

“Jesus Calms the Storm”

Mark 4:35-41

Turn with me in your Bibles to the fourth chapter of Mark, and in a minute we'll read beginning in verse 35. Have you ever been in a situation where you were so fearful that you could almost taste it? Your heart is racing, you break out in a cold sweat, your mouth is dry, your hands are trembling. Whether it is a child afraid of the dark, or an adult waiting to read the results of a pathology report, or a parent who can't find their son or daughter—fear knows where to find you. It can come on you suddenly out of the blue. We never know what a day will bring forth. Worry, stress, and fear are part of daily life. Really, could there be a more important topic? I came across some data to help put it in perspective:

- The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics found that 18.2% of U.S. adults experienced symptoms of anxiety in a recent period—roughly one out of every five adults. Anxiety rates were the highest among younger adults.
- The American Psychiatric Association's 2025 Annual Mental Health Poll reported that about two-thirds of Americans are anxious about current events happening around the world.
- Gallup's 2026 survey found that 43% of Americans reported being worried a great deal about major national issues, including healthcare, the economy, crime, and government concerns.

We read and hear things that trouble us. Doomscrolling is the habit of continually consuming negative news, alarming headlines, and distressing social media content, often for extended periods of time. Maybe you begin scrolling in an attempt to stay informed, but the constant exposure to stuff contributes to fear and anxiety by keeping your mind fixed on the negative. It distorts your

perspective, convincing you that your world is more hopeless and chaotic than it truly is. And as a result of this, many people experience increased stress, worry, sleep difficulties, and emotional exhaustion. While we should be informed about the world around us, our hearts should ultimately be anchored in the faithfulness of God rather than in constant headlines.

Philippians 4:8—“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

But it doesn't stop with fears about things happening on the global stage. In fact, that actually is eclipsed by the fears that we live with on a personal level. These same studies revealed the deepest fears people have include:

- Fear of losing loved ones — Serious illness, death, or harm coming to family members is consistently one of Americans' greatest fears.
- Fear of financial instability — Concern about retirement, medical bills, job security, and everyday expenses.
- Fear of personal illness or decline — Many worry about physical and mental health, or disability.
- Fear of loneliness and broken relationships — Isolation, rejection, and strained family relationships continue to be significant sources of anxiety.
- Fear of failure and an uncertain future — Many fear losing control, disappointing others, making wrong decisions, or facing an unknown future.

All of it suggests that we're living in perhaps one of the most anxious periods in modern history. If you have struggled with fear, you are not alone. Fear is no

respector of people or of ages. It strikes the weak and the powerful. It haunts the young and the old, the rich and the poor. Throughout the Bible, fear is often what keeps people from being able to enter into some state of blessing that God intended for them.

- Numbers 13:27–33, God put the Promised Land before the children of Israel, but they wouldn't go in because they were... afraid. The spies came back and said, "The people there are like giants and we're grasshoppers."
- Matthew 14:28–32, Peter begins to sink as he walks on the water because he looks around at the storm and is afraid. Christ's power would have held him up, but he sank.
- In many ways, the original sin of Adam and Eve grew out of fear. Satan played on this idea that their obedience to God was making them miss out on something.

Go through and think about it, and you'll find example after example. Israel makes the golden calf because they are afraid God has abandoned them. Saul disobeys God because he is afraid of the people. The Israelites wouldn't take on Goliath because they were afraid. God had all the power necessary, yet their fear kept them from experiencing it. Fear is what keeps you from experiencing the place of blessing God has for you!

To understand why God is the answer to all our fears, we must understand what the Bible says about fear. And it says a lot. Do you know what the most often given command given in the Bible is? It is "Fear not." That is the most frequently repeated command. That command is found in the Bible 366 times. That's one for each day of the year, including leap year. The word 'afraid' occurs more than 200 times, and fear more than 400 times. And lest you think our Bible heroes

were fearless, more than two hundred individuals in Scripture are said to have been afraid. And many were the main characters such as David, Paul, Timothy, and others. Biblical heroes were regular people who had to learn the same things you and I have to learn—to drive out fear by increasing their knowledge of God, to shift their focus from their present fear to the eternal God, to replace what they didn't know about the future with what they did know about Him.

Here in Mark 4, the disciples' raise a question—"Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" It is not merely a question they asked. It is a question many of us are asking today. When fear is in the driver's seat, we question whether or not the Lord is genuinely concerned for our well-being. And His response to the question is the same thing He says to us, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" (Read)

Mark 4 records a very busy day in the life of Jesus and the disciples. He had been teaching in a boat just off the shore of the Sea of Galilee while the crowds of people listened to Him from the land. As He taught them in parables, He then would explain their meaning to His disciples. And so it had been a busy time of preaching and ministering to the needs of people. Verse 35 says, "On that day, when evening had come, He said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.'" He intended for them to make the eight mile trip across the lake to the other side, which was predominately made up of Gentiles. Not long after shoving off, a windstorm suddenly comes upon them, the waves threaten to swamp their little vessel. Meanwhile, Jesus is asleep in the stern. Fear then begins to take over, they assume the worst, and become sure that the boat is going under. And I suppose that's the normal reaction we all have to something we can't control. The disciples are in a panic. And you've been there too. That is the way it is with fear. We are afraid of what might happen. It is a hypothetical uncertainty. That's

because fear likes to trade in the market of possibility. Fear is a tyrant of the imagination, it imposes itself upon us from the shadows, casting a hazy reflection in the mirror of ‘maybe.’

Don Wyrzten — *“The illusive monster of fear lurks in the shadows, waiting to claw my soul to shreds. And one prone to melancholia, I see its ugly face often: when I’m struggling with the emotional stress of a difficult relationship, when I’m afraid failure is just around the corner, when success seems too hard to handle, and on days when free-floating anxiety is getting the best of me.”*

Free-floating anxiety. That may be the worst one, the kind of fear that something is wrong, but you don’t know what. It just seems to envelop you like a cloud. Well, the fear of dying in a storm was what the disciples were experiencing. Fear had convinced them that their boat was about to go under, and this all while Jesus was asleep and seemingly unconcerned. Now, I want to be quick to say that this story isn’t primarily about how Jesus gets us through the storms of life. While that is true, the bigger issue addressed within this text concerns itself with the identity of this One who is in the boat with the disciples. We must trust Him because of who He is, no matter the situation we’re facing. That’s what the disciples are going to learn. And so from their experience, we learn several important truths. First of all:

1 – The POTENTIAL of difficulty in God’s will is to be expected (4:35-37)

“On that day, when evening had come, He said to them, ‘Let us go across to the other side.’ And leaving the crowd, they took Him with them in the boat, just as He was. And other boats were with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.”

Now, as we look at this, why were the disciples where they were? Why are the disciples out on the lake? And why do they end up in the storm? For starters, let me tell you why they were not there. They're not in the middle of a storm due to their disobedience. They're not in this predicament because they had made some foolish choice in their life. It is not like that. Obviously, you and I know that we can get ourselves into all kinds of messes as the result of making foolish choices. Our own lives testify to that, and the Bible speaks to that reality as well. There are those storms that we encounter that are of our own making, such as the consequences of our own decisions.

But pay attention to the fact that the opposite is true here, and that it is the result of their obedience that they now find themselves in the middle of a storm. It is obedience to the word of Jesus that leads them into a storm, a place where their fears will be faced and their faith will be challenged. It is important to mention this, before we go any further in the text, that sometimes the will of God involves that you and I face storms. You need to know that because I am sure that some of you have experienced something similar, though you've been obedient to God, though you love Him and are seeking to do His will in your life.

Think about various storms of difficulty that many of God's choice servants in Scripture faced, though they had simply been obedient to His will:

- Moses is met with opposition from Pharaoh
- Elijah runs for his life from Jezebel
- David hides in caves from Saul
- Jeremiah is thrown into a well by Zedekiah's officials

God doesn't always spare us from the storms. But neither should that fact cause us to give in to fear. In the disciples' case, they knew full well how prone the Sea of Galilee is to changing weather. It is about 700 feet below sea level, and a mere 30 miles to the north is Mount Hermon which is 9,232 feet high. Cold air from higher elevations continually clashes with warm air coming up from the Sea of Galilee, and as a result there are impressive windstorms. And the mountains and valleys surrounding the Sea of Galilee act like funnels which bring the wind down to the surface and cause the lake to churn like a cauldron.

They were seasoned fishermen who had grown up around the sea, and for them to panic the way they do suggests to us that it must have been some kind of wind. In fact, there are some Bible teachers who argue that it is 'satanic' in its origin. In the very next chapter, Jesus arrives on the other side of the lake where he is met by a man possessed with a legion of demons. Satan doesn't like to give up any territory and will try to oppose the gospel in any way that he can.

But then those same Bible teachers will point how verse 39 may also give a clue as to the satanic origin of the storm, for Jesus says, "Peace, be still!" Literally, in the Greek text, could be translated 'be muzzled.' It is the same word used in Mark 1:25 where Jesus confronts an unclean spirit in the synagogue and says, "Be silent!" Now, I'm not saying that the storm is satanic opposition, for the text doesn't say that. But neither am I ruling out the possibility. The origin of the storm isn't as important as the authority which is over it. I do, however, want you to understand the possibility of life's storms. They can come out of the blue. And when they do it is often a fearful thing. The disciples were simply being obedient to the will of the Master, and it led to an unexpected crisis.

And so we must not be surprised about the possibility of difficulty in the will of God. But then notice something else:

2—The PRESENCE of Jesus doesn't guarantee smooth sailing (4:38)

“But He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’”

The windstorm comes out of nowhere, and what ought to have been smooth sailing turns into a violent situation. The waves are about to swamp the boat. And while things seem to be getting out of control, where is Jesus? He is asleep. In verse 36, Mark says that earlier they had taken Jesus with them in the boat ‘just as He was.’ And based upon all that we read earlier in the chapter, He was tired. Exhausted from a full day of preaching and ministry to needy people. This is His humanity on display for us. Sometimes, we can easily forget that Jesus was fully human. He ate when He was hungry, He drank when He was thirsty, and He slept when He was tired.

Hebrews 4:15—“For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

In His humanity, Jesus is exhausted from a long day of ministry. But in His deity, He will prove that He is sovereign over the wind and the waves. Like the song that says:

*He was so much Man
That He slept in a boat,
Yet He was so much God
That the winds ceased when He spoke!*

The disciples have not yet learned just who it is that is with them in the boat! But they are about to get a glimpse. And so they are fearful of the wind, fearful of the

waves. Jesus is asleep in the stern, they wake Him up and say, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

Controlled by their fear, they begin to doubt two things:

The assurance of His love for them

Notice they ask, “Teacher, do You not care?” Think of it. The one thing that we see Jesus doing non-stop is caring for others. He touches lepers. He opens the eyes of the blind. He casts out demons from those who were oppressed. There is no doubt about it—Jesus cares! He is love incarnate. He is full of mercy and compassion. They have seen this firsthand. And yet when they’re in the storm, it is His love for them which they question.

From our perspective, there is an apparent problem when we encounter the storms of life—God is absent. We want to know where He is and what He is up to, but all we seem to get is Heaven’s silence. When our prayer seems to go unanswered, when our circumstances seem to get worse instead of get better, when God doesn’t do something on our timetable. Often our first instinct is to conclude that He is unconcerned. But our problem is that we interpret God’s silence as His absence, which is not true. That’s what the disciples do in this situation.

David Jeremiah — *“Some people do believe in the power of God, but they’re not sure about His presence. That’s a significant deficiency in one’s faith. Will He really be there when I’m in a crisis? Does He care about me? We can believe in a powerful God who can create a universe, but if He is absent when needed, how does that belief make a difference? Isn’t His absence basically the same as if He didn’t exist at all?”*

That was the crisis that the disciples faced here. They question the assurance of His love for them. And then they question:

The accuracy of His word to them

Do you not care that we are perishing? They are fearful of death at this point. And in the midst of the crisis, they have forgotten what He said in verse 35, “Let us go across to the other side.” His will involved going to the other side of the lake. But would the present situation overrule His ability to make good on His word? And so the question they ask is one we’ve asked too at times. Do You not care that we’re about to go under, Lord? You’ve said we’re crossing over to the other side, but based on the way things are going, we’re not so sure. When we begin to encounter resistance in the will of God, our first inclination is to doubt the Word of God. We forget that there is no such thing as ‘smooth sailing’ when in the will of God.

What mattered was not the problem of a storm at sea, but the presence of Jesus in the boat!

Lamar Williamson, Jr. — *“We cry out to God in the midst of our storms, ‘Don’t You care?’ We try to wake God up to take care of us. At such times the text speaks to our condition. It picture Jesus in the boat with His disciples, present with us and concerned for us even when we do not perceive His care.”*

The Lord never intended for us to bear the overwhelming burden of life alone. Instead, He gives us Himself. He has promised to be with us. Philippians 4:6 says the Lord is at hand, so do not be anxious about anything. Don’t assume His silence means that He isn’t with you. His Word tells me otherwise:

Hebrews 13:5—“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Matthew 28:20—“Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Those are promises that we can build our lives upon. And in that way, when the storms suddenly show up, we don't have to panic or give in to fear. We don't have to question the assurance His love for us or the accuracy of His Word to us. Instead, like James says, we learn to count it all joy when we meet trials of various kinds, for we know that the testing of our faith produces steadfastness.

Charles Spurgeon — *“I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages.”*

And so the possibility of difficulty in the will of God is to be expected, the presence of Jesus doesn't guarantee smooth sailing, and then notice third:

3—The PURPOSE of trials is to magnify our Savior and deepen our faith (4:39-41)

“And He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, ‘Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?’ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?’”

Jesus speaks, and the wind and sea obey. It results in an instant calm. One minute the wind is howling and the sea is raging, the next it is completely calm. What we find on display here is the Lordship of Jesus over creation, His rebuke of the forces that apparently challenge and harass. It is an echo of Genesis 1, “God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” So that the Son of God now stands on the deck of the boat and says, “Let the wind be calm, let the waves cease,” and the sea is suddenly calm.

John 16:33—“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

As those who live in a fallen world, trouble is a certainty. It isn't a matter of 'if' but a matter of 'when.' Calm waters are the exception, not the norm. But Jesus speaks His peace to the turbulent tides. The sea becomes like glass. There is not so much as a breeze. And perhaps more miraculous is the supernatural calm that comes to the turbulent hearts of the disciples. He uses the storm as an object lesson by asking them the question, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”

William Cowper said it this way:

*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

A sudden storm at sea? That's a frowning providence and is unexpected, unwanted. It is 'frowning' because it doesn't appear favorable to us, and from our

limited perspective it threatens to undo us. But behind that frowning providence God hides a smiling face, meaning that He doesn't intend for it to destroy us, but that it somehow is serving His grand purpose for our lives.

Look at the response they have to the power of Jesus over the storm. Fear of the storm gives way to fear of the Savior in their life. So that you have two types of fear mentioned here in the text, one kind of fear is terror of the situation itself, while the other kind of fear is the fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. It is the reverential awe of God, a worshipful response in the presence of omnipotence. They say, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Matthew 8:27 says it this way, "What sort of Man is this, that even winds and sea obey Him?"

In the midst of the crisis, two things never change:

The Lord's promise to them

What was the promise? It was the word He spoke in verse 35, "Let us go across to the other side." No matter what circumstance would arise, nothing would keep His word from coming to pass. He said, "Let's go to the other side," not, "Let's go to the bottom." His intention is to take us all the way across life's stormy seas. And the day will come that we reach the shore. If you're in a storm right now, you need to remember that the clouds won't always be dark, and the sky will not always be threatening. They will break in time, but not before they've served the purpose for which God intends them. The wisest man who ever lived said:

Ecclesiastes 3:1 — "For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven."

It has been said that into each life some rain must fall. The rain may be unavoidable, but it is never purposeless for the child of God. The storm does not have the final word—Jesus does! And the same One who sometimes calms the storm always comforts His people in the midst of it.

The Lord's presence with them

He might have been asleep, but He was still in the boat! It is no less true in your life right now. When Jesus is in the boat, let the winds come. Let the waves roll on. For it is His presence with us that matters.

Warren Weirsbe — *“The greatest danger was not the wind or the waves, it was the unbelief in their hearts. Our greatest problems are within us, not around us.”*

The purpose of faith isn't to get you out of something, but is to get you through something. Sometimes, God does save us from trouble. He removes us from certain situations. At other times, He saves us in the trouble. Sometimes, He saves us from death, like Peter who was delivered from jail and death itself. But other times He will use our hardships to bring glory to His name, maybe like the beheading of the apostle James, or the way the other apostles all went to face a martyr's death. He didn't keep them from the storm, but was with them regardless of their experience.

The point is we are in the same boat as Christ. He doesn't always get us out of the storm, but He has promised to get us through it. Their security came from Christ being in their vessel. Friends, our security comes from our vessel being in Christ. Because Jesus is on board, let me tell you what will not happen:

- The boat will not sink
- The storm will not last

- The men will not perish

Just a few years ago, I was facing a difficult situation in my ministry. Leading through a season of change wasn't very pleasant. In fact, it was turbulent at times. But during that awful time, Psalm 121 became my daily mediation.

Psalm 121:1-8—“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; He will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.”

Jerry Bridges — *“Can you trust God? The question itself has two possible meanings before we attempt to answer it. Can you trust God? In other words, is He dependable in times of adversity? But the second meaning is also critical: Can you trust God? Do you have such a relationship with God and such confidence in Him that you believe He is with you in your adversity even though you do not see any evidence of His presence and His power?”*

Our Savior is near, and He gives us the grace and strength we need for today. For to be in Christ is to dwell under the shelter of the Most High and in the shadow of the Almighty. That's a secure place to be! Therefore, you and I don't have to live as a slave to fear.

Keith and Kristyn Getty have blessed the church in recent years with so many wonderful songs. I love one they wrote and recorded with their daughters as a lullaby:

When my heart is filled with fear

Like a stormy sky

Jesus says "be not afraid"

He is at my side!

When my thoughts are tossed and turned

Like a raging sea

I will listen to His voice

He will comfort me!

When I feel the shame of sin

Like a crashing wave

My Redeemer rescues me

By His grace I'm saved!

There's a rock where I can go

Keeps me safe and this I know

Deep within my troubled soul

Jesus calms the storm!

He who rules the wind and waves

Soon will come again

Oh, take courage little heart

Then every storm will end!