

Power Over Nature

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[0 : 00] They took him with them in the boat, just as he was.! And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.

But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they awoke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

He said to them, Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Let's pray. Father, thank you for the privilege we now have to hear the preaching of your word. Lord, would you speak to our hearts in this moment as only you can.

[1 : 26] We thank you for the Holy Spirit who grants us illumination, and who convicts us of the truth. Lord, I pray for the power and unction of the Spirit to proclaim your word to your people this morning.

Lord, cause us to hear as we ought to hear, and then obey as we ought to obey. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

One of the mistakes that some people make when they read the Gospels is they read them as primarily historical accounts. Historical accounts about the details of the life and ministry of Jesus.

But the Gospels are not primarily historical accounts. They are really theological accounts. Each of the Gospel writers, from his own vantage point, is communicating their account of the Gospel, showing Jesus as the promised Messiah, who came into the world to give his life as a sacrifice for sinners like me and you.

And so each Gospel account, when you look at them, they go into great detail, in particular about the crucifixion of Jesus.

[2 : 59] And the whole idea is that the Gospel writers want to first of all establish who Jesus is, so that we would know who is the one dying on the cross.

Because the one dying on the cross is no ordinary person. They want us to know he is a unique person, but they take the time to help us to see the uniqueness of his life.

We just saw it in the Scripture that we're reading for this month, that we're memorizing for this month. Why does John go to the extent to try to help us to understand that Jesus was from the beginning, and that he was with God, and that he was God?

Well, John starts there, because when he ends up with Christ on the cross, he wants us to know that is the one who is on the cross. This morning we've come to a section in Mark's Gospel that's very important to Mark's case of presenting Jesus.

Remember, in John's Gospel, we read that John says, if everything that Jesus did was recorded in books, it says the world could not contain them.

- [4 : 18] I mean, it's hyperbole, it's an exaggeration, but I think we get the point. What John is saying is that not everything that Jesus did and said is recorded in the Gospels.
- So each Gospel writer made decisions. Each Gospel writer decided to include certain things and not include certain things to communicate his Gospel account of Jesus.
- That's what Mark does. This section that we have come to this morning is very important to Mark in terms of presenting Jesus as he wants us to see him.
- So we come to this section, starting at verse 35, where Mark gives us an account of Jesus calming the sea. And then in chapter 5, verses 1 through 20, he gives us a detailed account, very detailed account, of Jesus casting out demons.
- And then in verses 21 and through to 43 of chapter 5, he provides us with two accounts. One of Jesus healing a woman who had been plagued with an issue of blood for many, many years.
- [5 : 28] And then the raising of the daughter of Jairus, one of the synagogue rulers. Each of these accounts is very important in terms of what Mark is seeking to do to present Jesus to us.
- And this morning, we begin with the first one, which is Jesus calming the storm. And here's the question I want to answer for us.
- What can we learn about Jesus from him calming the storm? What is it that we can see from Mark's presentation of this particular event in the life of Jesus that should cause us to see Jesus as this unique man who Mark is presenting him to be?
- I want to offer two lessons briefly that we can learn from this account. First, by calming the storm, Jesus demonstrates his power over nature.
- By calming the storm, Jesus demonstrates his power over nature. Now, the way Mark recounts this event in the life of Jesus, you can tell he's not making up a story.
- [6 : 52] Not making up a story at all. And some of you may remember when we introduced the Gospel of Mark, I would have mentioned that Mark was not one of the original disciples.
- Mark was not an eyewitness to the things that he's recounting for us, but Mark would have received this information from the Apostle Peter. Peter would have given Mark the information.
- This is what we're told in church history that Mark would have gotten his Gospel account from the Apostle Peter. Now, when we look at what Mark shares, you know it's an account from an eyewitness.
- It's someone who was actually there. Mark tells us precisely when this event happened. Tells us precisely. Look at what he says in verse 35.
- He says on that day. Which day? It was the day that Jesus was in a boat on the sea teaching these parables. The parable of the sower, the parable of the seed growing, and the parable of the mustard seed.
- [7 : 59] Mark says it was on that day. And then he says it was also in the evening of that day when this event happened.
- And he tells us exactly where it happened. He tells us that it happened. Well, he doesn't specify it here, but we can tell that it happened on the Sea of Galilee because we see Jesus saying, let us go over to the other side in verse 35.
- And then if you turn over to verse 1 of chapter 5, it says they came to the other side of the sea to the country of the Gerasenes.
- And the Gerasenes, that area was bordered by the Sea of Galilee. That's the only sea that they could have been going over. That is where Mark tells us this event actually happens.
- The body of water that borders the Gerasenes is the Sea of Galilee. But Mark tells us another detail. And obviously, he had been told this by the Apostle Peter.

[9 : 08] He tells us that there were other witnesses in verse 36. It says, And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was, and other boats were with him.

Meaning, this is not something that the disciples were in a corner and this happened or they came back and said it happened. And you have to take their word for it. Mark says no. There were others there as well.

There were other people present other than just the disciples. And then he tells us this great windstorm arose.

And this was not an unusual occurrence. This was something that was somewhat commonplace in this area. As I read about this, I found this a little bit hard to fathom being one who lives on an island that's just maybe three feet above sea level, something like that.

But the Sea of Galilee is 660 feet below sea level. Imagine that.

[10 : 21] I mean, 660 feet below sea level, it is 12 miles long and 7.5 miles wide. So it's about half the size of New Providence.

And this is no little creek they're going over. This is a very large body of water. And what we're told is because of the location of the Sea of Galilee in this valley, the wind currents and the pattern of the wind in this area many times would result in these windstorms.

So it was not an unusual occurrence that they would face in this area. I was thinking about this and thought about the fact that we are, what, second day into the hurricane season.

And it's something that we are accustomed to. We know that storms will come to us or nearby us, but it's just one of the realities based on the geography that we have.

in our country. How many of you ever slept through a hurricane? Really slept through it? I mean, you slept the whole time. Glad we have no one who could do that.

[11 : 32] That's a pretty amazing feat to be able to sleep through a hurricane. But Mark tells us that Jesus was asleep. Jesus was asleep in a boat that was being rocked and filled with water tossed and actually they thought the boat was going to break apart and they were going to all die and Jesus was asleep in the midst of that.

We don't know exactly why he was asleep. Was he asleep because he was tired from ministry? He was so exhausted that he was able to sleep in that way? We don't know.

All we know is that he was asleep. all we know is that he was having a different reality than his disciples were having.

So much so that the disciples concluded that Jesus must not have cared and they woke him up and said teacher don't you care that we are perishing?

And Jesus gets up he does two things. first he rebukes the wind and second he calms the sea he says to the sea peace be still and Mark says the wind ceased!

[12 : 48] and there was a great calm over the sea. I think we should see that Jesus does this very naturally.

He doesn't have to work up the strength he doesn't have to kind of hype himself up to do it. He just gets up and he says he rebukes the wind to tell the wind calm down and tells the sea to calm down and both of them obeyed him.

one of the interesting things about weather patterns like this is you know that even after wind would die down the sea would still be a bit rough.

Mark tells us not only did the wind stop but the sea was calm. It was a genuine miracle that actually took place.

Now if you were the disciples I'm sure you'd agree that when Jesus did that you would have done man we thought we were going to really die. You'd have been so relieved that Jesus rebuked the wind and come to sea.

[14 : 03] But that's not what happened. That's not what happened at all. Look at verse 41. Verse 41 tells us after Jesus did this they were filled with great fear.

As a matter of fact the language that is recorded here would give us the impression that they were more fearful now than they were fearful in the storm.

They were filled with great fear. It's not the kind of reaction you'd expect for people who have just been rescued. people who have just been saved from what they said perishing.

Why were they filled with great fear? They were filled with great fear because they realized that although they had been with Jesus they didn't really know Jesus.

They did not know this one who they were relating to and traveling with and sleeping with and doing ministry with. They did not know him and they became fearful.

[15 : 25] They couldn't deny that he said to the wind stop, he said to the sea be calm and immediately it happened. They'd say Jesus cast out demons.

They'd say Jesus healed the sick. But prior to Jesus casting out demons and healing the sick, demons had been cast out before and the sick had been healed before.

They're saying Jesus do something where it's almost like speaking to a chair and telling a chair to do something and the chair does it. Jesus speaks to the wind, the wind hears him and obeys him.

he speaks to the sea and the sea obeys him. And they have never seen anything like this. They've never experienced anything of this nature.

One word. And the wind and the sea obey him. And they realize no ordinary man.

[16 : 33] he's no ordinary person. And so it brought great fear to them. And I think of the fact that how you imagine someone like this, all kinds of things that go through your mind in terms of I wonder if he knows that I'm thinking.

I wonder if he can read my mind. And they became fearful because they saw who Jesus really was.

Their eyes are now open and they realize wind and sea don't obey ordinary people. And they know it was no coincidence that the wind and the sea just stopped.

They knew that Jesus was the one who was behind it all. And let me just pause here to say this. I really believe that we have a picture here of what happens to us when we see the Lord as we ought to see him.

It brings a holy fear upon us. It cannot be business as usual when we see the Lord. We don't carry on as we always did.

[17 : 56] We see him and it brings a holy fear in our hearts. I find it interesting the way Mark ends this account in verse 41.

Mark ends the account with the words of the disciples asking the question, who then is this? Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Mark doesn't comment. It is as if he intentionally leaves the question hanging for his readers because the reader should also be asking the question, who is this?

who then is this who is able to speak and even the wind and the sea obey him?

And the reason I believe Mark leaves it hanging in that way is the answer should be obvious. It's kind of like when you ask a rhetorical question, everybody knows the answer to that question so we can answer it in our minds without saying it out loud.

[19 : 12] Who then is this? And I believe that Mark is leaving it hanging because he believes that we should be able to connect the dots and see that Jesus is the son of God, that Jesus is the divine one, the second person of the triune God.

God. And when we think about it, why do the wind and the sea obey him? John tells us in the beginning of his gospel, the clients had read one more verse, we'd see this this morning, if we were doing verse three as well.

John 1 verse 3 says this, all things were made through him and without him, not anything made, sorry, and without him was not anything made that was made.

Think about that, all things, all things were made through him, without him was not anything made that was made.

Jesus certainly created the wind and the sea. He spoke to them as their creator, he spoke to them as the one who brought them into being.

[20 : 30] All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1 15 and 16 says something very similar.

He writes, he, meaning Jesus, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him.

The wind and sea obeyed Jesus because he created them. I pray this morning that as we hear these words, that we draw great comfort from Jesus calming the storm.

We live in an increasingly frightening world. We live in a world with all kinds of turmoil and unexpected events.

You know, as I got the call from Troy last night, I was just reminded of how quickly things can change for us. How we're just one phone call away from sending our lives in another direction or just one experience away from a storm, something just brewing of epic proportion.

[22 : 11] Again, we enter the hurricane season just yesterday and who knows what it holds for us. We've been hearing these reports that it's going to be an average season.

Well, an average season, you really just need one. You don't need three or four. And an average one is probably going to be about 12, 13 storms. But even as we think about that, we can remember that hurricanes are made up of two things, wind and rain.

And our Lord created both of them. Our Lord controls and orders both of them. And the reality is that even though we face hurricanes in this part of the world, there are others in other parts of the world.

They face fearful things like wildfires and floods and earthquakes and mudslides. But all of those weather systems and patterns and realities, they are components of what God has created.

the Lord Jesus Christ in particular. And they're all subject to him. And so I think for us this morning, those of us who trust in Jesus, knowing that our Lord and our Savior is creator of everything, should cause us to rest, but also to marvel at who Jesus is.

[23 : 42] So that's the first lesson. The first lesson is that by calming the storm, Jesus demonstrated his power over nature. The second lesson is this, by calming the storm, Jesus demonstrated his care for us.

Here in this account, the Son of God says to his disciples, let us go across on the other side. He doesn't say to them, let's go down, or let's go perish.

He says, let us go across to the other side. He invited them to go across on the other side. And they took him with them in their boat.

to the storm. And yet when the storm arose, they had two thoughts. They had two thoughts. One, we're going to die. And two, Jesus doesn't care.

Those are two thoughts that came up. I was thinking about this passage, just meditating on it this week. And one of the thoughts I had is, you know how sometimes you may go to a website and they have frequently asked questions?

[25 : 08] Or a company may produce a document and they will give you frequently asked questions, questions that people ask time and time again. They don't want to answer them so they will produce a document.

I thought about what is one of the most frequently asked questions when we walk through storms and difficulties and trials where the Lord is not intervening immediately.

I believe one of the most frequently asked questions when we're going through those kinds of storms is, Lord, do you care? Lord, do you see?

Lord, do you care? And I guess it's not so much, Lord, do you see? Because the reason we ask whether he cares is we know he sees. We know that he knows.

And there is no intervention. There's no immediate intervention. And so we are all prone to question to different degrees, does God really care?

[26 : 18] There are some people who are hostile towards God and one of the things they do is they look around in the world and they observe the suffering and they observe all of the injustice.

And they say, there's a God he doesn't care because he doesn't do anything about suffering, he doesn't do anything about injustice. But I think on a personal level the reason that we and sometimes doubt God's care, those of us who know Christ, is we don't doubt for a moment that he is aware.

We don't doubt for a moment that he knows. And we don't doubt for a moment that he has the ability to speak to our storms the same way the Lord Jesus spoke to the wind and spoke to the sea.

We don't doubt that. We know he knows, we know he has the power. The reason we ask whether he cares is because there is no immediate intervention.

And as small as we are this morning, I know one of the things that we all have in common is, to different degrees, we have what we can term as storms swirling in our lives.

[27 : 51] We have what we may term as things that we have no control over and we don't know where they're ending up and we think somehow we're going to drown, we're going to perish.

And whether we articulated the way the disciples articulated or not, sometimes it's a lingering thought in our hearts. And we may not outrightly verbalize it to the Lord but we wonder, does the Lord care?

Or maybe we're thinking, well, he's maybe punishing me for something that I did, I did years ago, something I recently did, something I'm not doing. and we question the Lord's care for us.

I want to say to us this morning, the Lord actually does care. He does care. We should not for a moment think that his non-intervention in the moment, when we would want him to, is an expression that he doesn't care.

As I was working on this sermon, I began to think about the two points. I began to think about how Mark is showing Jesus as having power over nature, and he also is showing Jesus as caring for his disciples.

[29 : 31] And I began to wonder, what is the primary one? What is the primary thing that Jesus was doing? Isn't that when they woke Jesus up and they said, Lord, don't you care?

We're going to perish. Jesus says, okay, let me show you how powerful I am. I'm going to speak to the sea and speak to the wind and they're going to cease. And I will show you my power over nature.

nature. I don't think so. I don't think that the primary reason that Jesus rebuked the wind and calmed the sea was to show us his power over nature.

The primary reason that Jesus rebuked the wind and calmed the sea was to care for his disciples. Not for himself.

He was asleep. But they were frantic and they were fearful and he got up and he rebuked the wind and calmed the sea as an expression of his care for them.

[30 : 36] Now certainly we are able to see his power from that. Mark presents it. Mark is presenting it and no doubt Mark wants us to see the power of Jesus.

And we see that. His power over nature. And that's connected with the other things we're going to see that Mark gives us. But what I'm saying this morning is this. We see the Lord's care in the fact that he calmed the sea and he rebuked the wind as a care for his disciples.

As an expression of care for his disciples. Not as an expression to flaunt his power and flaunt his authority. And the implication is that even though they felt they were going to perish and they felt they were going to drown they could have endured even more.

But the Lord intervened and he cared for them in that particular moment. I want to say to us this morning those of us in particular who are aware of storms and difficulties in our lives.

The Lord's eyes are on us. Even though you think of Jesus asleep he was asleep but he was aware. He was asleep but he was able to commandeer the wind and the sea.

[31 : 51] And we have a God who doesn't sleep, doesn't slumber. And he is aware of every single detail of our lives. And he's promised us in his word that we will go through waters and we will not be drowned.

We will walk through fire and the flame will not kindle upon us. He will ensure that that doesn't happen. Yes, sometimes it does feel like we're going to drown. It does feel like we're going to die.

It feels like we're going to perish. But he has promised we're going over to the other side. We're not going to go in the middle and drown.

He says, let's go over to the other side. And once he is with us, we can have faith and believe that he will take us over.

Jesus asked the disciples two questions in verse 40. After rebuking the wind and calming the sea, he says to them, why are you so afraid?

[33 : 06] Why are you so afraid? And they probably were thinking, why are you so afraid? The water was coming and we were going to perish. And I don't think that's what Jesus is saying to them.

I don't think he is really saying to them, look at the circumstances and tell me why you should have been afraid of the wind and the waves and the sea that was coming in. That's not what he's saying to them.

I think what he's saying to them is this, despite the wind, despite the sea, despite the water in the boat, I'm with you. You have me with you.

Why are you afraid? you have me with you. You are with me. Why then are you afraid?

And so I believe that what the point is that we are afraid when we forget that the Lord is with us and we allow the storm to loom larger fear in our eyes than the truth that the Lord is with us who has promised he's going to take us over.

[34 : 15] He's going to take us through. And we need not fear that we would perish, even though the scripture does tell us we will go through the waters.

We will go through the fire. And that's all a part of living in a fallen world, living in a broken world. And the truth is that it would be wonderful if those who follow Christ were exempt from these things, but we're not exempt from these things.

As a matter of fact, you can probably make a better case that because we follow Christ, we will have more suffering than those who do not follow Christ. It is a distortion to say that because we follow Christ, life is going to be easy.

Because we follow Christ, we are in a cosmic battle. And the enemy of our souls, who is the enemy of our Lord, is fighting us in every way.

And so the Lord does not promise that we will not have these storms. He does not promise that we will not have these difficulties. But what he is calling us to remember is that we need not be afraid because he is with us and he's promised us.

[35 : 31] He's given us many, many promises. the waters will come, they will not overwhelm you. The fires will come, they will not burn you.

There will not even be the singeing of the hair on your head. So that's the first question. Why are you afraid? Why are we afraid? We're afraid because we forget the Lord is with us.

We forget that he has said, let's go over to the other side. And we focus more on the storm and the difficulty. that we face. And the second question is, have you still no faith?

Have you still no faith? What's behind that question? What's behind that question is this. This is not your first storm. This is not your first trial.

This is not the first difficulty. This is not the first opportunity that you have to see me at work and that you would have faith in me. Not faith in yourself.

[36 : 35] Not feeling positive and not having any negative energy and all that humanistic stuff. But Jesus is saying to us, your past experiences, watching me intervene, watching me work, seeing my power, should cause you to have faith faith for the situation that you're now facing.

And I think all of us in this room have lived long enough in this fallen world for me to know that we have faced many trials and difficulties and storms and fires and all the other things, and God has brought us through.

He's brought us through. Lord Jesus is expecting that we would build upon that in our faith to believe that the God who's brought us through past storms and past fires will bring us through the present one.

therefore we need not panic and question and wonder whether he cares for us, because he does care for us, and he has demonstrated that care in the past, and he will do it once again.

Accounts like this should encourage us all. You know there are some people who tell you that oh, if you don't have any faith, you can forget it.

[38 : 09] God isn't going to do anything for you. You need to have faith, and the reason that's not happening is you don't have enough faith. Well, the truth is, if that were the case, the disciples would have drowned. Had no faith.

They accused the Lord of not caring, and they felt that even with him in their boat, they were going to perish. And still, he got up, and he mercifully rebuked the wind.

He mercifully calmed the sea for them. For them. To show that he cares for them. Yes, he demonstrated that he has authority and power over nature.

That should encourage us. Nothing is outside of the scope of his power and his ability. Nothing. Nothing. Our focus is to be on the fact that he is with us and that he cares for us.

And that he even meets us in our weakness. He meets us in our doubting. He meets us in our faltering. He meets us even in our accusations that are not right.

[39 : 30] and so we see we see the God man here.

We see the divine one who is demonstrating authority and power over nature, wind that he created, sea that he created, but he also condescends.

to his weak, fearful, doubting disciples like us. And doesn't discard us. But he accommodates our weaknesses.

And he allays our fears. And I don't say this to excuse us to say that we must not demonstrate faith in the Lord Jesus.

I don't say it for that reason at all. I simply say it knowing that the human condition is sometimes we do doubt and we do falter in our faith.

[40 : 37] And to remind us that the Lord doesn't reject us because of that. But still there is a call to us to have faith in this one who is with us. This one who says in his word that the good work that he begins in us, he is faithful to complete it.

therefore when we think of it in this way we can imagine all of life as crossing the sea of Galilee.

We can imagine it as we're crossing the sea and as we cross to the other side to eternity we're going to face storms, we're going to face difficulties, we're going to face trials. But the Lord is with us, he's promised I'll never leave you, I'll never forsake you.

I will always be with you to the end of the age. And so this morning if you're here and you're fearful and you are thinking you're going to drown, you're thinking you're going to perish, let's think back on God's care for us in the past.

Let's think back on this all-powerful God, the Lord who has created all things, including the very things that come against us and he has total control over them.

[42 : 01] Jesus is Lord over the natural and the personal storms of life and so we can trust him. He will not allow us to drown.

That's for him. He will be him. He!!