

"EVEN THE WIND AND SEA OBEY HIM."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden

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Texts for the Sermon: Mark 4:35-41

Introduction

Mark begins his gospel with these words:

Mark1:1 "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

It's impossible for us who have been Christians for so long to imagine what it would be like to hear those words for the very first time.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That's a bold statement. Mark doesn't beat around the bush or warm up to his subject. He makes the claim right up front that this Jesus is actually divine, the Son of God. Those are big words, Mark, are you sure you can back them up. Just saying that doesn't make it true.

Story after story Mark piles up the evidence. Jesus heals and demonstrates that He's Lord over the physical world of health; He casts out unclean spirits showing His authority over the spiritual world of demons. He knows what people are thinking. He says He is Lord of the Sabbath.

This morning we see a whole other realm bend to His will and His words, the realm of creation and nature.

This story is filled with rich truth and wisdom for all of us. Let's do what we talked about last week and dig in to mine the rich ore in this text. Let's exposit it or expose to the light what Jesus teaches us by His Holy Spirit through this great story. One great way to dig into any text of Scripture is to start asking questions of the text and this text actually makes it easy for us by giving us the question to ask, "Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

Mark 4:35-41

First, Who then is this? Jesus is fully man.

Who is this man who is so exhausted He falls asleep in a boat and is undisturbed by a fierce storm? Who is this man who spends a whole day doing open air preaching and is physically exhausted and weary from well doing? Who is this man who got hungry, thirsty and tired, who felt pain and pleasure?

God and angels and spirits don't need food and drink and sleep. If Jesus got tired and had to sleep then He must have our nature, He must be bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. This Jesus, our Lord and Savior is as truly man as He is God. He knows our flesh, our infirmities, our weaknesses. He has experienced and felt all that we do on a daily basis.

Hebrews 4:15-16 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. [16] Let

us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (ESV)

He has been touched with our troubles and felt the weaknesses of our flesh and understands our needs and infirmities. Who then is this? He is one of us and He is like us.

Second, Who then is this? Jesus is fully God.

“Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” The disciples know their OT. They know Psalm 89:9 that The Lord God Almighty rules the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, He stills them. They know Psalm 107 that “He commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea” and that “He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed” (Psalm 107:25, 29).

So who is this that does what is humanly impossible? He talks directly to the wind and the waves and they submit to Him and do exactly as He tells them. Three simple words, ***“Peace! Be still!”***

The wind and the waves know His voice. His voice spoke them into existence, “let there be water and waves, let there be air and wind” and there was. They know the voice of their master.

Jesus is God. He has only to will something and it’s done. He thinks a thought and it’s accomplished. The mere force of His will extinguishes a fever, drives away demons, restores a withered hand, and alters weather patterns.

Learn this well. Jesus has absolute authority over everything. Nothing is impossible for Him. No situation or circumstance is beyond His power.

No sin or weakness is beyond His ability to tame it or correct it.

No temper so violent, no fear so great, no depression so deep, no relationship so broken, that He can no bring peace and calm.

There’s nothing in this life that you and I see, touch, know or experience that is outside of or beyond Christ.

He is mighty to save and He has exercised His saving power to save us from the storms of sin and evil and to bring us safely ashore.

In our darkest hour know that we will never be forsaken. When God seems most absent there He is most present and the cross proofs it.

If we are in the boat with Jesus, then He will carry us safely through any and every storm and He will get us to the other side just as He said. When evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side” (Mark 4:35).

In the words of the Apostle Paul: **Romans 8:31** If God is for us, who can be against us? (ESV)

You can have absolute confidence in Christ because of His all-encompassing, all sustaining power. The same power that calmed the storm and raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us (Ephesians 1:19-20).

Third, Who then is this? He rebukes our small faith.

Who then is this who in the midst of fear and unbelief is gentle as a dove in rebuking our small faith? Our Lord Jesus Christ is exceedingly patient and long suffering with us. Despite all the miracles the disciples have already seen their little faith quickly turns to fear in the face of the storm.

Everything they had heard and seen was quickly forgotten. Forgotten was His authority over unclean spirits and fevers and lifelong paralysis and leprosy.

All they could think about was saving their own skin. “Jesus, wake up, don’t you care that we are dying here?”

Jesus rebuked them: “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”

At first blush this seems like an odd question? Isn’t the answer obvious, the wind is howling, the waves are crashing, the boat is full of water. Who wouldn’t be afraid? They are afraid of dying.

But the question is legitimate. How is their fear justified given who He is and what they have seen? They are mixing fear and faith. They wake Him up because they know He can save them, yet they are afraid they are about to die.

Notice what Jesus doesn’t do. He doesn’t cast them off because of the defects in their faith. He chides them, but He doesn’t withhold an answer and or withhold giving them the help they ask for and need.

Let us remember this well. Jesus is the same today as then. He is merciful and gracious and patient toward us.

He recognizes our weaknesses, He sees our shortcomings, He understands the defects in our faith and courage and character. He bears with us through them and loves us despite them, and is at work in us to change them.

From this story we learn the painful truth that we are so fickle, we are fair weather friends, that we live and walk more by sight than by faith.

And people who walk by sight are lousy theologians. Like the people who make comments on the internet after some great disaster or tragedy and say things like “there must be no God or no good God or that a loving God would never let bad things happen to good people.”

Stories like this are meant to humble us, to show how quickly we fall into fear and doubt and unbelief. And this humility must kill our own proud estimations of our own faith and our unfair expectations of others.

May we learn to be more Christ-like toward our spouses and children and siblings and parents and friends and church members and church leaders.

And may we learn to be more hopeful toward ourselves when we lack faith and waver in courage and show ourselves to be poor and needy, weak and foolish.

Yes, you can be a Christian disciple and have weaknesses and shortcomings and faults and failures. You can be a Christian as long as you are repenting of your sins and acknowledging your ignorance and needs, and accepting Christ's rebukes and admonitions and correction.

Fourth, Who then is this? He afflicts us to increase our faith.

Who then is this who though gentle as a dove is also wise as a serpent and leads us into storms to increase our faith? We learn perhaps the hardest truth of all to swallow, that being a disciple of Jesus or a follower of Jesus doesn't exempt you from storms.

The twelve disciples were doing exactly what Jesus told them to do. "Let us go across the lake to the other side." They were with Jesus, they had given up everything to follow Him. Yet here they are in the middle of a fierce life-threatening storm. What's up with that?

We twenty first century American upper middle class Christians expect everything to go smoothly in life. We have enough faith to follow Jesus and say we will go wherever He calls us, yet at the first sign of trouble our faith turns to fear. We get surprised and thrown off track by sickness, death, tragedy, trials, troubles, failures and defeats. What good is faith if the first time we really need it we stopped believing?

Jesus never once promised a life of leisure and ease. He never guaranteed an easy path or smooth sailing. In fact He promised the opposite,

John 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (ESV)

Let me speak this truth as clearly and lovingly as I can.

Jesus doesn't say that affliction *may* come. Jesus doesn't even promise that affliction *will* come. He says they *must* come. Scripture teaches not the possibility or even the probability but the necessity of trials and tribulation.

Acts 14:22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (ESV)

1 Peter 4:12-13 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. (ESV)

1 Peter 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (ESV)

Why does Jesus promise this? Because He loves us too much to promise a life without affliction. But how is affliction love? Because they teach us many good and valuable lessons.

Affliction teaches us that we are finite, dependent creatures, that we are weak and vulnerable. This past week a microscopic germ reduced me to complete weakness. I was humbled and brought down by the tiniest germ.

Affliction teaches us just how much control we really have and who really is in control. Our lives are not a reflection of our management skills or our ability to control events and

circumstances. Our lives are a reflection of God's mercy and grace, of His provision and protection. And if He chooses, it can all change in a mere moment. Affliction reminds us of our powerlessness and Christ's power. He may not overcome in the way we expect but He will overcome in the way He planned and in the way that's best. He may give healing or courage; deliverance or patience; victory or trust.

Affliction exposes how weak our faith really is. We never really know what our faith is made of until it's tried in the furnace of affliction. Can we stand the heat? Will we actually be able to say with Job, "Though he slay me yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). Affliction exposes hidden weaknesses.

Affliction strengthens our faith, it builds it up, makes it more storm resistant. I have talked about five boy grace and cancer grace and untimely death grace. There is faith for those things as well. Fear of the future faith, loss of health faith, Lupus faith, handicapped child faith, financial set back faith, job change faith, recession faith, walking in obedience faith.

Affliction weans us from this world and all our attachments to it, and as the afflictions accumulate as we grow older we begin to long more for heaven than for earth.

Affliction draws us to our Father's throne of mercy and grace, it brings us to our knees and to sweet fellowship with God.

Affliction purifies our hearts, roots out sin, and straightens priorities and purposes.

If there had been no storm they would have learned nothing about their faith and they would have witnessed nothing of the great glory of Christ.

When we get to heaven we will be able to say with the Psalmist:

Psalm 119:71 It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

Psalm 119:67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.

The day will come when we will thank God for every storm, every fierce wind and crashing wave, for in them we will see His hand of love, grace and mercy, preserving us, protecting us, and training us in righteousness.

God creates storms, God puts us in storms, God answers our pleading prayers and delivers us from storms and all of this for our good and our benefit. God's providence in adversities should be a great comfort to us, and free us from anger, impatience and fear.

This doesn't mean every story has a happy ending from our perspective. Babies still die, sons and daughters are taken before the prime of life. But one day God will reveal His purposes and we will be able to say, "What you have done is good."

Application and conclusion.

"Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?"

Who is this who as a man among men who stands and speaks and the wind and the sea obey?
Who is this who at one moment sleeps the sleep of weariness and at the next moment tells creation to be still?

That's the question to ask. To come face to face with who Jesus really is and what He can really do. Always remember what kind of Savior you have and what kind of Savior you turn to in every storm.

When your soul is in turmoil and the storm's roaring is almost deafening, turn to the Word of Christ, let the Word of God speak to your soul and silence the roar of the enemy and silence fear and doubt. Let Christ speak His truth into your situation in a way that there is calm in the midst of the storm and you can say with a trusting confidence, "It is well with my soul."

Jesus didn't do this miracle just so we would know that He really and truly is both God and man. Jesus didn't do this miracle just so we would know certain facts about Him. Jesus did this to increase our faith and trust in Him and so we would follow Him wherever He leads us and do whatever He commands us.

The disciples fear is somewhat justified in that they don't fully comprehend the very presence of God in their midst. They haven't witnessed the death and resurrection yet. But we have. We know God is with us and God is in us.

Let fear give way to greater faith. Fear not for I am with you. I will never leave you or forsake you.

Prayer:

Psalm 89:8-9 O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD ... ? [9] You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them. (ESV)

Holy Father, thank you for bringing us face to face again this morning with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, your Son and our Savior. Thank you for this revelation of His glory and majesty. Thank you for the mystery and wonder of who He is, both man and God, so weary that He could sleep in a storm and so mighty He could stop that storm in its tracks. Don't let us remain as those with no faith or little faith, but increase in us growing faith and complete conviction that Christ is able to still any storm or see us safely through any storm that you in your sovereign and loving providence send into our lives. Amen.