

## **“Move Over Jesus . . .”**

### **The Calming of the Storm**

My tinted windshield does little to defend against the Texas sun, and as traffic slows because of an accident, I find myself running late to work and feeling frustrated. I try to maneuver into the fast lane, as SUV's and eighteen wheelers block my way. In this moment, and others like it, the pressures of life come to my mind and weigh heavy on my heart. I find myself speaking more honestly to the Lord, “God don't you care about meeting my needs? Where are you in this time of my life?” While I am certain that he is alive and well, I question his concern for me, rather than express honest feelings and seek to understand him.

In moments like these it would be worthwhile to remember Mark's account of Jesus calming the storm. For learning to trust in the Author of Life brings peace and security.

### **Mark 4:36-41**

**At sunset, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us sail to the other side.” Leaving the crowd, they took him in the boat, just as he was, but there were also other boats with him. A great wind-storm came up quickly and the waves beat against the boat so that water quickly filled the boat. Jesus was sleeping in the stern with his head on a cushion, and they awoke him and said to him,**

**“Teacher don't care that we are about to die?” Having arisen, he commanded the wind. He said to the sea, “Be silent.”**

**And it became silent, the wind ceased, and there was great calm.**

**He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” They feared with great fear and said to one another, “who is this already that the wind and the sea obey him.”**

### **Darkness at Sea**

Against the backdrop of blue waters, gentle waves, and small mountains, Jesus teaches by the sea. Villagers gather, leaving their agriculture and civic duties, so much so that Jesus steps into one of the boats, to speak a little ways out from the shore, a natural amphitheater. He relates to them using parables about their daily lives and work, and as the sun sets beyond the mountains, ending a long day of ministry, Jesus requests from his disciples to sail to the other side, leaving the crowd behind.

Experienced fishermen, like the brothers James and John or Peter and Andrew, knew the risks of sailing on the fresh-waters of Galilee. On occasion, gusty winds would quickly sweep down upon the sea, creating an ominous fury in a short amount of time. These fierce gales often occurred in the afternoon, which means that fishermen regularly fished at night. But the author of the gospel describes that this “great wind-storm” came up quickly during the night. The waves “beat” against the boat throwing portions of the large waves into the boat at

such a rapid rate that the boat weighed heavy with water— a dark and dangerous situation.

## Peace of Christ

Amidst the gusts of wind and the drowning currents, Jesus sleeps in the back of the boat, his head resting on a cushion. Based on Mark's description, it seems that Jesus rests soundly because of the physical exhaustion that came from a day of teaching and ministering to numbers of people. However, from a relational perspective, it would seem

more significant that Jesus remains at peace because of his right relationship with his Father.<sup>1</sup> Of the gospel writers, only Mark mentions a "head-cushion" in the story

(brevity and detail mark the author's style and reveal the authenticity of the account), accenting not only that Jesus was tired, but that he is at peace, without fear, even when the ship is sinking. This rest and complete trust contrast emotions of worry, fear, and doubt. Simply speaking, what goes on around Jesus, the created order, is subordinate to his Father.

## Sovereign Care

As things became suddenly worse, the disciples wake Jesus up, "Teacher, don't you care that we are about to die?" The spirited Jewish men who ask this question had witnessed the supernatural power of God. They saw first-hand the expelling of demons from oppressed souls. They observed healings of all kinds of diseases. They personally felt and experienced God's presence again and again as they walked with him. Yet at night, in a chaotic storm, they question whether Jesus *cares*

about whether they live or die. Even though they phrase their question in a way that expects an affirmative answer from him,<sup>2</sup> their abruptness and word choice communicate a sense of rudeness. They didn't say: "Get up Jesus! There are high winds and water is in the boat, please do something!" Or "Lord, help us solve this problem." Or "What do we do, Jesus?" Instead, the disciples question his *personal* concern for them.

Having arisen, Jesus speaks first to nature and then truth to his disciples. He

commands the wind and sea, "Be silent," and the wind and sea obey--there is great calm. He then asks his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" The word for

*Just as he has authority to direct the wind and waves, he also authority to speak truth in love to order what is lacking in our hearts.*

"afraid" here can mean "fearful ones" with a connotation of shame or it can be translated "cowards." In other words, Jesus speaks firmly, not necessarily in a parental, impatient voice, as if he is speaking to immature kids, but he rebukes them as their leader, a strong compassionate shepherd (the first of several rebukes: 7:18 and 8:17ff). Just as he has authority to direct the wind and waves, he also authority to speak truth in love to order what is lacking in the hearts of men: "You lack courage and do not have faith." Evidently, the currency for relationship with Jesus is faith. The disciples doubt the degree of Jesus' commitment and involvement on their behalf and, it seems, that they may doubt he has the power to save them (the primary emphasis in this passage is Christ's care).

<sup>1</sup> (The subtle parallel in v. 36 and v. 38 ("taking him as he was" and "he was") hints of Jesus' tiredness.

<sup>2</sup> Greek has two uses of "not." The particular use of "not" signals this meaning.

After Jesus responds to the crisis, the disciples react with “great fear.” Notice the cause-effect relationship in this event:

- (1) A “great” wind occurs (v. 37);
- (2) Jesus commands a “great” calm (v. 39);
- (3) The disciples respond with “great” fear (v. 41).

Just as suddenly as the storm arose, the storm ceases. And while the disciples believe that Jesus would respond, their hearts lack faith. To the degree that they lacked understanding in their leader’s concern for them, they now have much greater fear for his authority, for even nature submits to him.

### **Theological Reflection**

In some of the Star Trek episodes, the main characters enter into a room on the space ship called the Holodeck. At the center of a dark room sits a lighted high-tech table with computer panels. The room has high ceilings, is dark with gridlines, and has rounded corners. The commander tells the technician what real life scene he would like brought up and the technician punches in the coordinates or location. The room immediately changes into whatever environment coordinates were keyed-in. For example, if they punched in a tropical walkway with a waterfall in the background, the room would automatically become a tropical walkway with a waterfall in the background, a simulated reality. If a large sand dune in a desert was keyed in, then those in the room would be standing on a sand dune in the desert. The characters remained, but the context changed.

What interests me about this Holodeck is that it focuses attention on relationship over circumstance. Each day in our lives we experience moments in different settings. We

find ourselves at home, in a work room, in an office, at the park, in a rain storm, out at a restaurant, or stuck in a traffic jam on a freeway. One thing is constant, the Lord is present in all of these circumstances. The significant question, then, is “How do I respond to his Person?” In other words, environment is significant only as it relates to God’s purpose in maturing my relationship with him and my relationship with others.

The hostile forces of nature brought the disciples to choose fright rather than trust their savior, placing creation above the creator in their hearts. Three points can be remembered from this story to encourage faith: celebrate the Author of Life, fear him, and receive his love.

**Celebrate the Author of Life.** The disciples question whether Jesus cares if they live or die. From our perspective, this seems like a silly concern, since we know the end of

*Environment is significant only as it relates to God’s purpose in maturing your relationship with him and your relationship with others.*

the story: Jesus calms the storm and will go on to die on a cross and rise again, bringing life to all those who believe. But the disciples are *in* a difficult situation and do not see Jesus’ purpose at this point, so they speak abruptly and rudely to the Son of God.

Do you question Jesus’ care for you? What would you do if you were in the boat with Jesus in the storm? One of my friends responded to this question by saying that he would nudge Jesus and tell him, “Move over Jesus, give me some of that cushion!” I thought this answer to be insightful, since this is an

attitude that God desires from us. He wants us to choose to enter into rest with him. This kind of proactive response seeks to participate with Christ in a unique relationship as God's children, which means we believe in him for personal provision and life.<sup>3</sup>

**Fear the Lord**, not creation. When Jesus commands the wind to cease, he actually uses the phrase "Be muzzled." This is the same word used when Jesus commands a demon to be silent (1:25) just before ordering the evil spirit to come out of a man. Jesus has authority to "muzzle" hostile forces. Just as Yahweh demonstrated his sovereignty over the Red Sea, bringing about life for Israel and death for their enemies, so also Jesus demonstrates his salvific power by commanding the wind and sea to be "muzzled." This makes sense, for we know that all things were created by him and for him (Col. 1:16). Scripture always presents Jesus as in control in every domain, never without power. He embodies the sovereignty of the Father for the purpose of relationship, to invite us to trust and believe. When circumstances or created beings cause fear, we can choose to accept that God wants to reveal himself, and his actions will bring about a healthy reverence. Our fear brings us to Christ to understand, which then leads to

reverence (human need → revelation → godly fear).

**Receive His Love.** Jesus sleeps in the boat, but a few years after this event, silence from the savior will come because he is led away by religious leaders to be crucified. In other words, Jesus' actions and decisions continue to prepare the disciples for the greater test to come. He wants them to have faith, to believe that he will not leave them, and to feel secure that death does not have power over him.

Creation is subordinate to the Creator.

And while nature is given no opportunity to disobey Christ, the love of God can be seen in his gracious gift of choice to his children. We can choose to trust, and he desires us to

*It is not a sign of doubt to put words to what is in our hearts, rather it is a sign of trust in relationship, an aspect of faithfulness.*

receive his love.

Whatever storm you may be in, begin to express your feelings and request understanding from the Lord. Communicate feelings of aloneness, insecurity, grief, or fear. It is not a sign of doubt to put words to what is in our hearts, rather it is a sign of trust in relationship, an aspect of faithfulness. "Lord, I feel threatened by the storm around me, and your silence leaves me feeling alone and fearful. Would you help me to rest and experience your care?"

---

<sup>3</sup>The gospel writer places this event of Jesus calming the storm before two other events in chapter 5 where Jesus demonstrates his power of life over darkness and death--the healing of the demoniac, and the raising to life of a child.

