

Why are you afraid?

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[0 : 00] Now when Jesus saw a great crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. A scribe came up and said to him, Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.

And Jesus said to him, Boxes of holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Another of the disciples said to him, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

And Jesus said to him, Follow me and leave the dead to bury their own dead. When he got into the boat, his disciples followed him.

And behold, there arose a great storm in the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves. He was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, Save us, Lord, we are perishing. And he said to them, Why are you afraid, O you of little faith? And he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

[1 : 02] And the men marveled, saying, What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the seas obey him? And God adds his blessing to that reading from his Holy One.

I'm sure that you all have many questions about God, even about God right now. Questions about God's purposes in your life.

Questions about why God's permitting the many different aspects of your life to happen in the way that they're happening, in the way that they're unfolding. Questions that you may well be asking. Questions about why God's permitted the world to experience what it's currently experiencing in the current and continued virus pandemic. Questions about all the changes that this pandemic has brought.

Questions about why God's permitting the world to experience what it's currently experiencing in the world.

[2 : 27] Think of the very first question that God asked man. The very first question that God asked Adam. It's a question that's still pertinent today. It's a question that's still relevant for each one of us.

It's that question that God asked Adam after Adam had sinned against God. And that question that spoke about Adam's sin. The question that spoke about Adam's altered relationship with God.

It's the question that's so simple in words. And yet utterly powerful. The question, where are you? And of course, that question in so many ways, that question covers all the questions that God asks you.

The question, where are you? Where are you in your relationship with God? Where are you in your heart? Where are you in your walk with God?

Where are you in your commitment to God's word? Where are you? God's saying, where are you in your trust in me? Where are you in your following Jesus?

[3 : 34] Where are you in your love for the Savior? Where are you in your love for others? Where are you? Where are you in your love for others? Where are you in your love for others? Where are you in your love for others? It's that question that's resonated through time and will continue to be asked until the Lord Jesus comes again.

God's question to you that each one of you needs to address in all its different aspects. One of these aspects in that question concerns faith.

Faith in God's one and only Son. Faith in the Lord Jesus. It's that faith, that trust that Jesus addressed, particularly on the occasion that we were reading off there in the Sea of Galilee.

That occasion, remember, when the storm arose when Jesus and his disciples were in that boat.

They were tossed by the wind and the waves. The Lord Jesus asleep at the stern at the back of the boat.

The disciples terrified. Terrified that they were going to be drowned, so they thought. And they waken Jesus and they cry out to him, save us, Lord, we're perishing.

[4 : 43] And Jesus calms their fears before he calms the storm. And he says to them with that question, why are you afraid, O you of little faith?

And it's a question that Jesus asked his disciples 2,000 years ago. It's the same question that Jesus is asking us today and asking you today, asking me today. Why are you afraid, O you of little faith? So this is a question we're going to examine this morning, to examine the light of the question that was first asked in relation to where you are in relation to our Savior.

And of course, as we seek to answer that question, to apply the truth behind the asking of that question, to answer that question, why are you so afraid, O you of little faith?

In the screenshot just before, just as I started preaching, you'd have seen three headings. And that's the three headings we're going to base our thoughts on this morning.

[5 : 49] The first heading, the circumstances of unnecessary fear. And then secondly, the searching question of Jesus. And then thirdly, the security of Jesus' presence.

And first of all, then, the circumstances of unnecessary fear. Now, in the case of the disciples, their fear was from a purely human perspective.

And from that, in one sense, was understandable. After all, they'd entered a small boat. They'd entered that boat to cross the Sea of Galilee. And they'd entered it in calm conditions.

As we read in the passage there, as we read in verse 24, we read a little word that begins with the sense of something urgent that's happened.

The word behold. In other words, without warning, a storm arose. And of course, it's very much a geographical feature of that location in the Sea of the Lake of Galilee.

[6 : 50] And it still happens to this day. Wind comes over the eastern mountains. Cold wind comes over the warm sea. And this creates a storm. It creates very much hazardous conditions and happens very much suddenly.

It happens now. It happened in Jesus' day. Just as the disciples were crossing over the sea.

Unexpected change of circumstance that caused these disciples to be very afraid for their lives.

Such as can happen in our lives. Your life. My life. The sudden and unexpected turn of events that happen when you least expect them.

The whole course of your life is altered. The whole course of your life is changed. And yes, changed in the twinkling of an eye. You can become afraid.

Your faith can be challenged. And yes, you have given your life to Jesus. You have forsaken all to follow him. Who in faith have surrendered your life to him.

[7 : 57] And yet when a particularly troubling event happens, a difficult trial that happens in your life, your faith wavers. You're afraid.

Your fears arise and your fears swamp your heart. No, your faith hasn't wholly deserted you. You still have sufficient faith to call on the Lord Jesus, just as the disciples there in the boat called on the Lord Jesus to save them.

These disciples still, we have to say, had the evidence of grace to call upon Jesus to rescue them. To rescue them in that storm. Of course, their faith was so weak.

They wouldn't be still and they wouldn't believe that even in that dark hour of trouble, that all was well. Because Jesus was with them and beside them in that storm.

You know, whenever times of trouble, times of trial, times of torment come, whether in personal circumstances, whether indeed through national circumstances, international crises, things that generate so much fear in the hearts of so many, for you and for me to be still and to wait upon God.

[9 : 18] And yes, to call upon him with words that have echoed through the centuries. I believe. Help my unbelief. And you know, it's in these times of doubt and uncertainty, these times when we can be so tempted to retreat back into a place of fear.

It's these times when Jesus calls you to himself, calls you with these words, Why are you afraid, O you of little faith? Well, that really is the searching question of Jesus that we come on to.

We need to probe, of course, that question more deeply. And of course, see it in the immediate context in which Jesus asked that question. And then to apply that question to our own circumstances.

Let's begin with the why of that question. Why? What reason? What reason are you afraid? What reason? You who follow Jesus, why are you afraid?

You're afraid, Jesus is saying. You're afraid that I'm going to abandon you? Are you afraid that the work that I've given to you is now just going to come to an end here and now? Are you afraid that I care nothing for your life?

[10:31] See, the disciples had called on Jesus to save them. Yes, they had called on Jesus. But they, at the same time, presumed that they were perishing. That they were just about to drive.

And in fact, the storm was happening to test their faith. To test their trust in Jesus. Yes, Jesus was physically sleeping in the back of that boat. But Jesus had promised that he would never leave them and never forsake them.

You see, the disciples had feared that the storm was greater than their Savior. Greater than Jesus. And you know, in your time and my time of trial and trouble and torment, remember that Jesus is with you always.

He's promised that. His word is true. His word is sure. He's promised. I am with you always. He's with you in every circumstance of your life.

Yes. He's been with me. He's been with you in all the tragedies of our lives. He's with you in all the troubles that you and I continue to endure and perplex and even cause hardship and pain of heart.

[11:43] But he knows. And he cares. And he's with you in what might to you might appear a never-ending storm. A torment that so gnaws away at your soul.

The dark nights of the soul that the psalm writer of Psalm 88 voiced when he cried out to the Lord, why do you hide your face from me? Remember the why of your question.

The why of your question to God has to be relegated to the why of the Lord's asking you. Why are you afraid? What's your reason for your fear in times of trouble?

Well, Jesus answers that question. And he tells the disciples the reason for their fear is their little faith. Oh, you of little faith. See, the disciples weren't exercising that God-given faith to believe that with Jesus in the storm, with Jesus with them in the storm, they needn't fear.

The creator of the universe wasn't going to be troubled by his own creation. The power of the wind wasn't greater than the power of the Son of God.

[12:53] See, the disciples had failed to see that truth. And their faith at that time had failed them. And in your circumstances, the circumstances that God permits you to endure in his providence.

In these times, be strong. It's for you to be strong in faith, to be courageous. It's that same call that God gave to Joshua when Joshua was about to lead the children of Israel into the promised land. The call that God gave to Joshua to be strong and courageous. To be strong and courageous in the face of what appeared to be a daunting prospect in leading that several million people into the promised land.

And yet what appeared, from a human perspective, daunting and an obstacle, there's no obstacle to God. To God's purpose has been fulfilled through his servant Joshua.

And so, yes, God will and does berate you, chastise you, chastise me for our little faith. Remember when he does that, he does that in love.

[13:59] He loves you. He will chastise and say, Oh, you of little faith. To increase your faith. To trust in him the more.

And I'm sure it's the case that many times you've come back to this very passage. Sometimes when you have been afraid. And you've come back to this passage.

This passage that's recorded here and elsewhere in the Gospels. And you're hearing Jesus speaking to you personally. It's as if you're in that boat with the disciples and Jesus is calling to you. With that question. Why are you afraid? Oh, you of little faith. Well, why? Surely because you or I haven't fully grasped who Jesus is.

Who Jesus is in his power and in his love for you. Surely when our faith weakens. It's because we haven't spent time with our Savior in prayer.

[14:58] We haven't meditated upon his word. We haven't dwelt upon the love and the grace of the Lord Jesus towards each one of us. Who know him as Lord and Savior.

I think that even the fact that this passage has been brought before each one of us this morning. That in fact it's a wake-up call. It's a wake-up call to you.

It's been a wake-up call to myself. As we endure. As you endure. As I endure the storms that God permits in our lives. But know that all through these storms.

All through these times of difficulty. That you and I, we're to continue in faith. To continue to have faith in the goodness and love of God.

Knowing that his purposes. His purposes and these trials and troubles and tribulations. For your good.

[15:55] And for God's glory. And that of course takes faith. It takes sure faith. It takes abiding faith in the one who's promised never to leave or forsake you. And that takes us onto our final point then.

The security of Jesus' presence. The security of Jesus' presence. There's no safer place in all the world than for the believer in Christ.

To be found in Christ. There's no safer place. There's no greater security that's found in the world. Than to be found in the one who holds you in his love.

And his great love by his great power. You see that in a way that Jesus rebuked the wind and the stormy sea. You see in the passage Jesus' power over his creation.

And that power that indicated and indicates his complete authority. His authority over creation. His authority over the lives of every one of his people.

[17:02] That authority. The authority of Jesus. Calmed the storm. And it's the same authority that calms the troubled heart. You notice as we read in the passage that it was by his word.

That the wind and the sea were calmed. And calmed instantaneously. And it was so immediate that we're told that there was a great calm.

So from the turmoil of the elements that the wind and the stormy sea. From the turmoil of these elements and furious action. The command of Jesus stilled that tumult immediately.

And the result of course wasn't just the great calm. But was this reaction of astonishment in the disciples in the reply. When they were saying what kind of man is this?

What sort of man is this? That even the winds and the sea obey him. The disciples were never more safe and secure than with Jesus in the storm.

[18:06] Of course they hadn't fully grasped the fact that Jesus wasn't going to perish in that storm. In his hour hadn't yet come for Jesus to give his life for many. The disciples hadn't fully grasped the fact that Jesus must continue the work that his father had given him to do.

And do that work. Ultimately leading it to the cross where Jesus would give his life. As that sacrifice for sin. As the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The disciples hadn't fully grasped that Jesus must continue on that road to Calvary. That that storm would not cause the end of Jesus' life. Would not cause Jesus to perish there.

But of course the disciples hadn't even fully realized that the work that Jesus had given them to do. As his disciples. That that work must continue.

They hadn't yet reached that time when their lives would be given up in the Lord's service. So the disciples in that boat had such a limited perspective on Jesus.

[19:11] And on themselves. And the work that God had given Jesus to do. And the work that Jesus had given them to do. In the work of bringing the good news of salvation to others.

And you know that weakness for a limited perspective on God's work for us. It applies to us when we waver in faith. You know as we said just a few moments ago.

That lack of faith within ourselves is so from the case. When we haven't fully grasped the power of Jesus. Over all that would. Well all that would threaten to destabilize our trust in him.

And when we fail to grasp fully the love of God in our own lives. It's surely the love of the Savior. Love for the Savior.

We surely have to grasp. When we face the storms that God permits us to endure in our lives. And yes even these times of difficulty that happen so so suddenly.

[20:16] I mean the suddenness of the storm there in the Sea of Galilee. In many ways it's a signal for the Lord's people to be prepared.

To be prepared at all times. Because your faith will be tested at times when you least expect. I mean the disciples weakness of faith. It was exposed by the wind and the storm.

You see they hadn't expected that. A strong faith. A strong faith already exercising Jesus. A strong faith would have prevented the disciples fears.

In the same way the more that you're grounded in Jesus. The more that you're grounded in your faith. The more that you even begin each day with a full commitment to serve the Lord.

A full commitment to trust in him. A full commitment to do as the Lord commands you to do. The more that you exercise that sure and certain faith in the Lord Jesus.

[21:17] The more you'll be able to face the trials that God gives you. And face them knowing that just as Jesus was with his disciples in that boat 2,000 years ago. The same Lord is with you.

And is present with you. Even now. Of course. That never and will never minimize the dark and deep and distressing times that you've faced in the past.

Or even are facing now. Even in the darkest of experiences of the Lord's people. There's hope. Look to the Savior.

Look to the Lord Jesus. Look to Jesus who's given you that hope. That hope of salvation. Look to the Savior who knows you better than you know yourself. This is the Lord Jesus.

Our Savior. Our loving Savior. Jesus who's compassion for the weak faith sinner. Such as these disciples. In that boat.

[22 : 18] Jesus who's compassion for the weak faith sinner. Is so comforting. Yes. Even when we do fall and fail in faith. Even when these times when we stumble in our full commitment to the Savior.

Look again at the passage. Look again at Jesus in the boat. Yes. Jesus chastised the disciples. He rebuked the disciples before he rebuked the wind and the waves. But that rebuke to the disciples. It wasn't a rebuke of malice or lack of love. Jesus rebuked his disciples absolutely correctly. They'd sinned. They'd sinned in their lack of faith.

They'd sinned and that sin had to be called out and rebuked. But the loving rebuke of the Savior.

The loving rebuke of Jesus. It's from a heart of compassion and tender hearted.

Jesus wasn't going to disown his disciples. Because they failed in faith. Neither does Jesus disown you or disown me. When we fall or fail in faith.

[23 : 28] We were singing Psalm 103 in our first psalm this morning. Part of that psalm tells us that God loves those who fear his name. For he remembers we are dust.

And well he knows our feeble frame. Jesus knows your feeble frame. He knows how fragile you are when it comes to trusting in him.

At all times and in every circumstance. Remember that his love for you is great love. He's not going to reject you for the many times you've been afraid through lack of faith.

Even the prayer of little faith is answered in his love. So at such a time as this when, yes, when the world is so afraid.

When the world even is watching on to Christians. How Christians are reacting in these particular times. As the world is stumbling through even these critical times of continued pandemic.

[24 : 31] May it be that you who are the Lord's people. That you continue to trust and show that trust in him. And to proclaim that God is sovereign. The Lord is sovereign in all things.

And that even in these times, these circumstances. That your faith shines. That your faith shines through and your faith shines above. All that would tremble at these times.

All that your faith will be seen to be evident to be real and true and strong. Particularly when those who are watching you. Are leaving Jesus out of their thinking and out of their actions.

You're his witnesses. You have given your life to the Lord Jesus. Well, show it with a strong and courageous faith. Show that your hope is in him. Show that your life is safe in him.

And that come what may. That he's in control. What of you who have no faith in the Lord Jesus? What if you haven't even a mustard seed sized faith in the Savior?

[25 : 39] Well, I ask you a question. In what or in whom are you trusting? Remember the parable that Jesus taught of the wise man and the foolish man who built houses?

The wise man who built his house in the rock. Telling of the wise person who builds his life in the Lord Jesus. As opposed to the foolish man. The foolish man who built his house in sand.

Sand that couldn't hold that house. Pointing to the person who doesn't put his or her trust in the Savior. Who's building his or her life on that which cannot fully and truly satisfy.

Cannot fully and truly give that security of life that only Jesus gives. What are you building? Your life. If it's anything other than the Lord Jesus.

Life will crumble. And be of no lasting worth in the eyes of our Lord. But come to Jesus and put your faith in him. Put your faith in him for salvation.

[26 : 45] And yes, as you give your life to him. And put your faith in him. I say it not just to those addressing immediately. But to all. Continue to exercise that faith and trust in him in all circumstances.

Trust in the one who gave himself for you. And trust in him with all your heart. And he's waiting to receive you. He's calling you. Come to him.

And I'll just close with a few more words before we sing our final psalm for this morning. Think again of the current circumstances that we're all living through. The pandemic that the world's experiencing.

It's certainly shown the fragility of so much of what so many of us have trusted in for life. I pray that even these current times will be seen to be a means to point you to the Savior.

So that you might know the security of his presence now. And that security of his presence always. He's with you now. He's with you all. And promises to be with you always.

[27 : 50] And so may God bless you. Bless you as you grow in faith. Bless you as you grow in that maturing of your faith. That maturing of faith that looks beyond circumstances.

And looks to the Savior. The Savior, the Lord Jesus. Who cares for each one of those who are his. He cares for you who are his. So that you might know that you are secure in his eternal life.

Amen. That is true. Lord, be merciful to me who are sinners. We who so often have been afraid. When we have not exercised faith as we are.

When we have not trusted in you as we are. When we have leaned upon our own understanding. And not acknowledged you as we are.

Lord, be with all this morning who have been found under your word. May they grow in faith. Grow in that trust in you for all things. At all times. Knowing that you are God.

[28 : 54] That you are Lord. That you are sovereign. Lord, continue to be with us now as we sing from your word. Go before us, we ask. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to sing from Psalm 37. Psalm 37 from verse 23 to...

Psalm 37 from verse 23 to... Psalm 37 from verse 23 to...