired against Jesus in an effort to stop Him from preaching and revealing Himself in Gentile territory.

But can the Devil really control the weather? Well, obviously he cannot do anything outside of God's sovereign permission. But he *is* the prince of the power of the air.⁹ And we do see him using natural, weather phenomena in the book of Job. But we don't need to be afraid of that. A major theme of this story is that if you're a Christian, you need not fear, even if the Devil himself has started shelling your little fishing boat.

With that said, this wasn't an illusion. The boat was *filling* up. And they were already riding lower in the water than they'd want, having 13 people in this little boat. This is trouble with a capital T.

⁴ Frank Gaebelein, D. A. Carson, Walter Wessel, and Walter Liefeld *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8: Matthew, Mark, Luke*

⁵ Marvin Vincent *Word Studies In The New Testament*

⁶ Archibald Robertson *Word Pictures In The New Testament*

⁷ Gaebelein

⁸ Luke 4:13

⁹ Ephesians 2:2

Mark 4:38 - ³⁸ He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher! Don't you care that we're going to die?"

Are you a heavy sleeper? When I was a kid, I could sleep through a smoke detector going off. There, in this open boat, waves crashing, people yelling, wind howling, Jesus didn't stir. He was *asleep*. There's a suggestion in the vocabulary that they actually had trouble waking Him up.¹⁰

Was it because He had so much peace in His heart or because He was exhausted to His bones? Both were true. Jesus had a settled serenity, knowing He was being led by God the Father. Like David sang in Psalm 4, Jesus could lie down and sleep in peace because He trusted the Father. But also we should remember that Jesus was fully Man. He was *tired*. John 4 tells us of His weariness.

Pause to think for a moment of what an incredible thing it is that God was willing to take on *all* the aspects of humanity so that He could save us. He, an eternal Being with no weakness or limitation, was willing to take on fatigue, willing to take on exhaustion, willing to take on physical pain *for you*.

Now, contrast that kind, generous, self-sacrificing grace with how the disciples reacted in the moment. "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to die?" Their words were rough and indignant.¹¹ They've been translated and paraphrased like this: "We are in the process of perishing!"¹² And, "Teacher, are we to drown, for all You care?"¹³

They bring Him an accusation, not an appeal. It's strange - they clearly *have* some belief, and yet it is a stunted belief. An unbelieving belief.

They wake Jesus up because, in their time of crisis, they feel like He *must* have something He could do. *But* notice how they address Him: "Teacher." That title reveals something about their faith.

How has Jesus referred to Himself so far in this Gospel? As the *Son of Man*. Not just a great rabbi, but something much more. At His baptism, He was identified as the beloved Son of God. "Teacher, don't you care?" Well, if He's just a *teacher*, what's He supposed to do about a hurricane?

And that's the other sad part about their reaction. They *rebuke* Jesus.¹⁴ They accuse Him of not caring enough to keep them safe. So not only is He just a teacher in their minds, but an unkind one.

Now, we're scandalized by their lack of faith, but we have to be honest and admit that we do this to Jesus all the time. In our prayers, in our reactions, in our attempts to solve our problems, how often have we convinced ourselves that God is going to let us down? That there will be some moment of crisis where He *will* fail to keep His promises. "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." "There's a boy here with five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they among so

¹⁰ Clifton Allen *Matthew-Mark*

¹¹ Morna Hooker *The Gospel According To Saint Mark*

¹² Wayne Slusser *Jesus Stills The Storm*

¹³ James Brooks *Mark Vol. 23. The New American Commentary*

¹⁴ William Lane *The Gospel Of Mark*

many?" "If I don't see the nail marks in His hands and put my hand into His side, I will *never* believe."

The whole point of the Gospel of Mark is for us to answer this question: Who do we say that He is? Is He our *Savior*? Is He the Messiah? Is He Lover of our souls and the Lifter of our heads?

It will not do to have unbelieving belief. It will not do for us to have a partial trust in Jesus. If we convince ourselves that He will eventually let us down, then fear and frustration will come rushing in. And instead of *rest* in the storms of life, we'll be in the kind of panic we see in this verse.

Mark 4:39 - ³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Silence! Be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

He didn't have to be brought up to speed or briefed on the situation. He didn't have to rev up His power. His command over the cosmos was total and *immediate*. Where there had been a *mega* storm, now there was a *mega* calm. Same word.

Where else have we read about a man asleep on a ship that encounters a terrible storm only to have him wakened and the storm suddenly calmed? There are many parallels to the Jonah story here. And they become all the brighter when in Matthew 12 Jesus makes the bold claim that He is *greater* than Jonah.

In Jonah's case, he was *running* from his mission to preach to non-Jews, so God sent the storm. In Jesus' case, He was *headed* to preach to non-Jews, and it seems the devil was trying to stop Him.

Jonah chose his own death rather than repentance - "Throw me overboard and God will stop the storm." Jesus calmed the storm Himself, because He *is* God.

When Jesus spoke to the storm, He literally said to it, "Shut up. Be muzzled."¹⁵ The calm that resulted, scholars say, evokes the idea that the sea was so exhausted it had to lay down to rest.¹⁶

In His sleepy exhaustion, Jesus was instantly, absolutely, totally more powerful than the satanic storm, with all its fury and strength. With a word, it was over. When the Lord speaks, it is done.

But now, the Lord has something to say to the 12.

Mark 4:40 - ⁴⁰ Then he said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

3 words for the hurricane, but 10 for His followers. It's easy for us to think that our *circumstances* or our *struggles* are the problem when, *often times*, the real problem that needs fixing is in our hearts.

¹⁵ R.T. France *The Gospel Of Mark*

¹⁶ Vincent

Jesus marveled at their fear. They woke Him up to rebuke Him, but He says, “No, here’s what’s really going on: You are *cowards*.”¹⁷ If they really believed then there was no reason for them to be afraid. If God is with us, we need not fear. That *doesn’t* mean life is always easy, but He is not *only* the God of power, He is the God of *peace*.

Isaiah 41:10 - ¹⁰Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand.

Their lack of faith wasn’t in the idea that God *could* work a miracle. It seems like the 12 knew Jesus had power to do *something*. The problem was that they didn’t believe the Lord actually cared about them.

Now, in this day and age we don’t talk about fear as much as we do “worry.” I’m *worried* about this, that, or the other thing. That’s natural. But worry is just a fear that God is going to let me down. That He is not trustworthy. And the Bible *commands* us to not worry¹⁸ just as it commands us not to fear.

If you’re worried or afraid of some situation in your life, answer Jesus’ question: *Why* are you afraid? The answer is going to boil down to that I don’t *really* think God cares that much about me.

Mark 4:41 - ⁴¹And they were terrified, and asked one another, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”

This is a remarkable ending to a dramatic scene. The wind was calm. The sea was calm. But the disciples? They were *terrified*. The Greek says they “feared a great fear.”¹⁹ They *still* weren’t grabbing on to Who Jesus was. Look how they don’t talk to *Him*, they talk to *each other*. In Matthew’s account, they ask, “What kind of man is this?”²⁰

There it is. He’s not some man. He’s the *Son* of Man. He’s the GodMan. He’s the Messiah. But they are still unwilling to settle that in their hearts. And so, they are left not calmed or comforted, but conflicted. The storm moved from outside the boat to inside their hearts. They’re wondering what they’ve gotten themselves into.

As we’ll see, they have a long way to go. And we do, too. We *also* struggle with doubt and worry and frustration and discouragement. When we do, we need to simply answer this question: “Who then is this?” Who is this Person Who has come into our lives? The GodMan in our boat. Do we believe Jesus really is Who He says He is? And if so, are we listening to what He says and how we can conform our lives to it? The journey might seem scary, but through faith comes rest, peace, power, growth - the calm and help we need to live a life with eternal value.

¹⁷ Ben Witherington *The Gospel Of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*

¹⁸ Philippians 4:6

¹⁹ Allen

²⁰ Matthew 8:27