

Principles and Practice

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- [0 : 00] The last little section we read in verse 35 to 41. I'm sure it's a passage that maybe you've read many times, certainly the event you'll have perhaps even preached many times.
- Matthew records this incident, his gospel, Mark here and Luke. But you know, every time we read a particular passage, there's always something new, something fresh to take in.
- And certainly as I discovered when I was preparing this the other day. Because you know, when we do read scripture, whether it's Mark's gospel, whichever part of scripture, when we read scripture, that's often the case.
- Well, there are times anyway we can lose focus. You know, we can lose our focus on the main teaching points of the text. For example, here in the story of Jesus and the storm, so often we focus on the storm and not on Jesus.
- And therefore, if we're focusing on the storm and not on Jesus, then our application of the teaching of the story, our application is going to be muddled. And we'll fail to grasp the essential message of, well, what this passage is teaching us about who Jesus is.
- [1 : 16] And then there's another thing I think we need to bring to mind here. I think maybe I hinted that earlier when I was reading. So often when we read scripture, there are little phrases that so often we all overlook when we're reading.
- You know, short phrases that just seem to be throwaway parts of the story, when in fact they are absolutely crucial and essential to our understanding of what's been recorded for us in scripture.
- We don't want to miss what God is teaching us through his word, the whole word of God. Because even these little phrases that we're going to look at in a moment help us to understand who Jesus is.
- Help us to understand what the purpose of this short narrative is all about. As we said, it's a story we know so well, I'm sure, but it's a story that we have to focus in with our hearts to seek to learn more about who Jesus is, to learn more about the kingdom of God that Jesus brought in, the story that actually confronts us with our oh so little faith and trust in the Lord Jesus.
- So three things I want to draw your attention to in this passage. You see them in the notes there. The point of time, the particular time that Jesus crosses over from one side of Galilee to the other.
- [2 : 38] And then the particular testing of the disciples in that crossing. And then thirdly, the power, the power of Jesus seen in that crossing.
- So first of all, the point of time of the crossing. And this is where we find our first of the little apparently inconsequential statements that in fact tell us so much about the whole thread and purpose of the story.
- On that day, verse 35, on that day when evening had come, Jesus said to them, let us go across to the other side. On that day. And we might say, well what day?
- What day? Well surely the day, the time that Jesus had taught about what? About the kingdom of God. And the day that Jesus had taught about the kingdom and all its power.

The day that Jesus taught about the reign, the reign of the Lord Jesus. As that lamp who'd come into the world to shine his light into the hearts of man. The light of the Lord Jesus shining to bring sinners into his kingdom.

[3 : 45] That day when Jesus taught his disciples about the wonder of the kingdom, the kingdom having come in the Lord Jesus Christ to bring salvation to sinners.

That day when Jesus revealed so much about the kingdom and all its power. And the day that Jesus taught about the transforming work of the kingdom, the gospel transforming light work that's seen in the unseen power of God.

That day that now turned to night. And you see with that little introduction at the start of verse 45, on that day, this little introduction that at first just appears a matter of fact statement, actually turns out to be the linchpin that connects what Jesus has been teaching.

Teaching about the principles of the kingdom of God. Teaching about the reality of the kingdom of God. And now that day moves to night where we see the practice. The practice of the kingdom.

We see the kingdom in all its power, in its dramatic power, when Jesus calms the storm. And in fact, the calming of the storm by Jesus, the first of a number of incidents that shows Jesus in all his reign, in all his authority.

[5 : 08] Later in chapter 5, we'll read of a demon-possessed man being healed. Jesus showing his authority over evil. Again, later in chapter 5, we'll see Jesus healing, Jesus bringing to life.

Someone who's been dead. Jesus showing his authority over sickness and authority over death itself. I mean, Jesus has been teaching about the kingdom.

And now that very day, that day, Jesus will begin to reveal himself as king. King in his authority. And he'll demonstrate his power and authority when he calms the storm.

So, that's the setting. And we've got a setting for this miracle of the coming of the storm. But it tells us, it tells us setting, tells us immediately that the focus of the miracle is not first and foremost, not first and foremost about the storm.

That little introduction, these few words of introduction, tell us that the focus is Jesus. This event that's recorded by Mark here, is not first and foremost, so many people might think, and I did it myself at one time, it's not first and foremost about the storms of life.

[6 : 27] What we see here is primarily a revealing of the question that the disciples ask when they say, who is this?

So, we have to keep Jesus to the forefront here. Keep him before us as we read this passage. And, you know, and ask that question itself.

Who is this? So that your faith in him is strengthened. That your trust in him is strengthened. So that you truly worship him as the Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ, the King.

So that's the first little intriguing statement that actually has so much power, so much to help us in our understanding of what we're seeing here about the Lord Jesus Christ and his bringing in the kingdom.

But then, there's another little statement that we really have to stop at and work out what's been said here. In verse 36, And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat just as he was.

[7 : 29] And then we're also told other boats were with Jesus as well. I think that's something else we need to look at. But, you know, just as he was. You might think, well, just as he was what?

Well, again, you have to consider the flow of the narrative. I mean, this whole timescale that Mark's giving us here. What's Jesus been doing that day?

He's been preaching. He's been teaching. And now it's evening. What does Jesus do? He wants to go to the other side of Galilee, the Sea of Galilee. And he gets into the boat.

What does he do when he gets into the boat? Does he preach another sermon? Does he have another discourse with his disciples? Does he engage with those people who are in the other boats that accompanied the boat that Jesus was in?

Is that what Jesus does? No. He falls asleep. He falls sound asleep. He's coming to that boat just as he was.

[8 : 28] Just as he was exhausted. He was tired. He's been toiling hard that day. In his humanity, Jesus has reached that point where he must sleep.

His day's work has been strenuous. He goes into that boat without fuss, just as he was. He's exhausted in his human nature. He's exhausted.

He's exhausted. And he responds to that physical necessity of sleep. That's what we see there in verse 38. He sleeps. And that little intriguing statement there, you know, that Jesus goes into the boat just as he was, surely that, again, that tells us so much about the Savior.

It tells us, surely it points us again to realize that Jesus was fully human. In his full humanity, Jesus suffered for us.

Yes, Jesus wasn't as fully divine, fully God. Fully God who left the glory of heaven as God the Son and left the glory of heaven for us.

[9 : 34] But remember, he's the incarnate Son of God. Like us. Then, of course, accepted and being fully human.

He experienced humanity's full needs. He hungered. He thirsted. He needed companionship. He became tired.

He needed rest. He must be like us. He must be fully human in order to represent humanity. In order to do what sinner man couldn't do and didn't do.

Jesus must do what man failed to do in breaking the law of God. Well, man, of course, failed to keep the law of God. Man broke the law of God. And so we deserve death, eternal death.

But Jesus, in his full humanity, obeyed the law fully. In his sinless humanity, Jesus obeyed fully.

[10 : 36] He's our substitute, representing those for whom he came to die. Representing his own before God. His death, our substitute. He took the punishment we deserve in his full humanity.

You know, so often we forget. We forget that it was in his full humanity that Jesus paid a physical price for our salvation. You know, even before the physical suffering on the cross, Jesus endured physical tiredness.

You know, in his work of preaching, preaching the kingdom and teaching and healing and meeting the spiritual needs of others. You get tired. Now, you know, we've been with us thus far in looking at how Mark records Jesus' early ministry.

Remember, we've seen the pressure of the crowds, the pressure that they put on Jesus. You know, crowds constantly coming to Jesus in their need. Jesus reacts in his humanity.

He reacted to all the attention that they gave him. Remember, he had to depart from them to go into a boat to the shore of Galilee just to get away from the press of the crowd.

[11 : 47] But Jesus is continually making known the kingdom of God. He's showing it through his authority over sickness, over disease. He's making known that he's the Messiah. He's the Christ.

He's come to bring in his reign into the heart of man. And so, you know, being told that Jesus comes into that boat just as he was. What are we seeing here?

We're seeing the love of Jesus even in his physical exertion for us. Jesus labored. Jesus endured, yes, physical tiredness.

He endured sinless human weakness for us. And surely then this brings us to see this amazing truth that Jesus, the sinless Son of God, Jesus who'd come from that bliss of eternal glory, devoid of suffering, devoid of human weaknesses, Jesus in his earthly ministry suffered for us, suffered for you, and suffered in the physical demands of his ministry.

And of course, yes, above all, in the sin bearing on the cross when Jesus became sin for us, and we say, what a saviour. What a saviour. We cry out, who is this?

[13 : 03] Who is this saviour? And you who know him by faith cry out again, yes, who is he? He is the Lord. He is the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who came fully divine, fully human.

Jesus who came to us in human likeness to take our place, to make you right with God through his sinless life of obedience, even unto death on the cross.

What do we see next? What else do we notice here in this passage? We've seen the point of time of his crossing, but the particular testing of the disciples on the cross. Look at verse 37 to 38.

Again, a passage you're very familiar with, I'm sure, 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 woke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care that we're perishing?

Now just picture the scene here. Jesus has already taken the initiative. You know, it's he who's directed the disciples to cross over to the other side of the lake.

[14 : 16] That's what we read in verse 35. It's Jesus who says to them, let's go across to the other side. Why? Well, Jesus has worked to do elsewhere. He's going to go there.

He's going to be accompanied by his disciples, and he's going to be taken there by the disciples who knew that stretch of water so familiar to them in their earlier work as fishermen and the fact they lived there.

Jesus must go to the other side. But of course, going to the other side, Jesus knew. Jesus knew of the events that were about to take place.

Events that would reveal both the disciples' severe lack of faith in Jesus and reveal the authority of Jesus as King. You know, it's no accident, there's no twist of fate that caused Jesus to initiate that journey.

That journey that, you know, would be so interspersed dramatically with the storm and then Jesus revealing his power and calming the storm. Jesus showing his power over creation.

[15 : 25] It's Jesus who's led his disciples to that point in their life when, again, their fragile, their fragile faith in Jesus is going to be seen so clearly in failing to recognize Jesus as Son of God, as the Christ, the promised Christ, as King.

So this is a time of testing. It's a time of testing for the disciples and they'll fail that test in their unbelief, their unbelief in Jesus' Word.

But, you know, think of ourselves. Think of our own lives or your own life as a believer, you who know the Lord Jesus as Saviour. You know, there are times when, yes, Jesus will lead you to situations where your faith in Him is going to be tested to the limit.

when, you know, you'll be plunged as it were into a particular difficulty and your trust in Jesus is going to be tested. And the strain of the hymn will be echoing in your heart where your anchor hold in the storms of life, the times of loss, the times of bewilderment, the times when your faith in a loving God is stretched almost to breaking point.

But be assured of this, that when Jesus leads, He guides. And when Jesus guides, He's with you. He's with you in the storm.

[16 : 56] He's with His disciples here. And we might even say this, that the testing of your faith is a privilege. It's a privilege. You have precious faith. And that testing of that precious faith is a privilege because the Lord gives you that time of testing to strengthen that faith, to refine that faith, to direct your heart more and more to the Saviour who does all things well.

So what about the testing of the faith here, the testing of the faith of the disciples in this book? Well, look at the story, look at the narrative. Now, we know, of course, Mark wasn't there, but his source, and we believe his source was Peter.

Peter certainly was in that book. And of course, after many decades when Peter was giving Mark the account of the story, it's very, very obvious that Peter had never forgotten this incident.

In fact, Mark gives us details that none of the other Gospel writers give. You know, Jesus sleeping in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. You know, that's why he said even the very mention of the detail of other boats with that boat.

Again, what does this tell us? It tells us that there was an eyewitness there, someone who was actually there at the time in that particular incident. So we have this precise account of these events from a disciple's perspective.

[18 : 23] And so we see the response of the disciples to Jesus showing just how far short they've fallen in recognizing who Jesus truly is. So look at the detail and look at the teaching point of the detail.

Notice, first of all, the weakness, the weakness of the disciples to trust in Jesus and his care for them. What's happened? The calm waters of the Sea of Galilee, the calm waters have changed suddenly, suddenly into a violent storm.

These storms weren't unusual. The location of Galilee was such that wind could funnel through the surrounding hills and bring about a sudden windstorm.

And that storm, of course, exacerbated by the time it happens, at night time, pitch black night. There's this high sense of fear amongst the disciples in that boat.

But Jesus is exhausted after his day's work. He's sleeping, sleeping through the storm. And you can just, you know, see the disciples, in a sense, the disciples' train of thought at this point.

[19 : 36] The storm's raging. The boat's been blown here and there. Water's coming into the boat. And Jesus, who'd called his disciples to take him over to the other side, he's asleep.

And the disciples are thinking, doesn't he care for us? Shouldn't he be awake to help us? So they're afraid for their lives. Their fear is greater than their confidence and faith in the Lord Jesus who's led them thus far.

And we're seeing here what we might say is an astonishing distrust in Jesus. Don't you care, they say. Don't you care for us? Where's your care for us?

We're about to drown and all you can do is just sleep on. What kind of leader are you, Jesus? Who's this if he doesn't care for us? We who've followed him thus far.

Has that ever been your accusation against God? Your accusation against the Saviour? You know, something unexpected happens. A bolt from nowhere as it were.

[20 : 41] Sudden turmoil that shakes you to the core and you cry out, Lord Jesus, don't you care? Why have you allowed such and such a thing to happen to me? Is this what being a Christian is all about?

leading us, as it were, from terra firma to the perils of the water of despair. But you know, any kind of accusation like that, any accusation against our Lord and Saviour, just like the accusation that the disciples give here, is utterly unjust.

It's a sin. The sin of a lack, that lack of faith in the care and compassion of the Lord Jesus for you, for whom he came to give his life, for you, for whom he came to bring into his kingdom.

Any kind of accusation against our Saviour, saying, you're not caring for me, is utterly, utterly wrong. He gave his life for you.

He is not some kind of compassionless ogre, you know, some kind of cruel trickster who promises you a kingdom and gives you a wilderness. No. But look again at the response of the disciples here, you know, that response to Jesus when they wake him up.

[22 : 04] They've failed to take into account that Jesus was in that boat for a reason. Jesus must continue the work that his Father had given him to do. He was in that boat, not to drown there and then.

He was in that boat, yes, to have a little bit of time of rest before he would continue in his work of proclaiming the kingdom of God. All the disciples could think of was that storm, that fierce storm.

They didn't see the peace of the Lord Jesus lying there asleep. They mistook his sleep for a lack of care when in fact Jesus resting on that cushion was for the greater purpose of preparing for further work, further work in proclaiming the kingdom of God.

And don't we so often make the same mistake as the disciples? You know, mistakenly thinking that when we go through our storms, that Jesus' silence somehow indicates a lack of care, when in fact the opposite is the case.

when in fact Jesus, our Savior, is giving you that space to exercise your faith so that you are becoming a more strong Christian, a stronger Christian in the face of these storms that he permits you to endure for your greater trust in him, for your faith, for your love for the Savior.

[23 : 31] I've mentioned it before, I'll mention it again, the late Kenny MacDonald, I remember hearing him say this so often when he preached at our church in Portree, used to say this, faith is like a muscle, the more you exercise it, the stronger it gets.

I was recently reading words of the adventure of Bear Grylls and Bear Grylls said this, he said, life in the wild have taught me that the tougher path almost always ends up being the most fulfilling one and you who are on us at well, the tougher path, yes you know it's tough, you know it's painful, but there's a greater purpose in your suffering of that strengthening of your faith to trust and to love the one who endured all things for you through his devotion for you for the sake of your precious soul.

One more thing, one more thing in relation to the testing of the disciples in the boat. Notice, they completely failed to trust the word of Jesus.

Jesus said to them, remember verse 35, he was going to the other side of the lake. Now, Jesus' word of course is true because he's true, but the disciples doubted, they failed to trust Jesus at his word.

You see, for them, the storm seemed to contradict Jesus' word, when in fact the storm was there to prove Jesus' word. And you know, there are times of testing in your life when the word of Jesus comes before you.

[25 : 12] You know, when you hear him say, when he declares to you through his word, I am with you always. And he promises you eternal security in the kingdom. him. What do we do so often or certainly on occasions?

We doubt. We allow doubt to cause us to question his word. Remember, his word is truth. You know, doubts can arise, yes, when these storms hit you.

But don't ever let even the mightiest of storms cause you to doubt his promises. He is with you. Each of these words in that, again, little statement, so powerful.

He, Jesus, is present with, alongside you, you who are precious to him. He'll never leave you.

He'll never forsake you. And again, again, preparing the sermon, the words of William Piper came to mind, even in preparing this, the hymn, the poem, however you want to call it, judge not the Lord by feeble saints, but trust him for his grace.

[26 : 23] Behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face. Remember that at all times he is with you. Even in the frowning providences he hides a smiling face.

But then thirdly and lastly for this evening, the power, the power of Jesus in the crossing, verse 39 onwards. 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 seas obey him?

Jesus has awoken from his deep sleep, his much needed sleep. What's his immediate response? What does he do immediately?

Does he chastise the disciples there and then first and foremost? Does he ignore them? I suppose in one sense he had every right to do so and to carry on sleeping.

[27 : 31] He needed rest for his next day's ministry. But what does he do? He does something immediately. He rebukes the wind. You hear the voice of power, you hear the voice of authority over creation.

Peter in that boat, he heard that voice. The other disciples heard that voice. We hear that voice as Jesus rebukes the wind and then calls on the sea to be at peace and to be still.

And that never to be forgotten word of consequence, the wind ceased and there was a great calm. What are we seeing here? We're seeing Jesus' authority displayed by his word.

The same word that brought forth creation or through his word that creation came. That same word is now revealed in his authority over that creation.

He rebukes, he commands. And there's Jesus revealing who he truly was and is. He's revealing he's making known his majesty, he's making known his glory, he's making known who he is as Lord, as Messiah, as King, and the one in whom the disciples alone must put their trust.

[28 : 49] This is the same Jesus who'd come into that boat just as he was. Just as he was in all his sinless human need. And now by his word he reveals just as he was in all his glory, in all his majesty, in all his power.

What's the response of the disciples? They're afraid. They're afraid because of what they see and hear. They've seen evidence of Jesus' majesty and glory and power.

So no wonder then, no wonder that after Jesus has calmed the storm, what does he do? He turns to the disciples. And we might say he shames them. He shames them for their lack of faith.

Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? They were terrified at what they'd just witnessed. They'd allowed fear to replace faith.

Remember their fear was conditioned by the storm. And in fact they ought to have been focusing in faith on the Lord Jesus. Remember Jesus who led them thus far?

[29 : 58] Jesus who wouldn't forsake them? Jesus had further work to do in proclaiming the kingdom. But in their fear, in their fear they saw something.

They saw something of Jesus that actually they responded to with awe. They might even say with reverence. Who is this? Or who then is this?

That even the wind and the sea obey him. I mean, you know, up to this point they'd seen Jesus perform miracles of healing. Wonderful, wonderful acts of Jesus' compassion, Jesus revealing his power over sickness.

Yes. But this, this stilling of a tempestuous wind and waves, you might say as far as the disciples were concerned, this was on another level. Here's Jesus revealing his authority over creation, over inanimate creation, and showing his authority by his word of rebuke alone.

And we join with the disciples sure and saying, who then is this? We said they'd taken Jesus into that boat, just as he was in his tiredness and fatigue.

[31 : 10] And now they've seen Jesus, they've had a glimpse of Jesus' glory, just as he was in his majestic power and over creation itself. And you see the way that Mark finishes that chapter there, that account with a question, questions asked.

But notice, the answer isn't given here. And surely what we've got here is this device, it's a device to bring readers, to bring you, to bring me, to stand before Jesus and answer that question.

Well, answer it. In the depth of your heart, answer that question. Who then is this? Now you who by faith have seen the Lord Jesus, you who've seen him in his power and his glory?

I pray that you know that answer and can give that answer to him so ever comes to you and ask, who then is this? And you call out, he is Lord.

He's the saviour, he's my saviour, he's my Lord, my God. But what if you can't give an answer to that question? Or what if you're giving an answer to that question that is not?

[32 : 22] That this is Jesus, the son of God, the saviour, the redeemer, the messiah, the christ. But who's not that in your response?

Well the question, it has to be a further question, who then? Who are you saying Jesus is? And if he's not the Christ, they're not your saviour, who is he? Well it's for you to answer that question and it's for you to come, yes, knowing your inadequacy and coming before him and crying out, Lord Jesus, receive me, come to me, bring me into your kingdom, I confess my sins before you, come Lord Jesus, enter my heart and be my saviour.

Amen. Let us pray. Our heavenly father, we thank you for your word. We thank you Lord that you have made known to us through your word, the Lord Jesus Christ in all his glory and all his power and all his majesty.

Lord, may we bow before him even now, calling upon him as our saviour. And may it not be that there be any here this evening who cannot and will not call upon the saviour as Lord, our saviour.

Lord, help us each one to follow you to wherever you send us, to wherever you send us in your perfect sovereignty.

[34 : 00] Lord, as you send, so may we follow and give you the glory. Help us then, we pray, even in our final psalm of worship, may it truly be that we offer that psalm of praise unto you for your glory's sake.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's close in Psalm 148. The whole of the psalm on page 194.

Oh, praise, oh, praise the Lord. Praise him from heaven's height. All angels give him praise. Praise him, you hosts of light. Praise him, sun, moon, and stars on high, you highest heavens and cloudy skies.

Psalm 148, to God's praise. Please excuse us. God. Therefore praise, that only God's heart, O Son, God.

exceeded those Jeez. Lord Patreon.

[35 : 10] He came glad He