

Expository sermon outline and notes prepared by:

© Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor

[Swift Creek Baptist Church.com](http://SwiftCreekBaptistChurch.com), 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834

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Mark 4:35-41 “Safety in the Storm”

Intro. Beginning with this text, and going through chapter 5, we see that God’s Servant, Jesus Christ, is the Master of every situation. Here we see Him facing a terrible storm. Next Sunday we will see Him face a demon possessed man that no one could tame. In these & other situations Jesus demonstrated that He is the Conqueror of every enemy. So if we trust Him and follow Him, we need never be afraid.

From the first part of this chapter we see that Jesus had been teaching His disciples the Word. But it’s not enough to hear the Word of God. We must also believe it, and put it into practice. Now, Jesus is about to give His disciples a practical test of their faith, and they will also learn by experience a wonderful truth about Jesus. For the most part they failed this particular test, but that’s OK. Part of the learning process is to learn from your mistakes, and improve in your areas of weakness.

You may be going through a test of your faith right now, or you may have gone through a recent test. Has your faith proven to be genuine, or has your response indicated that your faith is small or non-existent? Well if your faith hasn’t been tested recently, the day will come when your faith will be tested, and you need to be equipped with a strong, genuine faith in Jesus Christ. He is the One who can help you through the storms of life.

So let’s consider this story together, and see what lessons God has for us. First of all, we see:

I. THE SAVIOR SEEKING REST

From this passage of Scripture we can draw a lesson about rest. We see from v.35 that this incident took place in the evening, after a long day of labor. At this point Jesus was worn out from the toil of the long day, and felt the need of rest. He had been pressed on all day by “a very great multitude.” He had been teaching & preaching much of the day. After preaching 3 sermons on a Sunday, I know that I usually get very tired, & Jesus taught & ministered to the people all day long. Since Jesus was the Son of Man as well as the Son of God, even He needed rest.

So what did Jesus do get find rest? Notice that Jesus said in the last of v.35, “Let us cross over to the other side.” He wanted to cross over from the busy western side to the less populated eastern side, for He knew that was the only way he would find rest from the crowds. In fact, v.36 says, “Now when they had left the multitude....” That was the point of going to the other side. He also would find rest in the boat trip itself. I believe Jesus planned to stretch out in the boat, rest His head on the leather seat cushion that the steersman usually used, and get some rest. Well, Jesus was able to get some rest, for we read in v.38, “He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow.” He was in the back of the large boat.

Application: And if Jesus needed rest, how much more do we need rest. Do you take time for rest, or are you always running ragged, working yourself to death? Be sure to set aside a day of rest each week. From time to time you need to get away from the demands of life, and get some rest. When you do get away on vacation, don’t try to do too much. Be sure you get some rest. It is important for your health & well-being.

Furthermore, this truth about the humanity of Jesus ought to encourage us. He knows the trials of a man, for He has experienced them. He knows the bodily weaknesses of a man, for He has felt them. Hebrews 4:15 says, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses....” You can share your problems with Jesus in prayer, for He understands from His own personal experience.

Next we see:

II. THE STORM SENDING DANGER

In v.37 we read that “a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat....” The geographic location of the Sea of Galilee is such that sudden violent storms are not unusual. The Sea of Galilee lies approximately six hundred eighty feet below sea level. Its bed is a depression surrounded by hills, especially on the east side with its precipitous cliffs. It is understandable that when the cool currents rush down from Mt. Hermon (9,200 feet) or from elsewhere and collide with the heated air above the lake basin, this down rush is impetuous. The result was a terrible thunderstorm with heavy, swirling wind & rain. The storm described here must have been especially fierce if it frightened experienced fishermen like the disciples.

The fishermen disciples were used to such squalls, and, at first, would probably let their sail down, and pull so as to keep the boat’s head to the wind & waves. Yet shortly after the storm began, the disciples realized they were in danger. We see the danger in the last of v.37, “The waves beat into the boat.” The tense of the verb (imperfect) indicates that the waves kept beating against the boat. In fact, the wind & the waves were so great that the boat “was already filling.” The small fishing craft, swamped by towering waves, was becoming water-logged. And when the open boat craft began to fill, they grew alarmed. They were seemingly in imminent danger of sinking & drowning in the Sea. That must have been a scary feeling. If the boat went down, they were too far from the shore to swim, especially during a storm.

Now I want to point out 3 lessons based on their experience in the storm. First of all:

A. Don’t Automatically Conclude that You are Out of God’s Will - Many people have the idea that storms come to their lives only when they have disobeyed God, but this is not always the case. Jonah ended up in a storm because of his disobedience, but the disciples got into a storm because of their obedience to the Lord. They were simply doing what the Lord commanded. They believed in Jesus, loved Jesus and were not ashamed to give up everything for His sake. Yet here we see these men in trouble, apparently in danger of being drowned.

If we are true Christians, we must not expect everything smooth in our journey to heaven. We must count it no strange thing if we have to endure sicknesses, losses, bereavements and disappointments just like other people.

B. Don’t Assume that God Doesn’t Care – In v.38 we see that they awoke Jesus, and there is a touch of rebuke in their appeal. They asked, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” Their words meant, “Do we mean so little to you? With death staring us in the face, how can you sleep? Don’t you care whether we’re all swallowed up by the angry deep?”

But it is not for us to fling stones at them, seeing that we also often may catch ourselves thinking that Jesus has gone to sleep when storms come on ourselves, and that He is indifferent to our plight. How often in the trials of life we are prone to imitate the faithless disciples and cry out, “Lord, don’t you care?” Of course, He cares! The apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 5:7, “casting all

your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” Furthermore, as we shall see in a few moments, though He did not prevent the storm, He did preserve them *through* the storm.

C. Trust that God Has a Purpose in Allowing the Storm - Did Jesus know that the storm was coming? Of course, He did! The storm was a part of that day’s curriculum. God has His reasons for allowing us to go through the storms of life. By them He teaches us many precious lessons which we would never otherwise learn. By affliction He shows us our emptiness and weakness, and draws us to put our trust in Jesus. He can be trusted in the storms of life. We are strengthened through the adversity of the storms of life. James 1:2-3 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” Romans 5:4 adds the fact that trials also build character, and instills hope. Always remember that things will get better for the child of God.

Many of you know that my family has been going through a recurring storm for the past several years. I cannot help wondering why this has happened. I love God. I have sought to live a godly life. I am married to a godly woman. We have been diligent to live exemplary lives before our children. Yet I have had to reflect if the storm we have been going through is due to some sin. It is comforting to know that the disciples were in the will of God, & yet experienced a terrible storm. I have also been tempted to question if God cares for me & my family. A few months ago, when I realized the storm was back, I walked behind my shed, looked up with tears in my eyes & felt like asking, “God, where are you?” Yet this story reminds me that Jesus is present, and He cares. He is allowing this storm, and He is accomplishing His purpose in my own life. He is making me stronger. Though my faith has been tested, it is stronger than ever. Satan shall not have the victory.

Now once God has accomplished His purpose in allowing the storm, then we can experience what we see next in our story. For we also see:

III. THE SAVIOR SILENCING THE STORM

Notice what the Savior did in v.39, “Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still!’” The word translated “peace” (*siopao*) means to be silent. No doubt the wind was howling, and perhaps the thunder was loud enough to strike fear in any heart, but Jesus said, “Be silent.” Then He literally commanded the wind & waves to be muzzled. The perfect tense of the later verb means that the wind & waves were to remain that way. Jesus here exercises the divine prerogative of controlling matter by the bare expression of His will, and that this divine attribute was exercised by the wearied man, who, a moment before, had been sleeping the sleep of human exhaustion. The marvelous combination of apparent opposites, weakness, and divine omnipotence, which yet do not clash, but coalesce in perfect harmony, is a feat beyond the reach of the loftiest creative imagination. If the evangelists are not simple biographers, telling what eyes have seen and hands have handled, they have beaten the greatest poets and dramatists.

Now anyone can speak words, but with Jesus there was power in His words. In the last of v.39 Mark reports, “And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.” In a very effective manner Jesus asserted His authority over the elements of nature, so that there was a great calm. Those words were the words of Him who first created all things. The elements knew the voice of their Creator, and like obedient servants were quiet at once. What is very striking is that not only the winds immediately quiet down, but so do even the waves. Generally, as it is well-known, after the winds have perceptibly diminished, the billows will continue to roll for a while. But in this

instance winds and waves synchronize in the sublime of a solemn silence. Suddenly the surface of the sea had become almost as smooth as a mirror.

Based on what happened, we need to answer the question that the disciples asked about Jesus in the last of v.41, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!” They already knew that He had the authority to forgive sins, to cast out demons, and to heal diseases. Now they discovered that He even had authority over the wind and the sea. They did not answer their own question with words, but they did in their reaction. Notice in v.41 that “they feared exceedingly.” Literally, they “feared with great fear.” The “awe” here indicated was a combination of fear and reverence. It is the same fear that anyone would experience when they are in the presence of God! The disciples began to realize that Jesus was far greater than they had previously imagined. He exercises control not only over audiences, sicknesses, and demons, but even over winds and waves. Who but the Son of God has the power to calm the wind & the sea. Very appropriately the narrative ends by fixing the attention upon the person of Jesus Christ.

How would you answer the question of the disciples? Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you stand in awe of Him? The same God who created the wind & the sea has the power to calm them simply by speaking the Word. God created the world by speaking it into existence, and He controls the world by the power of His Word. I would say that Jesus can handle any problem you face!

IV. THE SAVIOR INSTRUCTING HIS DISCIPLES

The story does not end with v.39. Jesus took advantage of the situation to instruct His disciples. Though they probably had learned a great lesson about Jesus & His power to save, they still needed to deal with the problems of their own fear & unbelief. Though Jesus had taken care of their outward circumstances, He still needed to deal with the inward problems that remained. Now remember, the disciples had, by implication, accused the Master of not being concerned about them. Is it not really marvelous and very comforting to take note of the fact that Jesus never rebuked them for the grim, thoughtless words? He dealt most gently and tenderly with them. By the way, if you humbly acknowledge your own weaknesses & shortcomings, He will certainly deal gently and tenderly with you as well. He will be patient with you. Don't give up when you fail the Lord yet again!

Yet they needed correction, so He dealt with 2 more fundamental problems:

A. Concerning Their Fear – In v.40 Jesus asked, “Why are you so fearful?” There were at least three good reasons why none of the men in the ship should have been fearful, even though the situation appeared to be threatening. To begin with, they had His promise that they were going to the other side (v.35). He did not promise an easy trip, but He did promise an arrival at their destination. Second, the Lord Himself was with them, so what was there to fear? They had already seen His power demonstrated in His miracles, so they should have had complete confidence that He could handle whatever situation they would face. The Creator and Sustainer of the universe was with them in the boat! Finally, they could see that Jesus was perfectly at peace, even in the midst of the storm. Jesus was in God's will and knew that the Father would care for Him, so He took a nap. What could the disciples say, as they sat there in the great calm, in answer to Christ's question, “Why are your fearful?”

So dear child of God, when you go through one of the storms of life, do not fear. Do not worry. Put your trust in Jesus. He will help you reach your ultimate destination! And if you still are afflicted with fear, just look back on how the Lord has helped you in the past.

Since turning to Jesus in faith is so important in calming our fears, we also see that Jesus dealt with them:

B. Concerning Their Faith – In the last of v.40 Jesus asked, “How is it that you have no faith?” Or some of our best Greek texts read, “Do you not yet have faith?” Their fear clearly demonstrated their lack of faith. Jesus wondered at the slowness of the disciples to learn their lesson. They still had not yet developed a strong faith in Jesus even after so many miracles, and living beside Him for so long.

Don’t we also show our lack of faith when we become fearful in the storms of life? That’s in spite of the fact that we know Christ even better, and we have centuries of His working for His servants to look back on. We wonder unbelievably instead of saying out of a faith nourished by experience, “It is just like Him”.

Instead of being fearful & lacking faith, we should put our faith in Jesus, who can do the impossible. No stormy passions are so strong that He cannot tame them. No temper is so rough and violent that He cannot speak peace to it and make it calm.

Conclusion: You will certainly face various storms in your life. Well I want you to know from this story that the safest place to be is in the boat with Jesus. You will still face some storms in life, but you are far better off being with Jesus, & putting your faith in Him.

Are you in the boat with Jesus? Have you put your faith in Him as Savior? Are you a member of His church? If you could not answer “yes” to one of those questions, then I want to invite you do take action today. I will be happy to lead you in a prayer to trust in Christ as your Savior. Or if you are already a Christian, but not yet a member of this church, we invite you to get in the boat with God’s people. Move your membership to this church. Together we can serve the Lord and grow in our faith.

Sources: William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), *Mark: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987); Kenneth S. Wuest’s *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). McGee read, but not used.

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