

Why Are You So Afraid?

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[0 : 01] Hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. We just want to say thank you. Thank you for tuning in to this radio broadcast.

And we truly believe that as we get into the Word, and the Word gets into us, that it changes everything. So let's get into God's Word together today.

And let me start this way. As a kid, I didn't really grow up out on the water much. In fact, my mom always told us a story about a time when she was a kid and didn't know how to swim.

She was at some pond or river and was in the shallow end. And something happened where she got pushed or swept into water that was above her head. And as she thought that she was going to go under, all of a sudden she felt this big rock under her feet.

And she was able to stand up and get the help she needed to get out of there. And we always said just how thankful we were that God put that big rock right there to save her life. But growing up, she was always so cautious about the water and us kids around it because of her experience.

[1 : 07] So we didn't do a whole lot on the water. And then to make matters worse, I was probably six or seven. And we had gone over to one of my dad's demolition derby friends, his home.

And they had this in-ground pool. And I don't remember all the details now, but I couldn't swim at the time. And for some reason, I was in the deep end. I was hanging on to the wall. My older brother and sister were there too.

And somehow, I got pulled out into the water away from the ledge. And I think we had about 15 or 20 seconds of just pure pandemonium as I think I about drowned my older brother and sister that day as I went into panic mode.

Good thing we kind of panicked all the way over to the wall. And then we were okay. But my mom's cautiousness, my own struggle that day, always made me more hesitant towards being on the water.

And so when you hear people say, Hey, I can't wait to get to the lake or to the ocean to sit on the beach or just be in the water and my giant alligator floaty, I honestly am perfectly fine staying on land.

[2 : 12] And every time that we've been close to the ocean as a family, Bethany and the kids would love to spend like three days there. But I'll tell you, one day is really enough for me.

But I have a feeling the guys that we're going to talk about today would laugh at my caution towards the water. And they'd say, Hey, Powderpuff, hold my sweet tea because I'm going to tell you a real story about rough water where we thought we were goners.

So welcome back to the fourth week of our series called Disciple. We're in the Gospel of Mark. If you want to turn about three quarters of the way through your Bible, the Gospel of Mark.

And we're looking at this book where the main theme is Jesus Christ, the servant-hearted Son of God. And we've jumped off that theme to say, Okay, if that's who Jesus is, then what does it look like to be his disciple and to truly follow him?

So we're looking at passages in the book of Mark that can show us how to stand strong and how to be faithful in a world that's becoming more and more hostile towards the things of God every day.

[3 : 17] And I'll tell you, last week was tough as we took a soil check, a heart check with the parable of the sowers, to see if we're really all in with Jesus and what that looks like is a life that bears fruit.

And then today, as we start here in Mark chapter 4, we'll answer this question. Why are you so afraid? And I'll tell you what, they say inflation last year was 9%, but does anyone in this room who's really gone to the grocery store think that it was that low?

Then you add in rising costs with gasoline and utilities and pretty much everything else. Man, it can be scary just how you're going to make it in this economy. Any parents listening to this just pumped about the godly society your kids are growing up in?

Probably not. It can be frightening the things that your kids are exposed to and even taught. I'm sure all your relationships with your children or parents or siblings or spouse or at work, I'm sure all your relationships are just perfect, right?

No tension at all. Man, relationships are hard. They can be daunting. Maybe you've recently heard a doctor say those words, you have cancer.

[4 : 32] Or maybe you or somebody you love is sick with something else. It can be terrifying. Let's just be real here. Life is hard. There are so many situations that we walk through in this life that can absolutely kick the snot out of us.

And yet, there's one answer to anything and everything that you'll ever face. His name is Jesus. The name above all other names.

So, let's start here in Mark 4, verse 35. And let's just go ahead and read this story together today, okay? It says, It says, Now, let's try to put ourselves in the wet shoes of these disciples in the boat for a second, okay?

These guys had to be tired. It was a long day. Jesus was teaching all day on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Crowds were smothering around them.

They were probably done peopling for the day, okay? You've probably been there too. And as night began to fall, Jesus gathered the disciples in some boats. We don't know how many.

[6 : 24] And they began their journey to the other side of the sea. And I can't imagine how tired Jesus had to be. I'll tell you this. When you preach, and a lot of people don't understand this, and it's okay if you've never done it, but when you preach, you pour yourself out.

And while I've gotten used to three services here at the church on a Sunday, man, I'm still spent when 11 o'clock service ends each Sunday. And yet Jesus taught all day long.

And being fully God, but also fully man, he understood what it felt like to be tired. It appears that the sea was calm when they started on their voyage. But here's the thing about the Sea of Galilee.

With steep hills and cliffs that kind of encompass the sea, this makes it vulnerable to high winds, which can cause sudden and violent storms to develop, come up on you really quickly.

But hey, with several of these disciples being lifelong fishermen, man, these guys have been in storms before. They'd been on this sea before. They knew how to navigate these waters, but this storm was different.

[7 : 30] And if you study out these verbs used in the Gospels to describe this particular storm, it's almost as if, I'd say the closest thing for us, it's almost as if the hurricane-like conditions were going on here.

We're talking massive storm. Could you imagine being in that chaos in a regular old fishing boat? And yet down in the stern, Jesus is asleep. He's at peace.

And as the boat is rocking back and forth violently, as the wind has to be howling, as the waves are crashing into the boat, and it's starting to fill up, even though I'm sure the disciples were bailing it out as fast as they could, as guys who've grown up on these waters are panicking.

Jesus is underneath. He's taking a snooze, man. And I even read one commentator who said, there's a good chance that Jesus was soaked to the bone in seawater, and yet he's at peace, head on a cushion, asleep from a full day of seeking and saving the lost.

And then here come the disciples. And honestly, they're pretty rude to the Son of God, but that's what we do as humans when we're in panic mode, right? I'm sure when you think you're going to die, manners probably go out the window pretty easy.

[8 : 43] But they said these words to him. They said, don't you care? Don't you care that we're going to drown? Now at this point in Jesus's ministry, these guys had been walking with him long enough to know his heart.

He had loved them beyond what they deserved when he called them to be his disciples. He had shown compassion on the sick, the lost, the tormented, the down and out. They had watched him heal and transform lives and love people like they had never seen before.

And in the words of John MacArthur, but in their terror, their faith and steadfastness, that was replaced by fear and doubt.

I wonder how often that happens to us, where our faith and our steadfastness is replaced by fear and doubt. So let me share a couple things today that really just jumped out from our story as we answer this question, why are you so afraid?

First, always remember, you're in the storm in his presence. You're in the storm with him in his presence. In other words, if you're a follower of Christ, he's with you every step of the way.

[9 : 56] Amy, our administrative assistant here at the church, she was sharing a story with me last week. See, her dad, Edward is 90. And he's always been so healthy and so active.

And yet, just about a week before Christmas, he started having some major health issues, landed him in the ER something like eight times over three to four weeks. Just insane. And during the time before he had his surgery, there were some nights where Amy and Brian needed to stay with them to help.

And in his pain and struggle, he was sleeping one night in the recliner and had kind of fallen out. So Brian went, picked him up and got him back in and situated and, and decided that, you know what?

I just want to make sure he's safe. So he slept in a chair next to him. But every once in a while through the night, Edward would reach over and touch Brian's arm or his hand.

And he would say, I just wanted to make sure you were there. It calms my heart to have you here with me. See, this is what the disciples hadn't fully understood at this point.

[10 : 59] And so far in this story that they're doing everything in their power to keep this boat up. They're, they're steering with every bit of strength they have. They're dumping the water back into the sea as quick as they can.

And they did what we all have been guilty of doing. They went to Jesus as a last resort. Think about this. How many times have you and I been in some kind of life storm?

Something went haywire. So we take charge, right? That's what we do. And we begin to work to calm this storm. And yet how often do we make things worse? How often do we find ourselves just exhausted going down with the boat?

When we can reach over and know that the Lord's presence is right there through every storm. See, the Holy Spirit living inside of every Christ follower is there comforting and guiding us along the way.

So what do we do in a storm? Well, as soon as those waves start beating against the boat, I need to cry out to the one who's in control. Jesus, I give this to you.

[12 : 04] Holy Spirit, have your way. Lead me. Give me wisdom as I want to honor you in this storm. That really doesn't seem like it's going to end very well. And then as hard as it is, we trust him.

Look at verse 39 and see why we can trust a God like this. It says, He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the waves, Quiet, be still.

Then the wind died down, and it was completely calm. Everything changes when you know whose presence is with you in that storm. Can you imagine that?

The boat is being tossed back and forth violently. With that motion, I'd probably toss something else too, right? Your adrenaline is going sky high. You're absolutely in survival mode.

When Jesus steps up, he scolds the waves, and he tells them, Quiet, be still. And it wasn't that the storm finally passed by and slowly calmed down.

[13 : 03] Uh-uh. That wind and that rain immediately left. Those waves instantly calmed. And it was as if a storm never happened. Happened. Because Jesus is in control of every storm that you and I will ever endure.

See, here's the thing. If you and I are in a boat in a storm like this, I can say all the most comforting words in the world to you. But the reality is, I have no control over this storm and what's really going to happen.

I can say, Hey, everything's going to be okay, but it may not be okay. But Jesus, let me say it again, but Jesus changes everything.

And when you're in that storm, you can reach over like Edward did, and you can say, It calms my heart, because I know you, Emmanuel, God with us. You are here. You are the Almighty, Revelation 1.8.

You are the author and finisher of my faith, Hebrews 12. You are the faithful and true witness, Revelation 1 and 3. You are the lion of the tribe of Judah, where nothing can stand against your power, Revelation 5.5.

[14 : 09] The prince of peace, Isaiah 9.6. You are my shepherd, and I shall not want, 1 Peter 2. You are Yahweh, the great I am, Isaiah 40, Mark 6.

And I trust you, because you have proven yourself in my life, time and time and time again. See, it changes everything, when you know who's in the boat with you.

And with his presence, comes his power, his grace, his strength, his mercy, his love, and even discipline, over you and me as his children. So never forget, as his disciple, that you're not alone.

You're in this storm with Jesus, and he ain't scared. He ain't worried. And he's more than enough, for you and for me. Okay. And then, I also want you to remember this.

So, you are in the storm, in his presence, and then second, you are in the storm for his purposes. I love to try to put myself in these scenes, because as hard as we try to explain these passages, and understand the context, we can't see the looks on these disciples' faces, when Jesus speaks in the storm, just halts in obedience to him.

[15 : 22] I wish we could, but I love verse 40, where Jesus, right after calming the seas, says this to his disciples. Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?

It says they were terrified, and they asked each other, who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him. Now, I don't know if you noticed, but when the storm was raging, the disciples came to Jesus, to ask him, why he didn't care, that they were going to drown.

But did you notice, what they called him? Mark says, they called him, teacher. And maybe this is why, he allowed them to be in the storm, in the first place. Because if you look at Matthew 14, 33, a little later, in Jesus's ministry, when he comes, walking to them on the water, and they start to freak out, because they think it's a ghost.

But then, do you remember what Peter said to him? Peter said, Jesus, if it's you, then call me out on the water. And Peter, in the power of Christ, actually walks on the choppy waves, until he takes his eyes off of Jesus, and he begins to sink.

After Jesus saves him, and gets them both in the boat, Matthew 14, 33 says, then those who were in the boat, worshipped him, saying, truly you are, the son of God.

[16 : 38] So he had gone from teacher, to the son of God. Then we even fast forward, to doubting Thomas, and John 20, verse 28, who wasn't there, when Jesus first appeared, to the disciples, after he rose from the grave, and Thomas didn't believe, a word of it.

He needed to see Jesus, for himself. But do you remember, what he said, after Jesus appeared before him? When Jesus said, hey, put your finger, in my nail pierced hand, or in my side.

As he did, Thomas' response is great. John 20, 28, Thomas said to him, my Lord, and my God. See, Jesus isn't afraid, to let you walk through a storm, if it can take you, from seeing him as teacher, to the son of God, to my Lord, and my God.

See, we live in a world today, like it or not, where every one of us, have to fight this idea, that I have to always be comfortable, all the time. Anything that takes me, out of my comfort zone, must be destroyed, right?

And yet, the more you run after the heart of God, the more he becomes, my Lord, and my God, the more you're going to be stretched, beyond where you've ever thought, you could go. Why?

[17 : 50] Because the Lord's greatest desire, for you, is not happiness. Really? I thought that was the purpose of life. Uh-uh. That's the purpose of TV, and internet ads, so they can get you to buy their products, that they promise to make you happy, and don't work.

Listen, his promise for you is better, and deeper than happiness, that's always affected, by what's happening, around you. See, God's greatest desire for you, is holiness.

Deeper intimacy, with the God of the universe, every single day. And he's not afraid, to let your boat, get rocked a little bit. He's not afraid, to interrupt agendas. He's not afraid, for you to walk through a storm, because his greatest longing for you, is for you to trust him, and walk by faith.

Because when you do, it won't be you that they see. It'll be Jesus. Less of me, more of Jesus. And that's when we walk, in his incredible joy. And those fears, that often drive us, you know, all the fears we all struggle with, fear of not being good enough, fear of not being successful enough, fear of not being good looking enough, fear of losing control, fear of what others think of me, fear of failure, fear of the unknown, fear of not being loved, fear of missing out, FOMO, fear of getting hurt, fear of not pleasing everyone.

Listen, I'm right there with you, as a human being, who struggles with insecurity too. And yet, what does the word of God, say in 2 Timothy 1.7? It says, For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

[19 : 35] See, these fears that we just talked about, that every one of us are probably still struggling with in some form or fashion, these are from Satan. He uses fear to drown out your faith.

And yet in Christ, those fears fade as you walk in his power, his love, and his self-discipline, of seeking his face that draws you closer to him every day. So, why are you afraid of that storm?

Let me ask you again. Why are you so afraid of that storm? Because it's uncomfortable, right? Because it hurts. Because it interrupts my plans. But God may just have you in this storm for a reason.

And that reason may be the same thing as it was for these disciples. So that your faith and trust in Jesus can grow, and you can see that he will never leave you, nor will he ever forsake you.

That at his command, the wind and the waves bow in obedience. Hear me today. He wants to be more than just teacher, although he is the best.

[20 : 38] He wants you to see him for who he really is in your life. Your Lord, and your God, your Savior, and your hope in this life, and into eternal paradise.

And I know we can easily pick on these disciples for their struggles that we all have too. But I love watching how Jesus pours into them. And he grows them over these three years of ministry with him.

And when Pentecost happened, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, these men who were once selfish and vindictive and cowardly, and even all show and no go, were now transformed into faithful ambassadors of the gospel of Jesus Christ, sharing this message of hope that Jesus went to the cross to pay the price for our sins that they demand.

And he gave his innocent life for guilty people like us. And then three days later, to show he wasn't just another quack, claiming to be the Messiah, quack looking for attention, three days later, he rose from the grave, conquered death, and offers us life to the full.

See, church history records what ultimately happened to these disciples. And we know that all of them, all of them gave their lives for their faith in Jesus, except for John.

[21 : 55] But you look at Peter, the loud, boisterous one, and we see this incredible maturing of his faith, where history records that he was this great leader of the Jerusalem church, and was crucified upside down during the reign of Nero.

We look at James, one of the sons of thunder, who was fiery, vengeful, and selfish. And this guy went on, as history records, to become the first bishop of Spain, giving his life to tell others about Jesus.

Even doubting Thomas, became convinced when he put his hands, his fingers in his hands and his side, he was so convinced that Jesus was his risen Savior, that history records he went on to India to plant churches, and he was killed by a spear.

God replaced their fear with faith, and it made all the difference. I have to tell you, that this message for me today was different.

And I'm having trouble even knowing how to explain this to you, but I've preached, I was just doing a little bit of a calculation, I've preached around 600 different sermons since I've been in full-time ministry, since 07.

[23 : 01] And while I always ask the Holy Spirit to just get me out of the way, and speak his word into each of our hearts, there was something unique about this message for me.

It was Friday morning, nine days ago, about 6.45 in the morning, I was typing away on this message, and God just began to open up his word into my heart. And I felt the Lord's presence strong in my office, and I just began to worship as he poured these words out today.

And what I realized is that I too often try to deal with the storms of life in my own power. And I realized that day that I was sinking. But when I finally cried out to Jesus, I realized again that he is more than enough for me.

He's with me every step of the way. He's awesome in power. And sometimes when I'm walking in that storm, he has a purpose, and it's to grow me and draw me closer to him so that I can be used for his glory.

The water may not be my favorite thing in the world, but I'm thankful for the storms that God uses to teach me to trust him. And I'll leave you with this today. A disciple of Jesus isn't afraid of a storm because they know with Jesus' presence comes his power.

[24 : 19] And these storms help me to grow and to trust him more. And listen to this. There ain't nothing wrong with that. Pray with me, please.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your word today. Thank you for how you just use it to speak truth into our hearts.

And we just give you praise that your word is alive and active. And as this word comes upon our hearts, Lord, I just pray that we have hearts that are receptive.

Like the parable of the sower that we talked about last week, I don't want to have a rocky heart where it's just shallow and emotional and impulsive. I don't want to have a thorny heart that is all about the things of this world and wealth and getting caught up in the anxieties of this world.

Lord, I want to have a heart that is receptive to your Holy Spirit's power through the word of God. That when your words hit my heart, that they take hold and produce a crop 30, 60, 100 times the seed that was sown.

[25 : 32] So that's my prayer over every person listening to this today, God, that you will do what only you can do and that you will move as your word has been preached.

So thank you, Jesus, for your powerful words. And may we just live for you with everything that we are. We love you, Jesus. We worship you. And we pray these things in your precious name.

And God's people right where you are said amen and amen. Hey, let me give you this invitation real quick. Maybe you've been listening to this message and God is just kind of opening your heart and you're in a place where maybe you're ready to surrender your life to Jesus.

Maybe you just have some questions about faith. Listen, we here at FCC have had people who've come alongside us on our journey and who have blessed us and taken care of us and dealt with our immaturities and everything else.

So please know that we are here to help you on your journey as well. So reach out to us. My name, once again, is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor here at First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana.

[26 : 37] You can reach out at 812-663-8488 or you can email me at rayatfccgreensburg.com.

And listen, I'd love to just sit down with you, talk about the word of God, answer any questions that you may have, and just see God do some amazing things in your life.

So God bless you. I pray you are blessed by this message and I hope you have a great week.