

“The Calmer of the Storm”

Mark 4:35-41

April 27, 2014

Only God Can—Dundas’ testimony

As we come to Mark 4:35-41, we find ourselves right in the center of an *Only-God-Can* moment. **[Mark 4:35-41]**

What I hope you will believe after meditating on this passage is that...

***Our faith in Jesus need never waiver
because He is sovereign over all our circumstances.***

Jesus performs such a remarkable miracle in this passage, and we can be so stunned by His power that we sometimes fail to see that this is also one of the prime examples of His very real humanity.

Let’s pause to consider two aspects of Jesus’ character from this passage:

1. **Because of His humanity, Jesus can identify with our human weakness** (Mark 4:35-38).

One of the primary ways we experience our human frailty is through weariness. How many of you have been so tired that you thought you just couldn’t go on. How many of you have been so exhausted that you could have slept through anything?

Jesus has experienced that kind of exhaustion. After dealing with the accusations of the Pharisees and the constant demands of the crowds, He’s grown so weary from His ministry of teaching and healing, that finally Jesus says to His disciples, let’s retreat to the other side; and along the way Jesus falls asleep in the boat.

Verse 37 tells us that there arose such a fierce gale of wind that the waves were breaking over the boat and filling it with water. The sea of Galilee is 628 feet below sea level and surrounded by mountains

gouged with deep ravines,¹ so sudden and violent storms are common on this sea. But this was not your average storm. When verse 37 calls it a fierce gale, the word *megas* is used—this was a mega storm. These seasoned fishermen who had spent their whole lives on this sea were scared to death. The fact that Jesus was sleeping through this storm is as impressive as the storm itself!

I can’t prove it from this passage, but personally I believe there is more to Jesus’ deep sleep than just mere exhaustion. Jesus lived His life in the constant awareness of His Father’s sovereign power and care. He knew that nothing came into His life apart from His Father’s hand. He lived the Word of God like no one else. Like...

Psalm 3:5—*“I lay down and slept; I awoke for the Lord sustains me. I will not be afraid...”*

Psalm 4:8—*“In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.”*

Illus: Mom and Naomi (Tornado warning 10 miles west of Langdon)

- Clicked off the weather—“let’s go to bed mom”
- Grandpa: “there’s nothing to fear because God is in control and He will watch over us; we’re not afraid if it’s God’s time to take us.
- Grandma: took her hands, memorized Psalm 4:8; prayed for safety and peace; went to bed.

So it was that Jesus slept in the boat, exhausted and assured of God’s sovereign care.

2. **Because of His deity, Jesus is sovereign over our circumstances** (Mark 4:39-41).

¹ Hughes, 113

The Jesus sleeping in the boat as it is being “overcome” by waves and wind is the creator and sustainer of the sea and the weather. Colossians 1 says of Jesus, “by Him all things were created...all things have been created through Him and for Him...in Him all things hold together.”

But the disciples don’t realize the magnitude of their Master; and what they do know of Him they have lost sight of in the magnitude of the storm. They are irritated that they have to wake Jesus, and in vs. 38 they say, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” **Life Principle: Fear will distort your vision of God.** When you are tempted to fear your circumstances more than God, the very next temptation will be to doubt God’s goodness.

Aroused from His sleep, Jesus’ response was not one of panic. He simply stood up and rebuked the sea with two words: “Hush be still.” And vs. 39 says, “the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.” The word here again is *meGas*, mega-calm. In other words the calm after the storm was just as intense as the storm itself. Two extremes—the weather went from mega fierce to mega calm within seconds because Jesus spoke.

And guess what the disciples’ reaction was; *meGas*, mega-fearful. Verse 41—“they became very much afraid and said to one another, “who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

The threat of their circumstances was over but their fear intensified because they realized that the one in the boat with them had the power to do *what only God could do*. They had been irritated with Jesus. They had rebuked Him saying, “Don’t you care?” And now they catch a glimpse of the One they have spoken against. The God who controls the weather is in the boat with them.

- Psalm 148: “Fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfill His command.”

- Job 37, “To the snow He says, ‘fall on the earth;’ And to the shower and the rain, ‘be strong.’ ...By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast. He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter His lightning. They turn round and round by His guidance, to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world... Whether for correction, or for his land, or for love, he causes it to happen.”

This is why believers should be careful not to complain about the weather.

Don’t miss Jesus’ response to the disciples—it’s a loving rebuke: “*why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?*” Notice Jesus draws a direct correlation between the presence of fear and the absence of faith.

Fear is what we experience when we view our circumstances as bigger than God.

Fear is the absence of faith.

Fear is unbelief (practical atheism). It denies the true nature of God, that He is all-sufficient, all-powerful, all-wise, and perfectly good.

Fear reveals idolatry—that we’ve been trusting in some security other than God.

Fear is laziness of mind, failing to be disciplined in our thinking according to what God has said is true.

So the way to overcome fear is not by fighting fear but by fighting the unbelief that feeds it. Fear is the fruit on the tree, but unbelief is the root. You need to take the truth of who God is and what He has said and apply it to the root of unbelief so that the fruit will change from fear to faith.

It doesn’t help to just tell your kids not to be afraid. You also have to tell them what to believe. God said, “do not fear...for I am with you.” [Isa 41:10]

To overcome fear you need to do the opposite—single-hearted worship from a believing heart and a mind disciplined in the truth. That’s how you pray—you start rejoicing in who God is and rehearsing what He has said.

I love how Lloyd-Jones said it when he preached on the same story in the Gospel of Luke: **“Faith is a refusal to panic! ...Faith is a refusal to panic, come way may...Faith is perpetual unbelief kept quiet.”** Faith says, “I am not going to let my emotional life or my mind be controlled by these circumstances.”² Faith says, “I will let God and the truth of His Word dictate my response. I won’t let my thoughts and emotions run wild.”

When Lloyd-Jones says “*faith is a refusal to panic*” it implies that you have a choice to respond to your circumstances in either a God-honoring way or in a humanistic way. Which way will it be?

Circumstances do not cause you to be fearful, angry, depressed, or worried. What sends you into these downward spirals is how you respond to your circumstances based on how you interpret them; either through a lens of trust in God or a lens of humanistic hopelessness. (internal beliefs)

Illus: why two people with same prognosis of cancer can respond in completely different ways: 1) suicide, 2) living life to the fullest. (interpret circumstances → internal beliefs → view of God)

You are not helpless.

Illus: I’ve been saying to one of my children when we are working on issues of anger, “*you may not be able to control how you feel at first, but you can choose to respond in a way that honors God as you trust Him to help you do the right thing.*” Our response to circumstances is determined by what is in our hearts.

Our emotions can reveal what is in our hearts. Our emotions can alert us to an opportunity to respond to a negative situation in a God-honoring way. But our emotions were never meant to control us—the Holy Spirit of truth alone shall be our Master.

But what about those times when we truly are in danger? When a neighborhood dog attacks me on the street, I should respond to a God-given sense of danger. When a storm threatens my life, I should seek shelter. But even when I really am in danger of dying, as a believer, I should not fear death—my eternal future is secure.

My concern is not so much how we feel initially but how we respond with our thoughts and actions. Fear becomes a sinful spiral when I allow my thinking to be driven by fear rather than confidence in God.

So what should we take from Mark 4 into our daily lives? ***Our faith in Jesus need never waiver because He is sovereign over all our circumstances*** as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer.

Question: *Will we trust Him in the storm? When the weakness and frailty of our humanity is exposed by our circumstances, will we be overcome by fear or will we overcome by faith?* As Lloyd-Jones said, “If you find yourself in a trial, take it as a wonderful opportunity for proving and growing your faith and glorifying God.”

Perhaps some of you are in the middle of overwhelming circumstances right now. What should you do? How might you combat fear?

1. Refuse to panic—refuse to let your circumstances dictate how you will respond with your thoughts and your actions.
2. Pray for God to show you the roots of unbelief in your heart that are feeding your fear. What are you really afraid of?
3. Attack unbelief! Repent of any unbelief in your heart that is warring against trusting God. War against it like an intruder in your home at night. (friendly car salesman vs. terrorist)
4. Pursue truth! What does the Bible say that correlates to your situation?
 - a. Who is God? (attributes)
 - b. What has God promised?
 - c. If you don’t know the Bible, find a friend who knows the Bible well enough to help you find relevant truths.

² *Spiritual Depression*, pg. 143.

5. **Pray and preach those truths to yourself repeatedly until Biblical truth dominates your perspective.**
6. Affirm that God fulfills good purposes for your growth and His glory even through affliction.
7. Rejoice in the Gospel! Remember the temporal nature of your circumstances and remember your eternal hope. Even in the worst circumstances (death), we have hope.
8. Celebrate God's faithfulness by practicing gratitude.
9. Focus on fulfilling today's responsibilities in the power of Christ, loving God and others more than focusing on yourself.
10. Adopt a Philippians 1:21 attitude for life: "to live is Christ and to die is gain."