

Lord of the Storm

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church. Let me invite you to turn to Mark chapter 4. Our sermon text today is Mark chapter 4, verses 35 through 41. That's page 788 in the Pew Bible, if you want to turn there. It'll be on the screens, too, when I read it in just a minute.

Mark chapter 4. Let me pray, and then I'll read our text for us. Our Father in heaven, we do proclaim your great faithfulness to us, your people, that even when we are blown and tossed, even when it seems like we are so unfaithful, God, you remain true. You remain faithful. And thank you that you remain faithful to your promise to speak to us and to reveal yourself to us and to lead us through the word that you've given us.

So, God, we look to you and your faithfulness as we come to the scriptures again, asking for you to speak and lead and guide. And even, Lord, we pray to change us and to make us whole.

For Jesus' sake and in his name we pray. Amen. All right, Mark chapter 4, verses 35 through 41.

Let me read for us. It says, Let me read for you and say,

So today we come to the end of our fall sermon series in Mark's gospel. Next week we'll pick up our Advent series, and we'll most likely pick up Mark again in the new year.

[2 : 34] But today, for now, we've come to our last text of our series. For the past few months we've been looking at this written account of the life of Jesus, the gospel of Mark, which is probably the earliest of the four gospels.

We've been looking at this account of the life of Jesus, and we've been trying to reacquaint ourselves with the real Jesus. You see, our view of Jesus often, it's so domesticated, and sometimes we become so overly familiar that we miss who he really is.

Our passage this morning is a good example. For many, it's a familiar story. Jesus calms the storm. But have we really encountered this Jesus?

And have we really reckoned with him? Have we paused long enough to consider that this isn't just a nice story, but a historical account of the living and reigning Lord?

So this morning, I want to simply walk through this text together. Take it step by step. And we'll pray that the real Jesus will step through these written words and encounter us this morning.

[3 : 47] And so as we come to this story then, we see that this story begins with a storm. Let me read again verses 35 through 37. On that day when evening had come, Jesus said to them, let's go across the other side.

And leaving the crowd, they took him with him 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.

You know, the first thing this passage shows us is that being a follower of Jesus does not make you exempt from storms. Notice that the disciples here are even obeying Jesus' command.

When they set off across the Sea of Galilee, it was Jesus' own voice that said, let's go across to the other side. And by all accounts, they obeyed him right away. Mark says they took him with him in the boat just as he was.

Remember, Jesus' practice at this point in his ministry was to teach by sitting on a boat at the edge of the water. And by doing that, this allowed his voice to carry up into the crowds and it kept the crowds from pressing in on him.

[4 : 50] And when Jesus says, let's go to the other side, the disciples obey right away. They set out with Jesus in the boat just as he was. The sense of that phrase, just as he was, probably means that they didn't even return to shore before they set out.

Jesus commands and they go. So here are the disciples. They've been following Jesus, heeding his words, believing him, loving him, not ashamed to give up all things for his sake.

They listen to his voice and they set out. But what happens? Smooth seas? Clear skies? No. On this day, it's tempest and it's storm. The Sea of Galilee was notorious for these quick, kind of overwhelming storms.

The geography is sort of just right to produce sudden, ferocious storms as the kind of cold air from nearby Mount Hermon, which is about 9,000 feet above sea level, comes down and meets the warm air rising from the Sea of Galilee, which is about 700 feet below sea level.

[5 : 56] So here's this sort of perfect geography to just create these massive storms. Apparently, even today, along the western shore of Galilee, there are parking lots near the water with signs warning of high winds and big waves that can swamp cars that are parked along the beach.

The Sea of Galilee is notorious for these kinds of storms. And so it was on this day for the disciples. Jesus commanded, they set out, and they met a storm.

A storm that crashed into their boat with a fury and that threatened to drown them all. As disciples, we are not exempt from the storms.

J.C. Ryle says it well. He says, If we are true Christians, we must not expect everything smooth in our journey to heaven. We must count it no strange thing if we have to endure sicknesses, losses, bereavements, and disappointments, just like other men.

Free pardon and full forgiveness, grace by the way, and glory at the end. All this our Savior has promised to give. But he has never promised that we shall have no afflictions.

[7 : 14] One of the disciples in the boat that day would later write this. The Apostle Peter, in his first letter, says to his fellow Christians beloved, Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you.

I wonder if when Peter was writing about that fiery trial, he remembered this watery trial that he had experienced this day in the boat. Brothers and sisters, storms will come. Our boat will be shaken. Our confidence may be rattled. Our faith may be brought to the brink. But we must not lose heart. Notice what we see next in our passage.

Let's pick up in verse 37. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat so that the boat was already filling. But Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.

And they woke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Now what we see here in verse 38, what we see in this moment, is a glimpse of Jesus' full humanity.

[8 : 20] Yes, he is the one who will calm the storm. But don't miss this too. Jesus was also really and truly human. Note the details that Mark gives us.

You know, a typical Galilean fishing boat was about 26 feet long. And we're told that Jesus was in the stern, that is the back of the boat, asleep on the cushion, most likely the cushion that you'd sit on to row.

By the way, it's details like these that remind us that Mark is recording the testimony of eyewitnesses. There are all sorts of these little details in the story that seem almost kind of unimportant.

The hour of the day, the reference to the disciples taking Jesus from the boat right where he was sitting, the presence of other boats, you know, the boats drawing in water, Jesus' sleep on the cushion, the disciples' sarcasm, Jesus' rebuke, the disciples' fear, all of these particulars.

They give us evidence that this is a firsthand account. You know, this isn't some legend that grew in the telling. Rather, Mark's recording the testimony of people who were there.

[9 : 23] And what we're shown is Jesus' sleep. You see, friends, Jesus had a human nature and a body just like ours.

He experienced hunger and thirst. He knew what it was like to feel exertion and weariness. He, too, needed rest and sleep. And after preaching to crowds all day under the heat of the sun, that's what we see here.

Jesus, needing rest, has fallen asleep. Of course, the disciples didn't yet have the eyes to see it, but this should have been a great comfort to their frightened hearts.

They come to him angry, even afraid. Teacher, don't you care that we're perishing? And yes, on the surface, it looks that way. How could he be asleep right now?

Doesn't he care if we drown? But look closer. Here is Jesus in his full humanity displayed.

[10 : 25] What does the full humanity of Jesus mean? Does it not mean that he knows our infirmities and our trials and our sorrows?

Yes, even our storms? Does not his full humanity mean that he experienced them and felt them fully? And so we ask, teacher, don't you care?

But look, see his full humanity. See him carrying the full weight of human need and pain. Teacher, don't you care?

See him in his humanity, not merely asleep in the midst of the storm, but look at where this story is going to lead. In his full humanity, Jesus will bear not just the weight of our weariness and need, but Jesus will bear the full weight of our waywardness and our sin.

Where Mark's gospel leads is to the even greater storm. What we will see is Jesus marching forward in his fully human nature, going all the way to face the storm of God's wrath against sin.

[11 : 52] And when the storm of God's wrath against sin comes billowing down in full force, Jesus will be there with us in our place. When on the cross, the storm of God's justice against human sin is poured out, Jesus will be there.

For us in his full humanity. Not merely sleeping because he bears our weariness, but dying because he's bearing the sin of all who trust in him.

Teacher, don't you care? How often have we prayed that prayer when the storms have come? But friends, he's not far off.

He's not unfeeling. He's not aloof. The Lord Jesus is fully present and full of compassion. We see in this moment of Mark's gospel the full humanity of Christ, and that is a source of unimaginable comfort.

But of course, the humanity of Jesus is not all that we see here, is it? Something even greater is revealed in the midst of this storm. Let's pick up in verse 38. 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 are perishing?

[13 : 09] 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.

This is the moment in Mark's gospel when the full deity of Jesus comes fully out into the open.

There's been hints. There's been echoes. There's been intimations of it along the way.

But here it comes out. Jesus is not just fully human. He is also fully God. The one living God that Jews had worshipped for generations.

The exclusive God who forbade them to have any other gods before them. Who forbade them to make a graven image. Who forbade them to take his name in vain. This one true living God was here in power in the person of Jesus.

Who, after all, could do such a thing? Who can control the wind and the waves with just a word? Who can confront chaos and create calm just by speaking?

[14 : 18] None other than the same God who hovered over the water of creation and brought creation to life from nothing. The same God who moved the waters of the Red Sea so that his people could go through on dry land.

The same God who parted the Jordan River to open the promised land. The same God the psalmist extolled for his great power. Remember, we read it earlier, Psalm 107.

Some went down to the sea in ships doing business on the great waters. They saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea.

They mounted up to heaven. They went down to the depths. Their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wit's end. And they cried to the Lord in their trouble.

And he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm still. And the waves of the sea were hushed. Who then is this Jesus?

[15 : 21] Who else but the Lord God? Who else but the Lord? Who else but the Lord? Realize what Mark is showing us here. That Jesus isn't just a wonder-working teacher or a prophet, but the one who holds the very fabric of the universe together.

He molded the stars and fashioned the seas. He ties every atom together and puts every breath in your lungs. Jesus Christ is the reason the whole universe doesn't spin out into chaos and fall back into nothingness and non-being.

He is the reason you exist. You see, your life, friend, is not merely the random outcome of time and matter and chance. Your life is the creation of a sovereign and good God.

A God so powerful and so good that he became human. He entered the world broken by sin. He came into the world threatened on every side by the dark forces of chaos and death. The creator entered his creation to stand against the raging storm of brokenness and destruction and to claim his sovereignty once more. To assert his loving rule and say once and for all, peace be still.

[16:47] Peace. Be still. You know, in this moment when the winds die down, when the waves subside, when calm is restored, what the disciples experience in this moment is a foretaste of the new creation.

The day when creation will be healed and shalom, that wholeness, that peace, that fabric of what God intended the world to be when it's restored. What they get a glimpse of in this moment, in the calm, is a glimpse of a world liberated from sin.

And what they see is that because Jesus has come, no more would this world be an engine of suffering and pain and of sin and of death.

Now that Jesus had come, the great chaos would be overcome by an even greater calm. It was a foretaste that day on the Sea of Galilee, but the real thing was coming.

And it would begin in earnest on Easter morning when the resurrected Jesus walked out of the tomb. Then the great battle had been won.

[18:09] Then the king could say, not just to the wind and the waves, but to sin and death and hell, peace, be still. Peace, be still. The king has conquered.

Sin has lost its power, and death has lost its sting. And when Christ emerged from the grave, he could say, peace, be still, even to our own hearts.

Because now there was no more condemnation for those who were in Christ Jesus. Because the resurrection, the resurrection, friends, was no mere waking from sleep.

The resurrection was the conquering of death itself. Jesus rose, no more to die. And those who are united to him, even though they die, yet shall they live.

So why are you so afraid? That's where the story ends.

[19:05] It begins with a storm, and it ends, well, if we're honest, it ends in fear, doesn't it? Let's pick up at the end of verse 39. 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?

You see what's happened here. Their fear of the storm is replaced by an even greater fear. Fear of the one who's there with them in the boat.

No longer are they afraid of what's happening outside of the boat. Now they're afraid of the one who's with them in the boat. The one they called teacher, but who now has clearly revealed himself to be something, to be someone infinitely greater.

Of course, this isn't the kind of fear that, you know, makes you want to run away, right? It's the kind of fear that draws you towards it in awe. Jesus says to them, will you still be afraid of the storm?

[20:18] Have you still no faith in me? Christianity means facing storms without fear, because we know the one who must be feared above all else.

And we know that this one who must be feared above all else, in fact, loves us and has conquered sin and death for us.

So why now need we be afraid? Imagine how Mark's first readers must have heard this story. You know, it's likely that Mark's gospel was written in the city of Rome to Christians who were facing persecution.

Imagine the storms that they faced in those early days. Where would obedience to Jesus lead them? If they heeded his call and followed him, if they set out across the sea of discipleship with Jesus as their Lord, what would become of them?

What storms would be waiting for them before they reached the safety of the other shore? Would they make it through? Or would the wind and the waves be too great? Would they be lost, proverbially, at sea?

[21:33] And yet Mark is reminding them, and he's reminding us, fear not the storm. Rather, fear the Lord of the storm. Fear him and you've got nothing left to fear.

Live in awe and wonder and reverence and love and worship of him. Let him be the captain of your heart, and you'll need not fear again, no matter what storms may come.

You know, it's significant that the visible outward sign of faith in Jesus. What do we do? When someone professes faith in Jesus and professes that faith publicly, how do we mark that occasion? We do it with water. We do it with baptism. Becoming a Christian means accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and your Savior. It means putting your faith, your whole life's trust in him. And how do we make that public? What sign do we give to show that we've trusted in Jesus? Well, Jesus says we do it through baptism. And what is baptism? It's going down in the water and coming back up.

[22 : 40] It's a sign of our union with Jesus. Jesus went down in the grave and came back up. So we too, through faith in him, have died to sin in our old life and now live a new life in his righteousness.

When a person is baptized, they're saying, I belong to Christ now. My life is wrapped up in his life. And that means you no longer need to fear.

The storm has already been stilled. Your sins have been forgiven. The waters of judgment have fallen on Jesus and you are safe in him.

And he promises to protect you and keep you until you land safe on the shores of the new creation. He will keep you in life. He will keep you in death. And he will raise you up on the last day.

Fellow Christians, do you remember your baptism? How you went down and came back up again? That says it all. It's God's promise to you, that act.

[23 : 48] That he will see you through every sea and every storm and he will bring you safely through on the other side. Why? Because Christ your king died and rose again for you.

Now if you have placed your trust in Christ and you've not been baptized, then take the next step to get baptized. We're going to be celebrating a baptism today in the second service.

That's what this big box is. I don't know if some of you are new. You're like, what is that giant box on the stage? That is weird. What is in there? It's water. In our second service, Susie Kim's going to publicly proclaim faith in Christ and get baptized.

So if you're here and you've placed your trust in Christ, if you've seen this one who's died and risen again for you, if that's true of you and you've not been baptized, then come talk to me after the service and we'll schedule a service when you can do the same thing.

And so you can experience the joy of obeying Christ's command to be baptized, but the joy of being reminded with this powerful sign that God will be faithful to you to the very end.

[24 : 55] Now maybe you're still considering Christianity. You know, the most important question you can be asking is the same question the disciples ask at the end of our passage.

Who then is this? You know, there are a lot of implications of Christianity about how we live and, you know, all sorts of things.

But the most important thing, the center of it all is that question. Who is this Jesus? If Jesus is just another teacher or religious figure, you can take him or leave him.

But if he is the one who can calm the storms, if he is the one who can control the chaos, if he is the one who is Lord of all, if that's who Jesus is, then you've found him.

You've found the one who can speak peace into your greatest fears. You have found the one who can safely carry you through any storm. You've found the one who's finally worth giving your whole life to.

[26 : 13] Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? Behold him, the Lord of the storm. Ask him for faith. He will not turn you away.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, how often we do feel like those disciples in the boat, afraid, scared, wondering where you are.

And yet, Jesus, thank you for revealing yourself as you truly are, the one full of power and majesty and glory. Lord, we confess that our faith seems so small, yet we thank you that you hold us close and hold us tight and see us safely through the storms nonetheless.

Lord, increase our faith in you. Help us to see you for who you truly are, the Lord Almighty, the keeper of our souls. We praise you, Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[27 : 24] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.