

Untitled (25)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 June 2021

Preacher: Paul Woodward

[0:00] Good morning.

Good morning. I have promised not to be too long considering my Southern Baptist past! You folks do know the difference between a Baptist and an Anglican, right?

! About 45 minutes. So I will pull off my watch so I keep track. So I want to start with a story this morning.

This is a story about a man whom we all know, but I'm not going to give it away just yet. This is a man who lived in the late 1700s, early 1800s.

This is a man who was a former sailor, a former ship's captain, a former slave trader.

[1:06] This is a man who, when he was a young boy, he grew up in a home where his mother died when he was seven years old. She used to read to him from the scriptures as he was young and growing up.

She would pray with him at bedtime. And so he had from the start this love for God's Word. And he encountered God's Word as a very young boy.

But after she died and he grew up, his father remarried. And he and his stepmom were not the best people to this child. In fact, the father sent him to sea and had him work.

He worked hard on board ship. And later on, he would become a slave trader. And he was actually on an island off the western coast of Africa, where he was pretty much in bondage by himself for a long while.

His clothes were tattered. He had to beg for food. He was very poor. He had a very hard life. But he was involved in the slave trade. Later on, he would go back on board a ship.

[2:18] He would escape this island. And one night he encountered a storm. And in that storm, he was afraid. He was very afraid. And he remembered back to his mother reading the scriptures to him as a young child.

And he had an encounter with God. And he would later recall that it was at that very moment in his life that he found Jesus for the very first time.

Now, I'm going to stop right there. And I would invite you to turn to your gospel reading for this morning in Mark chapter 4. I think it's page 998. And I just want to reread that because I want to delve a little bit into this message this morning.

Chapter 4, verse 35. It says, and I'm reading from a different translation, because I want to get some words across here. On that day, when evening had come, he told them, let's cross over to the other side of the sea.

So they left the crowd and took him along since he was in the boat. And other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose and the waves were breaking over the boat so that the boat was already being swamped.

[3:34] He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke him up and said, teacher, don't you care that we are going to die? And he got up, rebuked the wind and said to the sea, silence, be still.

The wind ceased and there was a great calm. Then he said to them, why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith? And they were terrified and asked one another, who then is this?

Even the wind and the sea obey him. Now a little background on the gospel of Mark. Mark, he wrote this gospel probably in the mid 60 AD to maybe the early 70s AD.

At this point, there was a lot of persecution in the Roman Empire. Christians were being killed for their beliefs. And the apostle Paul had already written his letters to the churches.

In fact, at this time, there is some speculation that when Mark wrote, the apostle Paul was already dead. He was killed for his faith, as was Peter. Both martyred for their death.

[4:48] So Mark wrote this gospel in a time where he was writing to convince the church in Rome, because it was the Roman Christians he was writing to. He was writing them, first of all, to let them know that throughout this persecution, Jesus is still with you.

But he also wrote to the church in Rome because they were in a very pluralistic society, just as we are today. We are in a society where there are numerous beliefs going around.

People don't believe that Jesus is the Son of God. They don't think that he is divine. In fact, they will tell you that Jesus never said that he was the Son of God.

However, there are several instances, in fact, where he does, even in the gospel according to Mark. So Mark writes to show that Jesus is divine.

The Romans would believe that the emperor is divine. They were forced to worship the emperor. And so the Roman Christians would undergo this persecution because they would not bow down and submit to the godhood of Caesar.

[6:02] And Mark said, that's okay. Jesus is God. He is the living Son of God. He was killed on a cross, but he was raised from the dead and still alive.

So in this story, Jesus has just been teaching some parables. He's been preaching to the crowds, as was pretty typical for Jesus.

And he was tired. It says that it was evening. Evening had come. And so Jesus had this thing set up with the disciples that when he would preach for a long time during the day, he would have a boat ready to get away from the crowds.

He needed to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee to get some rest. He was tired. Yes, Jesus was the Son of God, is the Son of God, but he was man.

He was incarnate. And so he got tired. Preaching will take a lot out of you. Believe me. So he gets in the boat. They start to go across.

[7:01] And Jesus is so tired, he falls asleep. But during this time, it says that a great windstorm arose. Now, it was pretty typical on the Sea of Galilee for these windstorms to arise, for storms to come up.

Now, the disciples, many of them were fishermen, and so they were used to this. However, this storm was so bad that they were terrified. It says that they were afraid and so afraid that they were going to wake up Jesus.

So they wake him up. They say, teacher, don't you care that we're going to die? Don't you care that we're about to perish? The boat is going to sink. The water is filling up.

We are scared. Jesus wakes up. Nowhere does it say that he speaks a word to the disciples when they wake him up. He pays them no attention.

He just gets up and he rebukes the storm. It says that he looks at the wind and the sea and he says, silence, be still. And immediately the wind ceases.

[8:04] The seas are calm. And he looks at them finally and he says, why are you afraid? Do you still not have faith?

Now we look at this, or we can look at this, and we can say, man, those disciples, they failed again. Here they've got no faith. They're with Jesus in the boat. And they're afraid the boat's going to sink. Come on. We know that this is the Messiah. He can't save us. And in fact, he did exactly what they wanted him to do. He saves them.

And yet it says that they were terrified. They were in awe of this man. The power that he displayed over nature.

Now, the Jews would believe, if you go back to Psalm 107 that we just read as our Psalter this morning. In verse 29, it says that he stilled the seas and calmed the storms.

[9:04] They would believe that only God can do this. But this is a man. This is Jesus, the Messiah, the long-awaited, anointed king that they were waiting for.

The disciples knew that Jesus was a king. He was the Messiah. They believed that. But they were expecting him to be a king who would take them from out of the control and dominion of the Roman Empire.

This was the king who was going to defeat the armies of Rome and let the Jews and Palestine be free once more. And yet we know that Jesus does even more than that.

Yet it's not the way they expected. So here they're trying to rationalize in their head. Who is this man who calms the seas, who tells the storm to be quiet?

Only God can have control over nature. You go back to Genesis 1, 1 and 2 where God creates the world. And he takes this void, this nothingness.

[10:08] And he makes something out of it. He hovers, his spirit hovers over the seas. God creates. God has control over nature and all things.

He has dominion. And so the disciples have this encounter with God. And yet they're confused because this can't be God. He's only a man.

How many times today do we go through the same kinds of things? We live in a society where people are constantly bombarding us with Jesus is not the son of God.

He was sure. He was a great teacher. You know, we can go by his principles and his morals and we're okay with that to some extent. But he wasn't the son of God.

And the Roman church that Mark was writing to, they were going through the same thing. Romans would say, no, Jesus is not the son of God. Caesar is divine. If you go further on to chapter 5, there's kind of a parallel to this story.

[11:12] Where after they get to the other side, they get to the shore. And as Jesus steps off the boat, a man who is possessed by a demon immediately comes toward Jesus and bows down.

And proclaims, what have you to do with me, Jesus, son of God? And Jesus takes this man who's possessed by not one demon, but many demons.

He says his name is Legion. And a Roman legion had about 5,400 to 6,000 soldiers. So he's saying, look, there's a lot of demons in this guy. And he says, if you're going to get rid of us, then put us in this herd of pigs that's walking by.

So he does. Jesus exercises the demons from the man. They go into the pigs. The pigs go over a cliff. They drown. The man is healed. He even proclaimed in chapter 5, if you read on down, it says in verse 18, as he was getting into the boat, Jesus, the man who had been demon possessed begged him earnestly that he might remain with him.

But Jesus wouldn't allow him and told him, go home to your own people. Report to them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you. So he went out and began to proclaim in the Decapolis, the city, how much Jesus had done.

[12:35] This man who had just had the demons exercised from him by Jesus, even recognized Jesus as Lord, as the Son of God, whereas even the disciples had little faith.

In Job, Job has an encounter with God in our Old Testament reading. Job sees God in a whirlwind. And Job is silent before God. Job suffers a great deal, loses his family, loses his wealth, loses everything.

And is kind of putting God on trial or calls him as a witness. And God finally confronts Job. Job is finally confronted by God and is made to be silent.

God says, Job, who are you that you would ask me? Where were you, Job, when I formed the world? When I was measuring the distances between the stars and the heavens?

When I measured out the foundations of the world, where were you, Job? And four chapters later in Job 42, Job finally repents for what he has said and done because of his encounter with God.

[13:47] In our New Testament reading in 2 Corinthians, Paul, the Apostle Paul, had an encounter with God on the road to Damascus. A brilliant encounter with God where he is blinded.

He's taken into the city. He's healed of his blindness and immediately begins to preach the gospel. The bishop is talking to us about, are we in Acts chapter 2 parish?

Look at the Apostle Paul after his encounter with God. What does he do? He goes and he preaches the gospel. In 2 Corinthians, he's writing this letter to the church at Corinth.

And he says that you are a new creation. He's preaching this ministry of reconciliation. Reconciled together, man and women reconciled to one another, but also vertically, all of us reconciled to God through this ministry of reconciliation.

We are a new creation. If we are an Acts 2 church, if we have been filled with the Holy Spirit, we are a new creation.

[14:50] Called as ambassadors, Paul says, because we are of the kingdom of God, living in a worldly kingdom. We are in this world, but not of this world.

We are called as ambassadors for our king in his kingdom that he has ushered in to proclaim the good news to all the people about.

As I look around and I see empty spots in our pews, we could be praying for people to be filling those spots. As a gospel group of Christians, as believers in Jesus Christ, we have an obligation to

pray for people who are not here, to pray for people that we don't even know to come into these seats, but also to go out as ambassadors of our king, Lord Jesus, and proclaim the gospel to our neighbors.

We are a new creation. Jesus has ushered in this creation, and we are to carry on his will. Going back to our story, because I know my Baptist time is starting to tick.

Going back to our story, this man who was a slave trader, who had an encounter with God because of a faithful mother who read scripture to him as a young boy, who would pray with him because of that encounter with God and this terrible storm that made him think back to that, he would denounce the slave trade.

[16 : 30] In fact, he became an abolitionist in Great Britain and worked with William Wilberforce to combat the slave trade. He would then go on to become an Anglican minister in a church in London.

Later in life, he would become blind, but as he ministered, he also wrote hymns. And one of his most famous hymns, I'm sure everybody in here knows, this man was named John Newton. And his most famous hymn, and one that's very near and dear to me, is Amazing Grace. And it's because of God's great grace that he sent his son Jesus to die on a cross for the forgiveness of our sins, to then be raised from the dead, to be the first fruits among the resurrection, so that we can have hope as the new creation to also be raised from the dead.

John Newton wrote these words in that hymn. And I'm not a great singer, so I'm going to say it for you. Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now am found. Was blind, but now I see. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[illegible]