

Jesus Calms the Storm

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Date: 16 November 2014

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[0 : 00] Amen. Thank you very much, Ray. Please turn to Mark chapter 4, verses 35-41. We're going to spend a while looking at these verses.

! And we might have some technology in a minute. Yes, okay.! I'm trying to get the technology tuned up. I've tried some different things this week.

I don't think they've all worked as smoothly as possible, but we will see. So please bear with me. We're looking at Mark's gospel for the next few weeks. Returning to that, we've been looking at it in the evenings previously.

And for my introduction, I would like to say there are three questions, which I think are relevant to us this morning. One question, who really is Jesus? Who really is Jesus? If you are seeking Christian faith this morning, that is the basic question that you need to find answers to.

So don't get too hung up about questions like, why do they paint churches white on the inside? Or why do they have blue chairs? That's not a fundamental question. Who is Jesus? That's the fundamental question. Who is he really?

[1 : 37] Here is the question. Where is Jesus when I really need him? That's the question of a believer who might be feeling low or lost or abandoned or desperate and saying, here I am in my current situation? Where is Jesus? Doesn't seem to be doing anything? Doesn't seem to be helping? Doesn't seem to be responding?

Where is he? There's a question. And then here's a third question. This is a question which I think perhaps is a little bit unwelcome to us.

Not a question of God to us. Why do you react to situations the way that you do?

Now I wasn't really expecting that question. I thought God would just say, you know, pat me on the head and say, I'm here for you. But actually the text raises this question.

Why do you respond the way you do? It's a probing question. And a question from God. Those three questions I think are relevant to people.

[3 : 05] Relevant to us. And they're the questions that are in the text that we're going to look at. We're looking at Mark's Gospel, chapter 4, 35 to 41.

And I'd like to look at it in three scenes. There are three megas. Mega in slang means big.

It means that because it's the original word in Greek. Mega in Greek means big, great, mega. And there are three things in here that are mega, which I hope to point out.

And in fact, there are not three questions, but four questions. You look at them. Verse 38, a question. Teacher, don't you care if we drown?

Verse 40, question. Why are you so afraid? Question 40. Sorry, verse 40. Do you still have no faith? And then the last question.

[4 : 05] Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him? So as we go through, we ought to pick up three scenes, three megas and four questions. Let's do a context. Because the story doesn't just come out of nowhere.

It sits in the middle of something. You could look back how we've got here and you could look forward where we're going on from here. So backwards has been explaining who Jesus is, sort of first time round.

A first look at who Jesus is. And some very surprising things have come up. We saw, for example, about his authority.

So when he taught in the synagogue, they said, this is amazing. The authority that he has to teach. And then somebody popped up in the synagogue one very memorable day and screeched out at Jesus.

What do you want to do with us? What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. And Jesus had sternly rebuked, be quiet.

[5 : 14] And the demon, the demon-possessed person had shut up. And people had said, this is amazing authority. And Jesus had authority to heal. And Jesus was able to cleanse the leper and had authority to forgive sins.

And even seemed to have authority to handle and to trump the law of Moses in the way that David, the king, trumped the law of Moses by being king.

Jesus seems to claim the right to do that. So lots of things have been found out about Jesus first time round, up to the point that we've got to.

His authority, his grace, that he forgives sins. He's interested in sinners the way that a doctor is interested in ill people.

And a bit about his identity. Who can have such authority? Who can forgive sins but God alone? These are the questions that have been raised so far.

[6 : 20] So we already have that information. And then going forward from here, there's more on the same thing. We just sort of go over the same ground, perhaps more intensely.

And the next few chapters all take place around the lake. So that's not late, but lake. And I've done a picture there.

I'm going to turn around and see whether it, does it make any sense? Does that look like a boat on a lake? Yeah. Can you see it at the back? Ah, good. Right. Okay. Can you see the little writing? I did the writing for me, so you don't have to see it. The next stories take place around the lake. So 4.35, that day when evening came, he said to his disciples, let's go to the other side, the other side of the lake.

And in 5.1, they went across the lake to the region of the Gerizines. And in 5.21, they crossed about to the other side of the lake. And then there's various other things, travels that happen.

[7 : 27] And then in 6.45, in chapter 6, verse 45, Jesus makes his disciples get into the boat. And in 6.47, the boat was in the middle of the lake.

He was on the land. And there was more darkness and wind. And Jesus walked on the water. So you have a remarkable miracle, chapter 4, verse 35.

And quite a similar one, chapter 6, verse 47. It all takes place around the lake. So that's the context. So let's look at these scenes.

So here's the first scene. I didn't do too badly on that one, did I? So let's feel the weight of the text. Let's see what it says. So verse 35. That day, when evening came, he said to his disciples, let us go over to the other side.

[8 : 31] Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was in the boat. There were also other boats with him.

Let's take that verse. So I've put some of the features there. So the same day. Although chapter 4 contains other information, he's telling us that the day that he did the parables, sitting in the boat, huge crowd around, this is what happened at the end of that same day.

It must have been a very long day for Jesus, teaching all those people. It must have been very strenuous for him. But it was the same day. And evening came.

So the sun goes down. And the day is drawing to an end. And Jesus says, let's go to the other side. Let's pass over beyond.

So we've got one side of the lake there. And we've got the other side of the lake there. And Jesus says, we're going to make the transition from one side to the other. Let's go over. And Jesus leaves behind the crowd.

[9 : 48] I'm sure they were begging for more. They love to hear Jesus. They fell over themselves to get close to him. Whether they really understood what it was about is another question.

But that's the crowd. He leaves them behind. And it says, leaving the crowd, they took him along just as he was. Interesting little phrase there, isn't it?

They took him just as he was. What does that mean? I don't think the commentators who've written books about it are absolutely sure. But just have a think. Jesus had been teaching.

He'd been sitting in that boat teaching, speaking. Must have been a very draining thing to do. Does it mean they took him without even bothering to land?

Without even bothering to go and get fish and chips? Without even bothering to get changed? They just took him as he was.

[10:47] He just sat there. Right, let's go. As he was. They took him across to the other side. And we're told there are other little boats along with them.

Now those boats fade out of sight. We don't get told any more about them because the action focuses on what happens in the boat that Jesus is in.

But that's the scene. And do you know, to be honest, we've got a group of disciples who are obeying. He says, let's go to the other side. They're not arguing.

They're not saying, no, Lord. No, no, we're not going to do that. They say, yeah, come on, let's all go. You've got the presence of Jesus. Jesus is in the boat with them. You've got a sea trip in an eastern country.

The sun going down. Prospect of a little sea journey that evening. What could possibly go wrong? What could possibly go wrong?

[11:52] Christian life is a little bit like this, isn't it? That you can have the presence of Jesus. You can be doing what he says. And you think, well, all is set fair.

What could possibly go wrong? Well, next scene. Next scene. Well, the move from verse 36 to verse 37 is really striking, isn't it?

Verse 37. A furious squall came up. The waves broke over the boat so that it was nearly swamped. Let's do justice to what's being said here. This is the first mega. A mega storm came up. A windstorm.

The words for a particular windstorm. Mega. Huge. It's dark. And you get the storm. The little boats are tossed around. And the waves.

[12:59] It says. It uses a word which is made up of saying, upon and throw. And the waves threw themselves upon the boat.

So, can you imagine the waves throwing themselves on the boat? It's a mega storm, the waves. Throw themselves on the boat. And we're told one other thing in this scene.

I had to change the style of writing because it wasn't working. A mega storm of wind. The waves threw themselves into the boat. Such that the boat was already filled.

Or was, what does it say here? Nearly swamped. But what is actually said, it was nearly filling up. You know, nearly full. Now, I once went on a pleasure cruise in Cyprus.

And the wind blew a little bit. And the boat went like that. I didn't like it. These are much more hardy fishermen and seamen than I am or was or ever will be.

[14:10] But they are looking and their little boat in this mega storm is nearly filled. And, verse 38.

Jesus was in the stern. So, the back part of the boat. And there's a place which is a headrest or a pillow or something like that. And he's there on the headrest.

And it uses an expression to say, he'd fallen asleep. So, we have this in English, don't we? When you sleep, you fall. Or we say, colloquially, dropped off.

It's using the same idea of falling, isn't it? And it pretty much says that sort of thing. Jesus was in the stern. He's leaning on the headrest.

And he dropped off. You know, what a scene that is. He's dropped off. You know, what a moment for the master to drop off.

[15:18] But you can imagine why he did. Because he must have had such a busy day. And he's not, he's not, he doesn't have the anxiety that we have that keeps us awake.

He seems to have a calmness so that he can sleep. I had a thought, and I haven't put it in my notes. There was somebody else who went to sleep in a storm. Can you, in the Bible, anybody like to think of who else was asleep in the storm while everybody else was panicking?

Jonah. Yes. Jonah. Interestingly, Jonah, the storm was remedied not by speaking, but by chucking him overboard, wasn't it? And then I thought, and I didn't really follow this line, Jesus is unlike Jonah in that, isn't he?

That he didn't end up being sacrificed to calm the storm. And then I thought, well, actually, he is like Jonah. Because in the end, he was sacrificed, wasn't he?

To calm the great storm. That's the scene. And we now look at the reaction of the disciples.

[16:36] So, Jesus has dropped off. And the disciples arise him. It's the same word for resurrection, but it can be used just to mean rise.

But I always think when it's used, you always have the echo of the fact it's going to be used for resurrection. They arise him. And they say to him, teacher, don't you care if we perish, if we are destroyed?

Does it say drown here? Yeah, drown, but it's a word which means perish. It's a pretty strong question for Jesus, isn't it? You uncaring so-and-so. You've dropped off just at the crucial moment. Don't you care? And I think it's really, it's not a nice thing to say to Jesus. It's a bit of an unworthy thing, actually.

But that's what they say. And Mark doesn't smooth it out. That's what they said to him. Don't you care? Here we are. Look at what's going on around us. You don't seem to care.

[17:45] I don't know. Have you ever said that to Jesus? Jesus? What happens next? Jesus arose.

So what they tried to do to him, he did himself. He arose. I always think there's an echo in that word. He got up. And he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, quiet, be still.

It's a word that's been used before to rebuke. It's not the very, very strong word that he used to the leper, where he said, don't you dare tell anybody.

It's not that really strong word. But it is nevertheless strong. He rebuked the wind and said to the waves, quiet, pipe down, settle down.

So those of you who are in the teaching profession will probably have said this to your classes when they're all in uproar, throwing things and pulling each other's hair.

[18:58] And you go into the classroom and you say, settle down. And instantly, of course, well, perhaps, let's assume. Settle down. This is what Jesus says, and the wind settles down.

Be quiet. And be still. Be muzzled. Stop growling and roaring round. Be muzzled. Be quiet.

Be still. And, second mega, I think it's the second, isn't it? There was a mega calm.

So imagine that. Be quiet. Be quiet. Be quiet. There was a mega calm. And I, you know, what a thing to happen.

I'd like to reference Psalm 107. Verses 22 to 29, which is what we sang.

[20:09] Let me just read it again to you. I think I mean 23 to, 23 and, what did I put? 22 to 29. I meant 23 to 29. It says this.

It's a psalm. Others went out on the sea in ships. They were merchant on the mighty waters. They saw the works of the Lord, his wonderful deeds in the deep. For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves.

They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths. In their peril, their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunken men. They were at their wits' end.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble. To the Lord, the God of the Bible. And he brought them out of their distress.

Notice this. He stilled the storm to a whisper. The waves of the sea were hushed. Interesting, isn't it?

[21:07] That's what the psalm says the Lord does. He stills the storm to a whisper. And the waves of the sea were hushed.

It's characteristic Yahweh. Characteristic God. And here we see the mega calm at the word of Jesus.

So let's follow on. There's some conversation and there's some application.

Let's look at the next thing that happens. Verse 40. He says to his disciples, Why so...

Well, NIV, why are you so afraid? It is a strong word. Why so cowardly? Please look at Revelation 21, verse 8.

[22:16] In the end, God makes the division between those who are his people and those who are not his people.

He offers people to come to him. He offers the water of life in Revelation 21, verse 6. He says, He who overcomes will inherit all this.

I will be his God and he will be my son. And then he makes a list of the characteristics that disqualify people because they are not the characteristics of the people of God.

Revelation 21, verse 8. The unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters, all liars.

Their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death. It's a very stern thing about people who don't have the ethics of the kingdom.

[23 : 21] Did you notice I missed out a word? First word. The cowardly. The cowardly.

Courage is a Christian virtue. The word cowardly is the word that Jesus uses here, verse 40. Why are you so cowardly?

Why have you not, why, why have you panicked? Why have you reacted to this situation the way you've done?

It's a little bit of an unwelcome question, isn't it? I wasn't expecting God to ask me a question back to me, but this is what comes. Why have you gone into such a tizz?

Why have you panicked? And why did you utter that question that you uttered? What was the question? Teacher, don't you care if we drown?

[24 : 42] Why did you say that? That word care is a significant word.

It crops up in a number of important places. Let me quote a couple of them to you. John 10, verse 13. This says about the shepherd and sheep.

And the man... There's one person who cares nothing for the sheep. Anybody remember who it is who cares nothing for the sheep?

The hired hand. The person that you just give him the national minimum wage, tell him to look after the sheep. He doesn't care about the sheep. He doesn't care about the sheep.

He doesn't care. But we're saying to Jesus, you don't care. And Jesus says, no, you've got that very wrong.

[25 : 42] I lay down my life for the sheep because I do care. Because I do care. What do you mean when you say to me, teacher, you don't care?

Who do you think you're talking to? Who do you think I am? If you say to me, teacher, you don't care if we... The hired hand cares nothing.

But don't mistake me for the hired hand. I am the good shepherd who loves his sheep and knows them by name and lays down his life for the sheep.

So don't... Just because I'm sleeping in the boat, I'm with you all the time. I was there. Because I'm sleeping, don't think I don't care. Or 1 Peter 5, verse 7, which in the old version would retain the word care, but it doesn't have it in the modern translation, but it says in 1 Peter 5, verse 7, cast...

Oh, it has got care in one place, doesn't it? Cast your anxiety on him because he cares for you. So the old version says, cast your cares on him because he cares for you.

[27 : 09] Let's give that its full weight. Throw your concerns, your anxieties, your fears for the future, your confusions, your panics, throw them on the Lord because he does care for you.

He does care for you. Cast your anxieties on him because he does care for you. And so here's the question from Jesus.

Why? Why are you getting in a tizz? No, seriously. Why panicky? Why? Why? It is natural to fear. It's part of being human because we can imagine the future. It's a great capacity. But there comes a point when just giving way to fear and just reacting without thinking, reacting without faith, is culpable, is blameworthy.

Jesus says, you shouldn't react like that. You should have learned. And us too. I mean, the picture of the vessel with Christ asleep and the storms around is a very appropriate picture for Christian experiences or the experiences of the church.

[28 : 39] Sometimes the church is depicted as a boat going through the storm, the seas of life. But sometimes we've set off with a journey with Jesus and we think, you know, this is brilliant.

I'm doing what he says. He's with me. What could possibly go wrong? And then storms come out of nowhere and we go into a panic. And, you know, what about us when we say rash things about the Lord or when we think rash things about the Lord or when we let rash ideas get hold of us and foolish reactions?

And the question of Jesus comes to us, why so cowardly? Why so fearful? Why?

It's a bit of a question, isn't it? And then here's this other question which I think is separate from it but it goes along with it. Mark 5, lost my place.

Mark 5, Mark 4. Mark 4, verse 40. Do you still have no faith? Do you have no faith?

[29 : 59] That's a very searching question, isn't it? These disciples are the insiders. They've been taken along by Jesus.

The other people heard all the teaching but they were given the inside knowledge. Do you remember? The other people heard the parables but Jesus took them on one side and explained it. To you has been given the secrets of the kingdom.

I've taken you on one side, given you a lot of support, taught you a lot of things. You've heard a lot. And Jesus is going to be pressing this button through the next chapters.

Are you guys going to be no different from all the other lot who are so mistaken and unresponsive? Do you have no faith? Just think of the things that you've seen, the things that you've heard.

Look at all the evidence you've had. You saw me. You were there when I, that chap burst through the roof and he received forgiveness.

[31 : 05] You were there when I called the tax collector to follow me. You were there when we had the debate about whether I was on the side of Satan or not, all these things.

You saw it. You heard it. Do you still have no faith? Really? Maybe Jesus is saying that to some of you. You've been sitting and listening for quite a while.

You've heard quite a lot. Maybe you've done Bible studies. Maybe you've been on courses. And the time has come when Jesus can say, I'm surprised that you have no faith.

You've heard so much. Perhaps you've heard it again and again and again. But you haven't trusted. That's what it seems like. You know, it's a question, isn't it? Here you are.

In this storm and your response prompts the question, do you have no faith? It's a challenging question. An uncomfortable question.

[32 : 12] Really. And notice that Jesus says, faith. Because faith, as Steve was pointing out the last couple of Sunday evenings, is crucial to our relationship with Jesus.

He doesn't say, have you not obeyed? He says, have you not trusted? The entry point into relationship with Jesus is faith. And the crucial point for sustaining relationship with Jesus is faith. That's how we connect to him. Why is this absent, apparently, says Jesus? And it's a challenge to us, isn't it? We're going to face storms.

Storms are going to come up suddenly. Trials. Disappointments. Perhaps tough times. Maybe illness. Old age. So, you know, that's going to come along, isn't it?

Death. Death. Will come. And when this comes, Jesus says, you are going to respond in faith, aren't you?

[33 : 21] Because that's what it's all about. Last question. Verse 41.

Last mega. They feared with a mega fear. You know, you don't know, in a sense, which was more, I don't know what the word is, so just grab the more, the storm, or the calm.

You know, the storm was frightening enough, but the calm was even more frightening. To see somebody say, quiet, be still. God.

That was, you know, they feared with a mega fear. And they asked this last question that we're going to look at. Who is this?

Who is this? That both wind and waves obey him? Who is this that both wind and sea fall into line to him? That's the question.

[34 : 35] And it's a good question. It's a question that shows a right awe, A-W-E, awe, meaning fear, meaning respect, reverence for Jesus.

Wow. Who is this? The sense of the greatness of Jesus, the hugeness of Jesus. It does not compute. You know, they're trying to get it into their brains.

We thought we knew him and then he said this. We haven't got it yet, have we? And I can't help thinking about that psalm which says, the Lord God stilled the storm to a whisper.

And maybe they were thinking about it. You know, I think Mark was thinking about it when he wrote because all the things that happened to those different people, Mark sort of follows the agenda of them in his next stories.

We find somebody chained up, we find somebody pressed by death, et cetera, et cetera, but I think he has this in mind. It's a great question.

[35 : 41] Who is this that even the wind and waves obey him? But it is not a question that is left unanswered.

So I don't want everybody to go home thinking, yeah, it was a great question, I wonder what the answer is. It's a great question, but it needs an answer. And for many people here this morning, they've come to a conclusion about this.

You know what the answer is, but for others, you haven't got the answer yet. you're still thinking, I don't know, who is Jesus? Who is he really?

And I think the way the story develops shows that you can't get the answer by human power alone. I don't think the disciples were particularly stupid.

I don't think the disciples were particularly sinful, but they hadn't got the answer. They couldn't work it out. They'd seen a lot, but they hadn't got the answer yet.

[36 : 49] It shows that more than human power is needed to really grasp who Jesus is.

And maybe that's the point that you're stuck at. Maybe you're thinking, I've heard a lot, I come along quite a bit, I like these Christian people, they've certainly got something that I don't readily find anywhere else, and I admire their faith, but I'm not sure who Jesus is really.

Who is this? You need to get an answer. You need to say to God, I haven't got the answer yet. I need your help to grasp the answer to this question.

You need to ask God, show me who is Jesus? You need to seek, and Jesus says, seek and you will find. You know, if you're doing a Bible study course with somebody, well, do your homework, pray about it, listen to what's said, go along to the next one, don't think, oh, I'll go and have my hair done instead, or something like that.

Seek, make it a matter of real earnest importance to know who is this, and when you've found the answer, believe it, and have faith.

[38 : 16] Now, what is the answer? Well, I'm going to let the last song give us the answer, and see whether you can sing it, and believe it.

The last song says, Jesus is our God, he is the king above all other kings, we will glorify, we will lift him high, we will give him honour and praise.

So we close by singing the answer to the question, number 304. and we have to hear and we to hear