

The Real Jesus, Mark 4:35-41, “Lord of the Storm” 3/13/22

How many of you have been to the Holy Land? I’ve been three times. From the Airport in Tel Aviv we bus 2 hrs North East to the **Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee [Picture]**. And no matter how exhausted I am from the long travel, as we crest over the hill overlooking the Sea, a sense of peace that comes over me. There’s just something about the Sea of Galilee region. The climate is mild, the pace of life slow, scenery is breathtaking, the lake is calm...most of the time. But kind of like the Accounting guy in the cubical down the hall who is normally pretty quiet, except for St. Patrick’s Day, the Sea of Galilee can get rowdy out of nowhere and suddenly you can find yourself in danger. That’s the situation Jesus and the disciples find themselves in Mark 4:35. And what Jesus reveals about himself in middle of an intense storm we will leave us asking the question “Who is this?”

35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.”

“That day”- same day Jesus was teaching the crowds using the parables of the kingdom that we studied last week and then going deeper with his disciples. And then he says, that’s enough teaching for the day, time to get in the boat. The classroom education was done, it was time for OTJ training on the boat. And this is a critical lesson for us today because this is how resilient discipleship to Jesus works. It is not enough for us merely to learn some facts or be able to regurgitate memory verses. We must also be able to practice that lesson by faith. That’s how to drive truth from the head to the heart, and that often means our faith must be tested just like these disciples will experience on this day.

36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.

While this is relatively short story, it is also backed with details. “Evening”, “other boats went with them”, “Just as he was”- in other words he didn’t change into his sailing clothes. No Sperry Topsiders, no Vineyard Vines sailing shirts for the trip. Just robe and sandals. Today many modern people are prone to think this story and others from the Bible are legends. People say, we can’t know the real Jesus, too long ago. All we know is that many years later the church came up with these legends and put forth the Jesus they wanted to believe...one of the problems with that theory is the details like these. Ancient legends weren’t written like that. That’s the way modern fiction writers tell stories, but not back then. One historian says, “Are we to believe that Mark, without any predecessors or successors, suddenly anticipated the use of modern, narrative, realistic fiction?”¹ No, the reason for the details is that these are the recent memories of eyewitnesses.

And this story is not only full of details but archeology has confirmed the details. Take for example that v.38 gives us the eye-witness detail that Jesus was asleep in the stern on a pillow. In 1986 on the Northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee an **ancient boat [Picture]** was found dating to the time of Jesus, largely preserved because it was submerged in the mud. This is likely to be the same style of fishing boats that Jesus and his disciples used. It is on display today if you go to Israel.

¹ From Tim Keller sermon, 2006 on Mark 4:35-41

Quoting from *Biblical Archeology Review* where there was a multipage article on this boat. “We found that a boat like this had a large stern platform which is where the helmsman would either sit or stand to guide the boat. This explains why Jesus chose the stern in which to sleep. There Jesus would have had the most protection from the elements. The pillow that he used was actually a sandbag that was kept on board and used to trim the boat when it was under sail and when it was not in use it was routinely stored under the stern deck to be used as a pillow by crewmembers who rested there.”² So Jesus is asleep not on a Mypillow, but a sandbag. Better than nothing. **Blank slide-** “OK Nate, this is a lot of minutiae. We’re 10 min in and we haven’t even gotten to the story yet!” But the point is, this all should give us great confidence that this event really happened. It’s not just true spiritually, it’s true actually. I will hear many times people say, some of the things about Jesus I read in the Bible I like, and some of it I don’t like. What do I do with the things I don’t like. That’s the wrong. Jesus really did do these things in real time or he didn’t. And if he did really raised Lazarus from the dead, if he did walk on water, if he did heal the blind. If Jesus literally in real life rose from the dead...the question isn’t what we like or don’t like- it’s will I continue to live as my own Lord, or will I fall down and worship Jesus as Lord! If it really happened you have to deal with Jesus as He is, he’s a non-negotiable being. And so they set sail for the other side.

³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Now the lake is 13miles long, 8miles wide, they were going from the North to the East cattycorner, so probably 10 miles across. So you say, why in the world would these disciples have gotten into a boat in the storm. Obviously, they would have known. Not so.

On the Sea of Galilee, you can set sail on a calm night and end up in a storm in minutes. The Sea of Galilee sits 700 feet below sea level and are surrounded by mountains, some of which are 9200 ft high. Which means that the cold air from the mountains sometimes comes furiously through the valley and clashes with a warm air coming up from the Sea of Galilee and it’s like a little bowl it can’t go anywhere and as a result there can be some impressive squalls that come out of nowhere. There are waves documented on the Sea of Galilee at 20ft. Matthew’s gospel, says the boat was disappearing in the waves.

³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” Professional fisherman from Galilee were used storms. So this particular storm must’ve been an incredible one because experienced sailors as they were they thought they were going to die. “When sailors ask a carpenter what to do in a storm you are in big trouble.”³ Picture this situation, it’s kind of comical. These disciples were bailing water, Matthew the land-loving tax-collector was probably throwing up over the side of the boat. And they look over at Jesus asleep on a pillow. “We’re dying! Don’t you even care? Aren’t you even going to try to help? At least grab a bucket!” Every one of us has probably felt this

² Quoted from a sermon by Lon Solomon, “Jesus Demonstrates His Power”

³ Ibid

way. Everything is going wrong and God must be asleep. Don't you care about me? "In our hour of greatest need you are asleep."

³⁹ *He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.* With no magic wands or incantations or enchantments...He simply spoke to the storm like you might a child throwing a tantrum- "Hey! Be quiet and sit down." Of course the difference is that when Jesus said it, it actually happened. He didn't just tell the wind to die down, the sea itself became completely calm. Even after a storm you know the waves will keep crashing for hours. At the word of Jesus everything stopped.

Just think about the kind of power Jesus must have had to stop this storm. Someone calculated the power that the **X-Men character Storm [Picture]** would need to have in order to create a tornado. I mean, that's some Pastor Matthew level geeking out. He said it would take 12 Gigawatts of power. For comparison the power of the average person is about 120 watts making Storm about 100 million times more powerful than us.⁴ Jesus just says- "Shut it." and a 12 Gigawatt storm stops in a second. And this is only a small fraction of his power...the sun puts out sextillion horsepower every year, and there are millions of these suns... who is running all this? **Colossians 1:16-17** *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities;*

all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. If Jesus were to relax this power for even an instant, you and I would fly off this planet and turn into space dust.

Now, the response to this event evokes two questions- One from the disciples and one from Jesus. And they are the same questions for us today. ⁴¹ *They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"*

Who is this? That's the 1Mill Question. We need to make sure we know the answer. There is another comedic moment here in the story. The disciples are afraid of the storm, but now they are terrified of Jesus. They are afraid of the storm because they can't control the storm. The storm can do whatever it wishes with them. But Jesus has infinitely more power than the storm, and they realize, he too is completely uncontrollable, if he can do this, he can do whatever he wishes. Because He is God in the flesh.

How do you feel about a God you have absolutely no power to control? Who can do whatever he pleases at any moment without consulting you? We like to think we are in control...Many people are like the disciples- terrified by that idea, who is this??? Two equal and opposite futile responses to God. **Rebellion:** It is the reason some people run away their whole lives, trying to avoid an encounter with God. They don't want anything to do with him because they don't want him to control them, ruin their lives, take something away from them or make them live a way they don't want. But we can't outrun God and we will all face him one day. Ironically the

⁴ <https://hypertextbook.com/facts/2006/storm.shtml>

other futile response is Man-Made Religion: Religion is largely an attempt to control God. If I do these things, if I try hard enough, if I sacrifice enough, if I say this prayer just right then God will have to do _____." Then God will bless me, accept me, give me the good life, or maybe just leave me alone. Kind of like one of my neighbors who tells me he goes to church and confession once a month to keep God off his back and so he can do what he wants.

But here's the difference between the power of a storm and the power of Jesus. The storm doesn't love you. You are at the mercy of the storm, it will destroy and kill you and go on completely indifferent to your suffering. But Jesus' infinite power is filled with love for you. And that means that even when we face the storms we don't have to worry whether or not God cares about you and your suffering. And that frees us to respond in the only reasonable way: worship.

Elizabeth Elliot put it beautifully in two brief sentences. "God is God and since he is God he is worthy of my worship and service. I will find rest nowhere else but in his will and that will is necessarily infinite, immeasurable, unspeakably beyond my largest notions of what he is up to."⁵

Or in the words of C.S. Lewis in *The Chronicles of Narnia*: "Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he-quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"..."Safe?" said Mr. Beaver ..."Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good." We worship a God we cannot control but is filled with love toward us.

Blank Slide- What has been your posture toward Jesus? Rebellion? Religion? Lay down those futile methods...they are as effective as the buckets the disciples were using to bail out the water. Turn to Jesus in worship. If you've never made a personal decision to trust Jesus, this is for you. If Jesus really did this- that means everything else he ever said and did can also be trusted. It holds authority. Jesus said that we are all sinners and separated from a holy and perfect God. That everyone must stand before this God one day to be judged, and where we spend eternity is on the line. And Jesus said no one can come to God and pass through that judgment to salvation without Jesus. This is why the question "Who is this?" is the most important question you can ask. Drop your bucket, and turn to him.

This leads us to Jesus' question for the disciples and for us today. ⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Do you remember how this story began? Notice Jesus said, "Let's go in the boat and go to the other side." Did Jesus say, "Let's get in the boat and drown?" No! He's saying..."Where is your faith? You can trust me at my word. I will accomplish what I say I will do." Jesus is teaching his disciples through suffering a critical lesson. He can allow suffering and also be filled with love toward them. Jesus' rebuke taught them that not only is he in control but that they can trust that he is doing 1000 things for their ultimate good, even when they can't see it. One theologian said "for the greatest danger

⁵ As Quoted from Tim Keller in *Jesus the King*, 58.

was not the wind or the waves: it was the unbelief in the hearts of the disciples. Our greatest problems are within us, not around us.”⁶

See the lesson of trust happens not in the classroom, not in a sermon...but on Monday morning. When you wake up Monday morning battling the anxiety of your week ahead. When you wake up and the war in Ukraine is still raging. When gas prices and a gallon of milk are going up by the hour and you are worried about your finances. When you get the news about the test results and it's not good. When you, again find out you are still not pregnant. Or your marriage still isn't fixed. That's where the testing of our trust takes place.

Now listen, God will sometimes save us out of the storms in the short-term. He might heal us, he might save our marriage, he might answer our prayer for a job. But make no mistake, there is a storm that will come for all of us and will sink us. The storm of death has a 100% success rate. Even for Lazarus- death had a 200% success rate, he died twice. Except for Jesus, which why we can trust him. He did what he said he would do. Jesus said in **John 11:25 I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.** And then he went to the cross died for our sins, and came to life just like he said he would do. Jesus is saying to us today, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

A mentor and friend of mine who I deeply respect is Pastor Lon Solomon from my former church. Not only because he was a powerful preacher and strong leader, but more so because of all the storms he endured and still trusted that His Savior would do what he promised to do. His daughter Jill was born with a disease that gave her terrible, life threatening seizures- by the time she was 5 she already had 1000s of seizures. Doctors said she wouldn't live past her early childhood. Today **Jill [Picture]** is in her 30s, happy and constantly confounding the doctors of what she can do and her life and the faith of Lon and Brenda Solomon has inspired **Jill's House [Picture]**, which serves hundreds of families of children with disabilities each year. I want you to listen to him in his own words during the early years, in the middle of the storms with Jill as we close...as you listen, pray that God would give you faith in your storm today.

Audio [Blank Slide].

⁶ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 1, p. 125). Victor Books.