

Jesus Calms The Storm¹

Series: Signs & Wonders - The Miracles of God in the Gospel of Mark

2nd Sermon | Passage: Mark 4.35-41

Intro

Today we are back in the Gospel of Mark for the second message in our series “Signs & Wonders.” The goal of this series is to confront us with the power of God. The idea behind this series is to hit the reset button on how we think about God. A.W. Tozer said the most revealing thing about a church is her idea of God. And that’s true of an individual as well.

See there is a danger we can manufacture in our minds an idea of God that we can worship while remaining comfortable. Usually we trumpet how loving and sacrificial he is and how he understands our problems. After all, Jesus came down from heaven & became like one of us.

We take these things that we like about God, some of them true, and we make them the complete picture of God in our minds. And because of that we run the risk of being casual with God. So we slap #blessed onto our posts, And we come up with things like Jesus is my homeboy t-shirts. And over time God becomes tame and domesticated. Kind of like a

spiritual snuggie to keep you warm and cozy as you live your comfortable life.

But that’s not the God of the bible. C.S. Lewis in *Lion Witch & Wardrobe* talks about a scene where Susan and Lucy are following Aslan as he makes his way to the stone table where he is going to be sacrificed. And Aslan sees them and invites them to come up beside him and walk with him. And Lewis says “They’d always wanted to touch his mane but they NEVER dared approach him before.” See they loved him. They were close to him but they feared him. He was soo powerful and he was anything but tame. Do you function in your life as if God is a domesticated housecat or an untamable lion?

Today we are going to confront our casual idea of God head on. And the question in front of us today is **how strong is the God you believe in?** (Keep up through the second time I say it just a few paragraphs from here) Not how strong is your belief in God. When we ask how strong is your belief in God we are asking a question about the **quality** of our faith. What we need is to ask the question about the **object** of our faith. How strong is the God you believe in?

And here’s why we have to see this: A Tame, domesticated, snuggie God is nothing more than a fictional character made up by tame, domesticated, snuggie Christians. And a bunch of those together make up a tame church. Listen: Thom Rainer, president of lifeway research, says somewhere b/t 7 - 10,000

these messages. His insights were very formative in the narrative exposition portion of this sermon.

¹ As I referenced in the first sermon in this series, I am leaning on Tim Keller’s book *Jesus the King* as a resource in preparing

churches in America will close their doors this year and its because tame domesticated churches are preaching a tame domesticated gospel that has no power to change anyone's life.

If Mercy Church is going to really be a church that God uses to bring a gospel awakening to the city of Charlotte it is going to begin with us believing that God is not domesticated, he's dangerous!

How strong is the God you believe in?

This question is ultimately a question about faith. And today we are going to assess what we think about God. Because I think that's the real reason all of us are here. Now I know there are a variety of reasons we came this morning. Maybe you came because you are a member and you serve and you love worshipping with your church. Maybe you came because it's a routine for you. Maybe you came because someone invited you and you respect them enough to join them even though you are skeptical of all religion and especially Christianity. But I do think, underneath all of our surface level reasons for coming to church, there is a deeper longing in our hearts for God to be real & to be as big and strong as we've ever dared hope. Some of us wont let our hearts chase that desire because we think its just a set up for more disappointment. But we want to want it. We want to feel like Susan & Lucy in the story. That God loves us...and he's also dangerously powerful. That the Lion loves me.

Today we are looking into Mark 4.35-41. It is a well known story and only 7 verses long. We mentioned last week that

Mark reads like a newsreel. Here's what happened. Plain and simple.

Here's the story:

Jesus and his disciples are out in a boat and a huge storm comes up. The disciples think they are going to drown but Jesus is asleep. In the boat during the storm. So they wake him up and say hey man don't you care we are about to drown! Jesus then stands up and says TO THE WIND & WAVES: Silence, Be Still. And it all stops. Then he rebukes the disciples for having no faith. And they look at each other terrified not really sure who they had gotten into the boat with. That's it.

That's the short version. Now I want to slow down and take in the whole scene Mark is re-telling. Then, I want to show you the giant implications this small story has for both Christians and non Christians alike.

[35] On that day, when evening had come, he told them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the sea."

Ok let's set the scene. The disciples had been with Jesus all day. He'd been teaching crowds of people, he'd healed some people. And they had been with him watching the whole thing. In fact historians say the whole gospel of Mark is the eye witness account of the apostle Peter. John Mark, our author, was Peter's writer. Peter sat down and told him everything that happened which is how we know what went down in such an intense moment that only his closest followers were there to witness.

And the important thing we will come back to about this verse: Jesus said “let’s cross over to the other side of the sea.” See a storm is about to come up and in the middle of it the disciples are going to forget that Jesus had plans for them to be on the other side of it. Sometimes we can forget God’s words to us and his promises for us when we are in the middle of a storm.

[36] So they left the crowd and took him along since he was in the boat. And other boats were with him.

This is one of those comments, I believe, that speak to the authenticity of the account. In fact Richard Bauckham in his book *Jesus & the Eye Witnesses* examines the characteristics of eyewitness memory. One of the marks of an eyewitness account is ‘irrelevant detail.’²

Like if you came up after service today and punched Charlie in the face. And I was telling the story later and said yeah this guy in a blue shirt came walking up front and punched Charlie in the face. The fact that you were wearing a blue shirt is pointless. The only reason I say it is because I’m recalling what I saw.

Fictional stories contain details for the purpose of moving the story along or to help color the message the author is trying to get across. But the fact that other boats were out on the water that night? It’s one of several obscure details in Mark that really do not advance the story at all. Another example in this story is the mention Jesus is sleeping on a cushion. Vincent

² Bauckham, Richard, *Jesus & the eye witnesses: The Gospels as Eye Witness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 343.

Taylor, biblical scholar, says “this detail, so unnecessary to the story, is probably of genuine reminiscence.”³ Basically these historians are saying these details help verify that this probably went down the way Mark says it did.

And I pause there and say that stuff because for some of you your problem with the bible is you treat it like a series of fables that are supposed to make you feel good about yourself. And we are going to get into more of this in our next series but listen...there is a lot of scholarly work out there defending the claim of this book that it is a historically accurate account of events that really did happen. And the reason its here is to tell you the same God who really did this...and who really died...and who really got out of the grave...that same God is alive today and his same power is available to you. For some of you that’s your big faith move today. To stop treating Jesus & Church like some kind of therapeutic spirituality and to either take it or leave it. Do you believe Jesus is who this book says he is and he did what it says he did. Sidebar over. Let’s keep rolling. Ok so they are in the boat...

[37] A great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. [38] He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher! Don’t you care that we’re going to die?”

The setting is the sea of Galilee. The sea of Galilee is 700 feet below sea level. Mount Hermon, 30 miles north, is 9200 feet

³ Taylor, Vincent, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952) 274 as cited in Bauckham on p 343.

high. The cold air from it would rush down to the warm air of the sea and it was very common for massive thunderstorms to come up. And these guys were fishermen who would have been used to big storms. SO, this must have been a big one.

Ok get in the boat here for a minute. The waves are crashing, the boat is rocking hard. The waves are so high they are coming into the boat. These guys have progressed through the levels of fear. Concerned look to anxious laughter to all out panic. And in their panic they wake up Jesus and say

So they woke him up and said to him, **“Teacher! Don’t you care that we’re going to die?”**

Right there. That’s the question everyone who has ever tried to live a life of faith in this world has asked at some point. Don’t you care? Everything starts going wrong and we start crying out to God and it’s as if God is all of the sudden asleep. And we are like...hey God what gives? I’d understand it if stuff went bad for people who are in a different boat...you know those people who reject you and who are trying to make it on their own without you. It makes sense for them to drown in the storm. But I’m in YOUR BOAT! Don’t you care!?!? When I really need you how come it seems like you aren’t there!?!?

Ever felt that? I have. I own that. Maybe you’ve NEVER doubted God’s power or his love for you. If you’ve NEVER doubted that...great. Come back next week when we talk about demon possession cause you are lying and clearly need to get that demon out. Ok let’s see what Jesus does with their cry

[39] He got up (fyi you know the only place in the gospels where Jesus is recorded as sleeping is during a storm?),

rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Silence! Be still!” The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. [40] Then he said to them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

Ok we are going to get into the implications of this in a minute but do you get what happened? A storm that we could easily translate as hurricane. That’s not an exaggeration. It’s raging. And he gets up and he talks to nature as if it were a person. Seriously. The word Silence is 2nd person singular. It’s as if Jesus is addressing and rebuking an unruly child. And the more astonishing thing of course is that the wind ceased and the waves went completely calm.

Make sure you understand what Mark is saying. He’s saying the moment Jesus said “Silence, Be Still” everything instantly stopped. Remember you are in the boat. The winds vanished and the sea did not just stop raging, it went like glass. Like look over the side and see your reflection because the water is STILL.

Ever seen the ocean before or after a regular storm? It is choppy for hours. But this one stops instantly. See what he’s doing? See what Mark is telling you? The next verse clues you in on Mark’s message to us

[41] And they were terrified and asked one another, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”

Who is this? We know who it is. Jesus didn’t say “in the name of _____ be still.” He didn’t call on a higher authority. Jesus didn’t call on the power of God because he IS the power of God. So he can just say it. Be still. He commands every molecule of the universe with just his words. He’s Dangerous.

This is Genesis 1 right. God SPOKE and on the third day the seas were gathered together and formed. Who is this? This freaks out the disciples.

When the storm raged...they were afraid. When Jesus makes the storm stop...they are TERRIFIED. Why were they more terrified in the calm than in the storm? Because Jesus is showing he's stronger than the storm. The storm had great power and they couldn't control it. Now what they are realizing is that Jesus had infinitely more power than the storm and they had even less control over him. That untamable power...it terrifies them.

That's the story. Now. I think the implications for us today are wrapped up in Jesus' question to the disciples. Because we are in the same boat as them. Remember: They were with Jesus! They had given up a lot at this point. Peter & Andrew, James & John...they had given up fishing the moment Jesus said "Follow me." Matthew gave up tax collecting. They all gave up their JOBS. They were varsity Christ followers by this point. If anybody Got it, they got it. And even these navy seals of the faith...they got it...but they didn't get it.

A familiarity with Jesus had blinded them to who he really was. And maybe this is you. We live in the bible belt where familiarity with Church and Christian things can help create a domesticated Jesus that doesn't threaten to disrupt our lives. But that's just not who he is. And it's why this story is in here. And when the disciples' eyes are opened...they aren't impressed. They are terrified. Because they realize he is ALL powerful. And they had no idea they'd been sitting with such power all along.

I spent a couple of weeks in Afghanistan a few years ago and one of the craziest things was the land mines that were everywhere. And they were marked with red spray paint on the ground. And children would play close by. Children who had never seen one detonated. They knew what they were because their parents had told them. But they weren't terrified of them. After we left the war heated back up and many of those mines went off. Then, they really got it. Like those kids in Afghanistan the disciples had NO IDEA of the power of the one they were with.

They got it...but didn't get it. Many of us get it...but don't really get it at all. We have no idea of the power of God.

His two Questions: Why are you afraid? do you still have no faith? These two questions are directed to us today. And the short answer is that we've domesticated God and I want to show you *how* we make God so small and powerless. In our storms: **How God becomes too small for our storms**

1. We forget what God has brought us through

Jesus looks at the disciples and says **...why are you afraid? Do you *still* have no faith?**

I'm telling you, when you read Mark you gotta pay attention to every, little word. "Still?" Still guys? You've been with me for a little while now. You've already seen me heal all kinds of people. You watched me cast out demons already. You've surrendered your careers for me...but **STILL**. **STILL** the storm is revealing you have no faith.

Listen to me. I need this message right now so bad. So I'm preaching to myself and I hope you are listening but if you aren't that's fine. At least the disciples had an excuse that they hadn't seen him on the cross yet. They weren't aware of the empty tomb because it hadn't happened yet. But us? We stand on this side of the cross & resurrection. We have been given the gospel message and the message says that God loves you. He loves you more than any father has ever loved any child. We talked about this in kids week this week which was awesome. God loves you. He made you to know him, but you sinned. And your sin was, at its core, rejecting God as your authority. You need forgiveness or you will spend eternity separated from God. And God says he loves you so much he sent Christ to die for your sins so that you can be forgiven! You can be reconciled to God now. You can know him, you can have a relationship with God. Jesus Died in your place so that you could be forgiven of your sins then rose from the dead giving you and I forever victory over death and eternity with God. Our greatest need was met in the cross & resurrection.

And some of you are in a storm right now wondering where God is and I'm like...He's RISEN & HE'S WITH YOU! **GOD DIDN'T PURCHASE YOU ON THE CROSS JUST TO ABANDON YOU IN THE STORM!!**

And he looks at us just like he looks at the disciples. STILL? Some of you have seen God save you, save your whole family. Rescue people from addictions and broken relationships. And your doubt of him in the present storm just doesn't square with

any of your experience up to this point. STILL!? Is all that you've believed and all you've seen him do...is it all fiction? Because if it is TRUE that he saved you from your sin, and its true that he walks with you now, you can rest in his love for you. And you can have the peace that will calm this storm. Because listen: a lot of times the storm seems to rage so big is because we are looking at it as if God isn't with us in the boat. If you are in Christ...if you've received his forgiveness of your sins then you have his presence. You always have. And there is untamable power working for you there.

2. We trust ourselves way more than we should

This one goes right along with the previous one. Charles Spurgeon once said in commenting on this passage that for so many of us, though we'd never say it, our faith is mingled with self-confidence. He said it in question form: . Is this the reason why you are so fearful, that your faith is alloyed with self-confidence? And there is a lot of hard truth in there. Many of us christians, if we are honest, tend to think that we are people of faith but if things get really bad "we can manage." We are smart, talented, & shrewd so we will be able to make it. There in may lie our greatest weakness. As Spurgeon said "Brethren, we are never so weak as when we feel strongest, and never so foolish as when we dream that we are wise."⁴ – Charles Spurgeon

Your false sense of self confidence is going to make you feel like you can handle the storm when it comes. [5] Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding [6] In all your ways acknowledge him, and he

⁴ Spurgeon, C. H. (1887). [Why Is Faith so Feeble?](#) In *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons* (Vol. 33, pp. 296–297). London: Passmore & Alabaster.

will make straight your paths. - Proverbs 3:5-6

I don't know how else to say it: You are not God. You aren't even close. In a moment everything you've built could be gone. That isn't meant to scare you but it is meant to wake you up. The paradox of the gospel is that our weakness is strength. Jesus was weak on the cross and that weakness brought with it the strength to give salvation to the whole world. Likewise it is in our weakness. Our willingness to lay down our agendas ENTIRELY and trust him completely...there you will find the power of God.

I'll prove it to you: Go and obey God radically in some area of your life. Not halfway. Don't cut a deal with God where you try to meet him in the middle with your obedience. Go all out! God calls you to give generously of your finances to his mission. DO IT! Radically do it. See if that obedience doesn't create joy like nothing else can. He calls you to share the gospel with others...DO IT! Seriously. Share the whole gospel with someone you care about. This is where I often don't trust him. I'm so worried people will laugh me out of the room or that I won't be able to answer a question. TRUST IN THE LORD! His power is in the sharing of the gospel. Let the Lion do what the Lion does. That person far from God but close to you...this week. Share the gospel. Not sure how? Let one of our pastors take you out to share the gospel. We'd love to.

3. We are surprised by storms

This one is pretty self explanatory. you get in the boat with Jesus, a storm is probably going to come. I feel the need to go

ahead and warn you if you are not a Christian here. If you are living a pretty comfortable life...Becoming a Christian does not enhance your comfort. Most times it comes at a cost. When you become a Christian you trade temporary comfort for lasting joy. Storms will come. Storms come to everyone. And in the storm what we believe in is revealed. That's why we must have a giant view of the object of our belief. Because that belief will be tested when the storm comes.

"Imagine you are falling off a cliff, and sticking out of the cliff is a branch strong enough to hold you.. but you don't know how strong it is. As you fall you have just enough time to grab the branch. Now how much faith in the branch do you have to have for the branch to save you? Must you be TOTALLY sure of it's power? No, of course not. You only have to have enough faith to grab the branch. That's because its not the quality of your faith that saves you; it's the object of your faith. It doesn't matter how you feel about the branch; all that matters is the power of the branch. And Jesus is the branch."⁵ JUST GRAB ON TO HIM!

we are so busy panicking in the storm that we may miss what God wants to do in us through the storm.

Listen this storm for these guys...was a picture of what was to come. Jesus was preparing them. Trying to get them to see him for who he really is. Because they are going to be the apostles who steer the church through the storm of persecution when he leaves pretty soon. Listen to me: Every single apostle, except John, is going to be persecuted and executed for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And Jesus is saying guys...a little wind

⁵ Tim Keller *Jesus The King* (Dutton: NY, NY 2011) 55.

and waves is NOTHING compared to what's coming. And you need to see right now that I am with you now and will be with you there.

4. We don't know God

Our question is the disciples question still: "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

Do you know God? The God of the bible is an untamable dangerous all powerful God. But he is good. And he loves you. Do you know him? If I ask you to tell me about God...what comes out? The reason the disciples panicked is ultimately is because they didn't really know Jesus as God. They knew him as teacher, but not as God. This was their awakening. It came in a storm.

God has given you a way to know him in his word. Job 22.21 says "acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace. And thereby good things will come to you." (KJV)

Ya'll I hate to make this so simple...but it really is: Do you know him? Do you spend time with him? Some of you call him God but you spend more time preparing your Instagram pic than you do reading your bible. Is he really God to you? Get to know him. Immerse yourself in his word. Get someone in your community group and go deep into God's word together. Listen we have two more weeks in Mark and I promise you could read the whole thing in the next 14 days NO PROBLEM. GET TO KNOW JESUS. That way, when the storm cuts you, you will bleed Jesus.

We used to do an illustration on this where we'd put a big jar filled with marbles and we'd knock it over. And Marbles

would fall out all over the stage. And then I'd ask: WHY DID THE MARBLES FALL ONTO THE GROUND? And naturally people would say "Because you knocked the cup over." Nope. Marbles fell onto the ground because marbles were in the CUP.

When the storms come, if you are building your life on the power of God as found in his word...it will come out of you.

In fact let me show you a bible connection that takes this story and just busts it into IMAX 3D. You know the OT story of Jonah? Listen Mark has deliberately told this story with language that parallels Jonah's story. If you know Jonah...your bible radar goes off when you read this story. Like...haven't I read this somewhere?

Both Jesus and Jonah were in a boat, both boats were in a storm, both Jonah and Jesus were asleep in the middle of a storm. In both stories the sailors scream "wake up, we are all going to die." And in both stories it is miraculous divine intervention that calms the storm. And in both stories the sailors become more terrified AFTER the storm than before it was calmed.

Mark leaves one glaring difference in the story: Jonah said if I perish...then you will live. So he sacrificed himself. Threw himself into the raging sea...to save the sailors. Jesus didn't. Well...Not yet. That's Mark's point.

See in Matthew's gospel Jesus says "One greater than Jonah is here." Jesus is saying I'm the true Jonah. I'm the one that is going to still all the waves and calm all the storms. I'm going to destroy destruction, break brokenness, and kill death."

Keller said: “See on the cross Jesus hurled himself into the only storm that can actually sink us – the storm of eternal Justice of what we owe for our wrongdoing. That storm wasn’t calmed until it swept Jesus away.”⁶

Do you see his love for you there on the cross? If you will rest in that love. Make your home in that love...let that love go down to the core of who you are...you will start to marvel and stand amazed. And his power will overwhelm you and calm the storms in ways you never thought possible.

⁶ Keller, 57.