

Mountains and Lakes

Week 4: Jesus Calms the Storm

Mark 4:35-41

For as long as I can remember, I've been fascinated by storms. I've definitely had my fill of them this year, but growing up, we lived across the street from Morse Reservoir in Cicero and I used to love watching storms come in over the lake.

One time, I was staying with my grandparents over in Worthington. They didn't have a lake, but there were acres and acres of open farm land to watch storms blow in. One evening, me and my grandpa were out there watching dark clouds coming in, when all the sudden, they started to rotate. My grandpa jumped up and said, "We need to get to the basement now!"

As a kid who always enjoyed watching storms, it was the first time I remember being truly afraid of one. I was asking my grandpa if we were okay. I was scared. And when everyone was in the basement, I crawled up on top of a deep freezer to look out this tiny window built into the cinder block foundation and I watched as this tornado cut through the fields behind their house, snaking its way across the countryside.

We went out later that evening to inspect the damage and I'll never forget seeing a washing machine in the middle of a field, about 500 yards from the house the tornado had just leveled. I grew a new sense of amazement at just how powerful storms can be, but I also grew a sense of awareness that, there are some things that are just out of my control. And I can typically go through life blissfully unaware of that, but every so often, reminders come billowing in.

As I've grown older, I've realized that storms come in all forms. Some with thunder and lightning, and funnel clouds, but other storms comes with test results, job loss, a break-up. The storm comes rushing in with deep anxiety that just won't let go. And when we come face to face with the reality of our limitations, it's easy for fear to start to settle into our hearts.

We're afraid of what we might lose. Our health, the person we love, our sense of safety and security. We're afraid of what we might find on the other side of the storm. The things that will change. And, if we're honest, I think we're also afraid of the answer to this question:

Jesus, don't you care?

Have you ever asked that question before? You might be asking it right now. My guess is that most of us have had that thought go through our mind. Maybe you've said it out loud before, or even shouted it up to Heaven. When we're in the midst of a raging storm and God seems silent, it makes us feel vulnerable. It can leave us feeling afraid. And it can make us wonder if God even cares about what we're going through.

My guess is that we've all experienced this at one point or another. And if you have, like I have, then you understand where the disciples are in our text today. Let's look at it together. Mark 4, starting in verse 35...(READ vs. 35)

- “That day...” Context (Point out passage references):
 - **Sea of Galilee 1** – Location, Jordan River, Jerusalem ~70 miles south.
 - **Sea of Galilee 2** – Zoom in a little, Capernaum, where Peter lives.
 - **Sea of Galilee 3** – Mountainside where Jesus gave Sermon on the Mount (shout out to Maggie!). Matthew tells us Jesus came down from the mountainside, is immediately met by people in need and starts healing them.
 - **Sea of Galilee 4** - They go to Peter's house and a large crowd is following him. Matthew alludes to it, but Mark tells us that, in between healing all these people, Jesus also found time to do some teaching and preaching.
 - All that to say, this was a VERY busy day for Jesus! He was in high demand. Crowds were all around him. In fact, the crowds were so large, Mark tells us in verse 1, that Jesus got into a boat that was pushed just a little bit off shore so that everyone could hear him.
- But now, evening is coming and I'm sure Jesus is flat out whooped, so he said, “Let's go over to the other side of the lake.” (**Sea of Galilee 5**, according to Mark 5)
- **Sea of Galilee 6** - Jesus and the disciples start making their way across the lake. It's right at a 6 mile trip on a boat that would have looked something like this...(Boat image)

So, it's been a full day of preaching and teaching and ministry. Jesus is exhausted and when evening comes, he says, “Let's go to the other side.” (READ vs. 36-37)

So, they leave Capernaum worn out. They didn't even take time to go back to the shore for some supplies or potty break, they just took right off into the next thing, which kinda sounds like some seasons of my life. And as they're sailing across the lake, a storm hits. And it wasn't just a light sprinkle, it was the kind of storm that made these experienced fishermen, who have seen a storm or two in their day, start to panic.

The wind is picking up, waves are starting to crash over the boat, water is filling up faster than they can bail it out. The disciples are afraid. But what's Jesus doing? (READ vs. 38a)

Let's pause here, because this is both completely normal AND abnormal at the same time!

A lot of preachers will tell you that the best sleep they get each week is that Sunday afternoon nap! I'm not really a nap-guy, but Sunday afternoon's role around, after a full

morning of giving everything they've I've got spiritually, emotionally, physically, I'm SPENT! A lot of Sundays, I go downstairs after lunch and Amber and the girls won't see me the rest of the afternoon.

In fact, during football season, I'll usually fall asleep sometime during the first quarter and wake up in the 4th. Adalyn even used to write the halftime score on a notecard and set it on my chest so I'd see it when I woke up! After preaching in the morning, Sunday afternoon naps just kinda "hit different," as the kids say. So, on one hand, Jesus taking a deep nap after a long day of preaching and ministry is completely normal!

But on the other hand, there's a storm raging all around him and he's just pulled up in the front of the boat, sound asleep on a little cushion. *That's* not normal! That is supernatural peace. And it's not that Jesus was unconcerned with what was going on around him, it's that he felt completely secure. He was living out the words of Psalm 4:8 that say, "In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety."

But, it's pretty clear that the disciples are NOT having the same experience that Jesus is having! (READ rest of verse 38)

I think this is one of the things that fear and anxiety does in our lives. It makes us take our eyes off of what we know is true. It makes us question God's goodness and if Jesus even cares. If you had asked these same disciples earlier in the day, "Hey, is Jesus good and does he care about you?" they would have been like, "Yeah, of course!" They'd seen and experienced too many things to question it.

But now, in this moment of panic and fear, they take their eyes off of what they know to be true and they fix them on the storm raging around them. Verse 39 says that Jesus...(READ)

The original language is pretty strong here. Jesus essentially tells the storm, "Hey, shut up!" And the text says that in a moment, everything went calm. Then Jesus turns from looking at the storm to looking at his disciples, who had to be dumbfounded by what just happened. (READ vs. 40-41a)

I don't think Jesus is scolding them here. I think he's using this as an opportunity to point out something much deeper. It's like he's saying, *You guys trusted me when things were calm. Why not now?* I imagine these are questions they'll think about later, but for now, they're just left wondering...(vs. 41)

They were in awe of Jesus. They've seen enough to know that he is no ordinary Rabbi, but to do something like this put him in a whole other realm. Jewish tradition taught that God alone had authority over the winds and sea. Psalm 107:29 says of God, "He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed."

God alone is able to quiet a storm, and yet with just a few words, Jesus shuts the mouth of the one raging around them and makes it disappear. These disciples started connecting the dots in their mind, and all the sudden, their fear of the storm gave way to the fear of the Lord standing before them. I think that's why they were terrified.

They had seen Jesus forgive sin, cast out demons, heal diseases. But now they saw something even deeper...they saw Jesus for who He truly is. The One who has authority over all things. Even the things that terrify us the most. And in the midst of the storms we face in life that cause us to be anxious and afraid, Jesus knows exactly what we need. He knows that for the disciples that day, and for us today, **Our greatest obstacles to faith are within us, not around us.**

Our greatest obstacle to faith is not the storm happening around us, even though it might feel like it's raging. Instead, it's the storm in us. The fear, the unbelief, the doubt about whether or not Jesus really cares. Those are the storms that can cause the most damage because they tear away at our soul and our trust in the Lord.

But, when our souls are calm and at peace with who God is and His love and concern for us; when we trust that our God is good and loving and kind towards us, that He will never leave us or harm us...when we have this kind of peace within us, we are able to find rest in our soul and withstand any storm happening around us.

So, as we close today, I want to bring it home to us; here, right now. **Where are you feeling afraid?**

What part of your life feels like it is sinking right now?

- Do you feel overwhelmed, burned out, or like you're just going through the motions?
- Maybe you have a teenager who's pulling away, and it feels like you're losing them?
- Are you staring down bills you can't pay, wondering how much longer you can keep your head above water?
- Are you navigating the disappointment of an unmet hope or dream? An unexpected diagnosis?
- Is there a relationship that feels like it's drifting off course and you're not sure how to bring it back?

It's so easy to be in the midst of these challenges to feel like Jesus doesn't care about you. To feel anxious and afraid. But I believe that Jesus wants us to experience peace and hope in the midst of the storms raging around us. And he's constantly inviting me and you to let go of control and to trust Him more deeply.

And here's the hard, but beautiful, truth that I've found in my life... Fear often reveals the places we haven't fully surrendered to God's care.

- We fear that our kids will fall behind, so we push them harder instead of trusting the Lord cares for them and will watch over their life.
- We're afraid of not being enough, so we overcommit and try to make everyone around us happy instead of just resting in our identity in Christ, who makes us enough.
- We're afraid of the future, so we try to control everything and everyone around us instead of surrendering it to God's care.

Fear often reveals the places I haven't fully surrender to God's care. And because he's more interested in forming our faith than fixing what causes us to fear, Jesus often calms what is going on inside of us instead of what is going on around us. And He's inviting us, maybe even inviting you today, to trust Him through it.

There's no doubt that the storms in our life can certainly seem strong, but Jesus is stronger. The waves can be big, but His love is bigger, and His voice still speaks peace over you. So, whatever it is you are going through today, do not give up. Do not give in. Jesus does care and you are not alone.

The disciples came out of the storm that day seeing Jesus in a whole new way, and I imagine, as you walk through your own, you will, too, as you put your trust in Him.

Response Time

Invitation: Where is Jesus inviting you to trust Him? Maybe trust Him as your Lord and Savior.

Communion: The same Jesus who silenced the wind and waves and spoke authority over creation, willingly went to the cross to die for us so that we may find life in Him.

His body was given and his blood was shed to bring us peace with God. Peace in our relationship with Him and peace as we walk through this life with Him. So come and receive communion, and as you do, find rest in your soul knowing Jesus cares and you are not alone.