

Part I, The Still of Storms – Mark 4:35-41
 Series: Look and Live #17

Illustration: being asleep at the wheel.

Read Mark 4:35-41.

What a good story! Matthew and Luke tell the same story, but they're just not the same. Mark's account is filled with vivid detail and narrative comments that the others don't have. That's all the more reminder that the Gospel According to Mark is almost surely based on the personal testimony of the Apostle Peter given to John Mark. That's why it's so engaging.

Mark starts out in verse 35, "On that day." Mark is telling us that this story happened on the back of the previous story. The difficult thing is figuring out what all happened on this day. Either way, it was one *horribly long day* of teaching. All day long, Jesus taught a thronged hungry crowd of people swarming him. It was at the end of one such day that Jesus told his disciples, "Let's go to the other side of the sea."

Remember, Jesus has been teaching alongside this massive lake called the Sea of Galilee. He's been on the western side of the Lake with his disciples in Israelite territory. Now he tells them they're all making the eight or so mile trip to the *east* side into Gentile territory. Up to this point Jesus has ministered exclusively to Israel. Jesus' words imply, "Come on, I'm going to preach to the Gentiles." As Paul is teaching us in Romans on Sunday nights, "Salvation is for the Jew first, and also for the Gentile."

In v. 36, Mark again gives us some interesting details. They had to *leave* the crowd. Jesus didn't say, "Well since the crowd has died off, we might as well go now." The crowd didn't let up for a second. He had to *leave* for the same reason he left the crowd in chapter one. He worked miracles in order to prove the truthfulness of his preaching and his message that God's Kingdom had come. So when miracles (or the people's request and demand for miracles) got in the way of his preaching, he moved on.

But Mark tells us three more things in this one verse. First, "*they took him with them* in the boat just as he was." He's probably reminding us that the last time Mark we were told specifically where Jesus was physically located was back in verse 1. Mark said that Jesus got into a boat and anchored just off shore to teach the people, that way they couldn't mob him in their excitement. Now he tells us that Jesus was still there in that boat. The disciples take him just as he is, meaning he doesn't even go ashore to grab some things or rest.

It's strange that Mark says that *they took him*. This is probably another indication that Jesus was dog tired. He is so exhausted that the disciples physically had to assist him to his proper place so they could make their journey across the lake. Jesus is wiped out. Amazingly, Mark adds that other boats still followed them. Even now Jesus can't get away from everybody. Still the miracle-seeking crowd pursues him, even by night in boats of their own.

The Sea of Galilee, because of its below-sea-level and surrounded by mountains positioning, is prone to the most sudden and horrendous storms. Jesus and the disciples are making this journey in a wooden boat that's probably about 18' x 7'. As they're paddling their way across in the dark hours of night, one of these wind-storms swept across the lake. In verse 37, Mark uses the Greek word that we'd translate hurricane if this were on the ocean. The huge waves actually begin filling their boat. This is a big, serious storm that makes even the expert fishermen on the boat conclude, "We're sinking! We're going to die."

But! Verse 38 tells us that, as this little boat was bouncing from wave to wave, "Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion." The *cushion* referred to here in the stern is the seat where the steerman was supposed to sit, guiding the rudder to steer the boat. As the disciples are ripping out their hair in panic, Jesus is taking a snooze. Given where Jesus was sitting and the frustration with which the disciples rebuke him, does this mean Jesus was supposed to be steering? Or perhaps no body was *able to steer* because he was in the way. Perhaps Jesus was the designated rudder man, and in the hour of need, he's fast asleep.

One of the disciples decides that this is too much. Whoever it is, he speaks up (though not politely) and actually *rebukes* Jesus in their panicked frustration. But this person wasn't alone. He was speaking on behalf of the whole group. "Rabbi, *teacher*, do you not care that we are perishing?" "Don't you *care*," they asked, "that we're dying?" "Don't you care *about us*?"

Verse 39, Jesus wasting no time sits up and to say to the waves (strange, right?), "Quiet! Put a muzzle on it." And instead of the waves gradually dying down and expending all their energy, the waves immediately disappeared and gave way to perfect calmness. This display of raw power *terrified* the disciples, verse 41. In fact they were more afraid at the display of Jesus' power and authority than they were at the prospect of the storm.

Now Jesus turns toward his disciples and says, "Why are you so afraid?" Or translated, "What are you acting so cowardly? Why are you being such a coward? Have you *still* no faith?" Have you been with me all this time? Have you seen my overthrow demons, heal leprosy, take away paralysis, and everything in between? Were you *there* for that, and have you still no faith? Jesus is really expressing his disappointment and rebuke.

Now, what effect is this text supposed to have on us? How are we supposed to *respond*? Just like every other story in Mark's Gospel account, Mark is doing two things: (1) he's revealing Jesus and (2) he's showing us what discipleship looks like *in light* of who Jesus is shown to be. In this story, we see Jesus illuminated, and because of what we now learn about Jesus, we also understand better what it means to follow Jesus.

This morning we'll think mainly about Jesus. Mark has shined the spotlight on our Lord, and God's intent in our study is not just that we would learn more *data* about Jesus. God gives us Mark 4 so that we would *marvel*, *appreciate*, and *adore* the righteousness of Jesus!

It ought to make our hearts glow to see Jesus sleeping on the boat. Why was he sleeping on the boat? Because he did not take time to sleep on the land. Because he spent himself day and night preaching the Kingdom of God. And why was he on the boat in the first place? So that he could go to a

new place to go on doing the will of the Father and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. And why was his heart so *set* on being so wonderfully righteous? Because he loved and honored the Father, of course. But also so as to attain perfect righteousness.

When a fallen soul repents from their sin and puts all their hope of being saved from the wrath of God *in Jesus*, then God takes *their* sin and counts it *paid* by Jesus' death, **and he takes the perfect righteousness of Jesus during his life and he counts that as *theirs*.**

So again, why did Jesus weary himself in the work of the Lord? Because that is what God deserves and requires. And because that is precisely what I have failed to do and to be. So God sent Jesus to do it so as to *give count it* as mine!

We see something else about Jesus here that makes his suffering and living for our righteousness even all the more amazing. The disciples questioned in verse 41, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?" This story illustrates once again that the man Jesus is actually something much more. He was *sleeping*, so he is man. Jesus was really truly man. And the reason he is man is for us. The reason he even gets tired is because of us.

But then, this man stands up and tells the rolling waves to shut up, and they listen. "Who then is this? Who is this *man* that by the sheer authority of his word he dispels chaos and demands perfect peace from creation?" Well, he can be none other than God himself.

Only the Word of *God* can do such things. And here, Jesus doesn't say, "God, would you please do this." It is just Jesus' Word, and yet we know it must be God's Word as well! So we learn, his Word is God's Word, because he is man and he is fully God. It was God *himself*, the eternal Son, who took on the flesh, dwelt among sinful man in the midst of darkness, wearied himself for our righteousness, and suffered and *bled* for our transgressions. It was GOD who saved us from the wrath of God! That's the light Mark shines on Jesus!

Our only two proper responses to this revelation of Jesus this morning are these: (1) Lord, make us more like Jesus! Lord, give us hearts that long to serve and labor for you such that we find time to sleep only between ministry engagements. And (2), Lord, we can *never* be like Jesus, so thank you that Jesus has pleased you perfectly and that you now count his perfect righteousness as ours. We can't and won't attain it. Thank you for giving it so freely to us by your grace.

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