

The Perfect Storm



Mark 4:35-41

If you have your bibles, go ahead and be opening to the gospel according to Mark. I appreciate seeing you here on this beautiful Lord's Day. We get to begin a brand new week in the house of the Lord. You, probably like me in 2000, went to see a movie entitled The Perfect Storm. That movie was an adaptation from a book written in 1997 by Sebastian Junger that was actually based on a real story that happened Halloween week, 1991. If you will remember, the Andrea Gail had come into Gloucester Massachusetts after a bad catch, and suddenly, the captain of the boat realized that time was short. There was time for possibly one more catch before the fishing season ended, so he and his crew set sail for Flemish Cap. Despite all of the warnings of a hurricane that was forming, they went to Flemish Cap and they got the catch of all catches, but then their ice machine broke down, true story. They had a decision to make...to abandon the fish, or come home. They decided to bring the fish home, but if they waiting out the storm they would lose the catch because the ice machine was not working. They made a poor decision. They underestimated the storm that was brewing. What they did not realize, even though weather forecasters were saying it, was it was possibly going to be the perfect storm because not only was there a hurricane brewing in the Atlantic, there were two tropical depressions that were forming from Canada and the United States, and they perfectly met off the coast of Massachusetts. You know the rest of the story. On October 28th, 1991, the last recorded words of Captain

Billy were these: "She's coming on boys, she's coming on strong." That is the last recorded message of the Andrea Gail. Weathermen are not exactly sure if the wave that capsized that boat was sixty to sixty-five feet or somewhere near one hundred feet, but we know they tried to take that wave head-on, and it capsized the ship. Billy and the crew lost their lives in what meteorologists say was the fiercest storm ever in American history. The storm was never named, so they just call it The Perfect Storm.

If you would allow me this morning, I'm going to borrow that title, The Perfect Storm, and that is what we are going to see this morning, spiritually, the perfect storm. I pray the day comes when you and I get to experience, not once, not twice, but many times, the perfect storm. Let's open our bibles to Mark 4:35-41. As we read this story, I just want you to see all of the special effects that Mark gives us. The reason there are so many special effects in this story is because we believe Mark is penning a firsthand account of Peter, who would have been there this day in the boat with Jesus. Sometimes when we go to a Hollywood movie and see the special effects, we get so overwhelmed with them; we don't really see the storyline or the characters. Let's not let the special effects cause us to not see what this story is really all about. Watch for the characters, listen for what Mark is trying to convey to us about what I believe is spiritually the perfect storm.

Scripture

"On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." (Underline the phrase, "the other side," because you will see that phrase often in the gospel of Mark.) 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. 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?" 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?"

(Prayer)

Father, thank You for this opportunity to gather in Your house this morning at the end of this Spring Break week. In a few weeks, we anticipate gathering together on Resurrection Sunday, but this morning, we want our thoughts right now to be on Mark chapter 4, verses 35-41. We want You to capture our imagination, our intellect, our emotions, and our will to let us see this perfect storm and to understand how to apply it in our lives, me as a pastor, a dad, a husband, a papaw, and friend, and then each one of us in whatever relationship we have, because we believe that just as You ordain, as You caused, as You allowed this storm, You still do that today. Father, we believe just as Jesus was sovereign over this storm, not in just stopping it, but sovereign over allowing it to happen, and He is still sovereign in our lives today. Father, help us make practical application so that we understand when storms come in our lives, and they will come and come often, You have a purpose and a plan for them so that we won't be surprised the next time we feel like we have some water in our boat. Father, get us ready now. It's in Your precious Son's name we pray, amen.

Mark says in his simplistic, very quick way, "On that day when evening had come." We've got to back up to the beginning of the chapter and realize that when this day started, Jesus was on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. So many people were following Him to hear Him teach, to have one of their relatives or friends healed from a sickness or disease, or to see Him cast out a demon, so many people were in the crowd on the sea that He actually has to leave the crowd and use a boat as a pulpit. The Bible says that just as Jesus did on the mountain when He was teaching the famous Sermon on the Mount that He sits down in the boat and begins to teach, but this day, He teaches differently that He's been teaching. This day, He starts teaching in parables, knowing that there would be a group that will get it, and there will be a group that won't get it. He gives us these

awesome parables about a sower who sowed seed and it fell on four different soil types, and there was good soil that reaped thirty, sixty, and one hundredfold harvests. Then He talked about not taking a lamp and bringing it into the house, under a bushel, or hiding under the bed. You put it on a lampstand so the light of that lamp can shine and fill the house. Then He talked about a seed and how a farmer sowed a seed and he had so much faith in the seed that when he sowed it, he just went to sleep. He just went about his business, getting ready for the harvest, because he knew that seed, even though he didn't know the scientific understanding of how a seed actually did what it did, but he just knew there would be a harvest one day. Last week, we saw that last parable that Mark records and that is how the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. It starts out as the smallest of garden seeds, but when it grows, it makes such a plant that the birds of the air can come and nest in its branches. Don't get the idea that Jesus taught from sunup to sundown. We know in Mark chapter 4 that He gave a private explanation to His disciples about the parable of the soil and we think He taught most of the day, and then He went back home according to Matthew. When He got back home, He explained the parable of the sower to His disciples, and all of a sudden, Jesus says let's go to the other side. You have to realize that they're on the Sea of Galilee. It's a sea about fourteen miles long by seven miles wide and about six hundred feet below sea level. There are high mountains around this sea. Celisa and I were there several years ago, and when you're down on the bank of the Sea of Galilee and just look around at this lake, (the Bible calls it a sea) you can see these ravines, gorges, or ditches, if you will, and it's beautiful. Then when you look to the south, it's open. Of course, the Sea of Galilee flows out into the Jordan and it eventually flows into the Dead Sea. It's now evening, Jesus is on this side of the sea, and He wants to go to the other side. That's like being in Marshall County and wanting to go to Calloway County, or being in Calloway County and wanting to go to Marshall County. It's about you being on this side and knowing there is somebody else on the other side, and you don't want to be here anymore; you want to be there. You have to remember that in this day, everybody who lived on this side was Jews, and everybody who lived on that side was Gentiles. So Jesus is with the home folks, so to speak.

That's where His ministry starts. He's ministering to folks like Himself, fellow Jews, and He wants to go to the other side. He wants to go over there where the pagans live, where the Gentiles live. He just says at the end of the day, 'Hey guys, let's cross over to the other side.' Being good disciples, they want to please Jesus so they take Him and put Him in the boat with them. You get this idea they are taking Jesus; Jesus isn't taking them to the other side with Him, they are taking Jesus with them to the other side. Does everyone see that? That's important. "Just as He was." I've been thinking for months on that. What does that mean, "just as He was?" I think you know what's going to happen as soon as He gets in the boat. As soon as He gets in the boat, He is going to fall asleep. I think this is teaching Jesus was dead tired. He was worn out. He was exhausted, but He wanted to get to the other side. He was not going to let exhaustion, tiredness, prevent Him from being where He thought God wanted Him to be, and that was the other side.

Have you noticed that Jesus was never satisfied to just stay where He was and just influence the people He was influencing? He always believed there were others He needed to hear Him, see Him, and Him minister to. Would you just file that away? Don't ever get complacent and want to just stay where you are.

Jesus is now wanting to get to the other side, but He is worn out. They don't even give Him time to rest, they just do what He wants, and that is they put Him in their boat. They are taking care of Him because He's exhausted. When He gets into the boat, He goes down into the stern of the boat and He lays on a cushion. I don't know whose boat this was, but let's just assume it's Peter's boat. It may not have been, but we know it was one of the fishermen's boat, and they have this cushion there. I have to believe if they wouldn't let their family sleep on that cushion, they wouldn't let Jesus sleep on that cushion, and Jesus goes to sleep on it. From where they are at, it is going to be about five miles across. All of a sudden, a great windstorm hits. Just imagine this with the effects of Hollywood. Imagine that wind, that cold air mass coming off of that mountain, down one of those ravines, and it forms a wind tunnel. This happened often on the Sea of Galilee. When it hit the waters, that warm air of the water being

six hundred feet below sea level, once it hit that water, that water responded to the wind, and immediately the Bible says, the sea is now in the boat. You know that when you're on a boat in the lake, you're fine as long as the boat is in the water, but you don't want the water in the boat. Now instantly, the water is in the boat. Matthew said that the whole sea shook! He uses the word for earthquake to talk about the storm, so the mountains, the sea, is shaking, the water is now coming into the boat, and Mark tells us that Jesus is asleep in the stern of the boat. Mark doesn't even say Jesus, he just says He is asleep in the stern of the boat, but you and I know who is asleep in the stern of the boat. That's Jesus, but Jesus isn't the only one in the boat. He's in a boat with professional fishermen who have given up fishing to follow Him. They've been on that sea many times when there's been a storm on the sea, but they are trying to get Jesus to the other side where He wants them to be. And when they appear in the story, they aren't manning the boat anymore, they aren't fighting the waves anymore, they aren't trying to keep the boat going in the direction of the wind so it won't capsize; they are waking Jesus up! They don't even wait until He wakes up. They are shaking Him, waking Him up, saying, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" and then He wakes up. He's fully awake now. He was exhausted! He was worn out! He was in a deep sleep, sleeping through a storm that was scaring the professional fishermen to death! They thought they were going to die, and He's asleep. Wow! I remember coming home from Trinidad one time. The plane took off, we were probably five to eight thousand feet up in the air, and the plane felt like it dropped a thousand feet. The guy beside me slept through the whole thing. I wanted to wake him up and say, "What's wrong with you!" They rush to Jesus, find Him asleep, wake Him up, and say, "Do you not care that we are perishing?"

Now watch this...He didn't say a word to them when He woke up. He just stood up in the boat and Mark said He rebuked the wind. Do you remember in the first of the gospel when Jesus rebuked the demon? That word, rebuke, is *epitimaó*. It literally means 'to rap across the knuckles. That's what they used to do to you in elementary school in Western Kentucky. The teacher would rebuke you, you would put your palm up, and she would take a ruler, and 'wham' across the palm. A one hundred and

ten pound boy just got rebuked by a ninety-five pound teacher. Jesus rapped across the knuckles, the wind. When He did, the wind immediately stopped. Then Jesus spoke to the waves. When the wind stops, there will still be the cause and effect of the waves. It will take the waves a little while before they quit being affected, even though the wind has stopped. Jesus didn't just stop the wind, He said to the waves, be muzzled. That's what He said in the Greek, 'be muzzled like a dog.' The waves immediately stopped.

Get this picture...*now* He talks to the disciples. He says, "Why are you so afraid? Have you no faith?" Jesus drew the conclusion that if there was fear in His disciples during this storm, then they had no faith. If they had faith, there wouldn't be fear. Do you see that? Now catch this...this is so cool. I'm amazed when I read commentaries and I hear pastors speak who don't even comment on this. It blows my mind because here is what we know about Mark; Mark is writing to let us, the reader, know who Jesus is, and Jesus is the Son of God. So the disciples in the boat are so afraid, they believe Jesus doesn't care that they die. Now, the waters calm, there is no wind; it's obvious He cares, they aren't going to die, He rapped the wind across the knuckles, and He muzzled the waves like a dog. Now, what I think I would want to be doing is a fist pump to my buddy. I think even if I was Baptist, I might be going "WOOOO!!! Praise the Lord!!!" with both hands, not that little Baptist arm lock! I might even actually jump up and down in the boat now! I might even dive out of the boat into the water and just have a victory swim! "WOOOO! God cares, praise the Lord!! We just witnessed a miracle of God!!" Do you know what Mark actually says? They were more afraid now than they were before. When the storm was raging, the water was coming in the boat, and they thought they were dying, they were afraid, but when the water was calm and they saw what Jesus did, Mark says they are now "greatly" afraid. I want you to catch this. They are now more afraid in the presence of Jesus than they were in the presence of the storm. Please tell me you get that. They look at each other and say, "Who is this?" They thought they knew who He was. He cast out demons; praise the Lord. They witnessed Him heal sick people; praise the Lord. But they don't know what to do now because it's one thing to have power over a demon, it's another thing to have power over sickness, but this is another

thing because there is only one being who has power over nature, and that is God. They don't get it. Mark is letting us know they don't get it. Mark is using their disbelief to help you and I understand what should happen when we face a storm, and that is we ought to get it. They didn't get it.

Can I ask you this question? I want you to be honest because it isn't going to do you any good, and it's not doing us any good as a church if you and I keep fooling ourselves. Do we really get who He is? Do we get why God brings storms in our lives? I want you to see three things in this story. I want you to see the calm before the storm, the calm after the storm, then I want you to see what many people do not see, and that's the calm during the storm. Growing up as a kid, we would see storms coming and I heard this little phrase, "Well, we're experiencing the calm before the storm." "It's calm right now, but get ready, the storm's coming." I don't know about you, but there's just something about Western Kentucky that when one of those fierce thunderstorms roll through, branches are on the ground, leaves are on the ground, and it's perfectly calm, there's just something about that calm after the storm. I never hear anybody talk about the calm during the storm.

I would like for us to analyze why God allows storms to come in our lives. They are not meant to drown us. They are meant to reveal first who we are, and second, who He is. I believe storms are designed by God to make you have to stop and see who you really are, and that is how you are who you are in your faith relationship with Him. If I can be totally honest with you, there are many of us here this morning who have no faith, but we think we have faith. There are some of us who have a little faith who think we have a lot of faith. I don't mean to be negative this morning, but there are probably very few of us who really are where we think we are in our faith relationship with Him. It is because most of us gauge our walk with Christ before the storm and after the storm in the calm, rather than gauging ourselves by the calm in the storm. Tell me you're getting this. In the calm before the storm, everybody wants to get Jesus where Jesus wants to be and that is to the other side. All of us as Christians want to get Jesus where He needs to get; we want to get the gospel to the other side. We don't want to just keep the gospel here; we want to get it to the other

side, whether the other side is our spouse, children, parents, friend, or neighbor to another state or to the other end of the world. We want to do that in the calm before the storm. In the calm after the storm, we really want to see God and how He did. It was just a miracle how He took that and worked it out and I could have never seen it or imagined this beautiful calm now! I want to be clear here; we're not talking about storms on Kentucky Lake or in Panama Gulf. We're not talking about a thunderstorm when the tornado takes the roof off your house. I'm talking about the storm your husband or wife brings into your life. I'm talking about the storm your children bring into your life. I'm talking about the storm your parents bring into your life. I'm talking about the storm your employee, or your employer brings into your life. I'm talking about that storm that your best friend brought into your life. Most of the storms in our lives are caused by other people. It is why most of us try to keep that circle of friends really, really, really small.

See, the storm was used by Jesus to teach the disciples that the reason you're afraid is because you don't have faith. You can just apply that to any situation you face. When there is fear, there is not faith. This was not just fear; this was a panic to the point that they said to Jesus You don't care that we're in a state of perishing! I know most of us would never say to God "You don't care!" but we kind of imply that when we question how in the world God could have let something happen. I mean, we're just trying to get Him to the other side! We're just trying to be used by Him! We develop relationships with people without hope of sharing the gospel, scattering the seed, and then, BOOM, a storm comes up and we question the sovereignty of God by questioning their actions. We have got to come to grips with this. God allows people to do what they do that creates storms in our lives! He is sovereign over that. Do you know what those storms usually reveal in us? An inadequacy, a weakness, a lack of something, and that is a lack of faith. It is a lack of trust. Jesus basically says why are you afraid? Why don't you trust? He's linking them together because the answer to the first question is because you don't trust. You didn't really believe that we're going to get to the other side. Jesus perfectly believed He was going to get to the other side because He believed what He was doing was God's will. It never went through His mind

that He wasn't going to get to the other side, so when He got in that boat, dead tired, exhausted, He could go to sleep, not because He was a heavy sleeper, but because He was a heavy believer. That was good! Listen, He was a heavy believer! Storms are designed to reveal we are not. So, how are we going to become a heavy believer? We've got to see the one who is a heavy believer, and that's Jesus. A storm causes you to have to get your eye on Him, and you see Him in all of His holiness. When they saw Him in His holiness, they shook in their sandals because they were more afraid of seeing Him than they were of seeing the storm. They were more afraid of the effects of the holiness of Jesus than they were of the effects of the storm on the sea.

It reminds me of what Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6 when he saw God in His holiness, holy, holy, holy. Isaiah didn't raise his hands, he didn't do a hot lap around the church; he cried out, "Oy vey ist mir"; Woe is me, for I am coming apart! "For I am a man of unclean lips." Do you remember in Luke chapter 5 when Luke gives the story of Jesus calling His first disciples? He sees the disciples empty boat and He turns to Peter who is standing on one of the boats and said let's go fishing. Jesus says to launch out into the deep. Peter says, 'Lord, we've toiled all night long and we've caught nothing! But You are the preacher, you know everything, so ok, we'll take you fishing if that's what You want to do.' Don't you fishermen just love it when the preacher gives you advice on how to do things that they know nothing about? Well, they get out in the deep, and then Jesus says 'hey Peter, have you ever thought about throwing the net on that side of the boat?' 'Ok Lord, we'll do it.' They do it, and you remember what happened. Every fish in the Sea of Galilee played last one in is a rotten eel! Every fish tried to get in that net and when they pulled the net up, it started breaking and they had to go get the other boat. They motioned for their partners and the filled both boats up so that now the boats are sinking with fish! Do you remember what Peter did? I love what RC Sproul says here. He says if he had been Peter, he would have pulled out a contract and say, 'Lord, just five minutes a day. If you will just show up five minutes a day, go out with me in the boat, tell me where to throw the net, I'll give You half of the catch!' That's not what Peter said...he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Please hear me. Storms have been designed in our lives to ultimately get our attention off the storm and get our eyes on Jesus and to see Him for who He is...holy, holy, holy. Do you know what that will cause you and me to do? That will cause us to say get out of the boat Jesus; I can't stand this anymore! If you show me anymore of me, I'm just going to have to confess again that I am a sinful man! That's why most of us don't cultivate a relationship with Jesus because we don't really want to see ourselves as we are. Most of us surround ourselves in the boat with people who are just like us and we're all saying the same thing. 'Yeah, we ought to really be scared here!' 'Yeah, we really ought to wake up Jesus!' 'Yeah, God really doesn't care!' All of that junk comes out because it's in us, and it's not just in us, it's in our friends around us. That's why most of us surround ourselves with people who are just like us because we find comfort in somebody telling us that what we're believing is right and true, 'God really doesn't care. This is not our problem! This is his problem, or her problem!' But when you see Jesus in His holiness, it cuts right to the heart, and the heart of it is we're not like Him. Because we're not like Him, we're not going to have what He had and that's a calm during the storm.

I want to make sure you get this. Praise God for the calm before, praise God for the calm after, but I don't want the calm before and the calm after; I want the calm during the storm. Listen to me. This story is supposed to be about Jesus because the disciples are trying to get Him where He is supposed to be going, but the storm comes and now it's not about Jesus; it became about them. I wish Mark could have recorded this, (of course, he can't because the disciples don't get it) the storm is raging and the boat is being tossed to and fro, and they don't go and say, 'whoa, who is that that He could sleep during this storm? Why isn't He reacting like we're reacting? Why isn't He scared to death?' They didn't do that! That's what I want. I want that calm during the storm, so that in the storm, my reaction can be what Jesus' reaction would be. If Mark is recording this story from Peter's recollection of the story, Peter would later write that we're supposed to be holy as He is holy, then he quotes the Old Testament book of Leviticus where God says be you holy for I am holy. What I want you to see is the more we become like Jesus, the more we will be calm during the storm. When you're calm during the storm, you will

do the right thing, not the wrong thing. Storms are designed for us Christians to realize who He is and how unlike Him we are, so that we will want to work on that part of us that is unlike Him so that the next time a storm hits, we will be more like Him. I want to say this. What we're doing right now does not reveal whether we have faith or not. If you're giving yourself some kind of star because you're at church this morning, you've missed it. When you and I are really going to know the level of faith we have, it's when that storm hits that's caused by people in our lives. It's going to reveal if we're really a believer. Jesus was just frank with them, "Have you still not faith?" That is why that storm is brewing where you work, where you recreate, where you vacation, and in our homes. It is so we will see Him, so we can see us. Faith changes our lives, and that's the life God is going to put on the lampstand. That's the life God is not going to hide under a bushel. That's the life God is not going to hide under a bed. God wants you to have a boat. God wants you to have a platform. In that boat, He doesn't save you from the storm, He saves you through the storm. It is your calm in the storm that will be used of God to influence those who are with you during the storm. You're not in the boat by yourself. You don't want to be the one causing everybody else in the boat to question whether or not God cares. You and I want to be the one in the boat causing everybody else in the boat to have the peace that we have. The storm may shake our boat, but it shouldn't shake us. If you shake with the boat, you can't steady the boat. There are people in your life who are in the boat with you that need you to be calm during the storm. The only way we can be that way is if we're holy as He is holy. That means we're set apart, we are in a class all by ourselves; that means we're different. Don't judge your reaction to something by what your three friends told you they would do! Judge your reaction by what Christ tells you that you should do.

What is our life about? Our life is about getting Jesus where He wants to be, and that's the other side. I want to close with the thought that Jesus believed He was going to die doing God's will. He really did. He believed God had a purpose for His death. Wouldn't it be awesome if we thought God had a purpose for our death and it wasn't just accidental or caused by something randomly? Once you accept that, you can live God's will. Once

you believe you will die doing God's will, then the only way you can die doing God's will is if you live doing God's will. Jesus lived God's will. Can I just say this? I believe Jesus really wanted to say right here when they said, who is this? He has cast out demons, He has cast out sickness, He has power over nature, I think He wanted to say, 'Guys, what am I going to have to do, die and be resurrected? Will you believe then?' That is exactly what He did to cause you and me to believe! It was to die in our place so He could live in us! We must believe that! That is what makes us who we are, not just here in a church service, but in every situation we're in.