

*“Bridling Fear with Faith”*

Mark 4:35-41

July 5, 2020

Please turn in your Bible to Mark 4. As you are turning there, let me issue a quick apology to those who diligently look ahead and read the sermon text ahead of time. I was planning to preach on Acts 3 today and, Lord willing, I will next week. But on Friday evening, I decided to add Mark 6 to our series, “Extraordinary Times, Extraordinary God,” as we transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Let’s read **[Mark 4:35-41]**.

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

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***Our faith in Jesus need never be overcome by fear because He is sovereign over all our circumstances.***

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You have faith. You will encounter fear. The question is, which one will overcome? Faith or fear?

So stunning is the miracle Jesus performs in this passage, demonstrating His supremacy and authority over the laws of nature, that we could easily overlook the stark reality of Jesus’ humanity displayed here.

*Consider both the humanity and deity of Jesus as we see it here in Mark 4.*

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 (physical and emotional exhaustion). 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.

Vs. 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 Galilea is 628 feet below sea level surrounded by mountains gouged with deep ravines,<sup>1</sup> so sudden and violent storms are common on this sea. But this was not your average storm. When vs. 37 calls it a fierce gale, it uses the word *megas*—this was a mega storm. These seasoned fisherman 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 personally 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 care. He knew that nothing came into His life apart from His Father’s hand. He lived his life by the truth’s of God’s Word without a single infraction. So we are not surprised that his life would reflect verses 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.*

Ps 4:8 has taken up a special place in our family because of an event that took place many years ago. My niece, Naomi, spent a summer in ND on the farm with grandpa and grandma. One night they were having a sever thunderstorm and according to their custom they watched the weather before going to bed. And a weather alert issued a tornado warning 10 miles west of Langdon—which is precisely the location of our farm. As soon as the weather was over,

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, 113

grandpa clicked off the TV and said, “well, let’s go to bed.” “Go to bed!,” Naomi said, “What about the tornado!?” Grandpa said, “there’s nothing to fear because God is in control and He will watch over us; we’re not afraid if its God’s time to take us.” And with that he went off to bed. But Grandma, being a bit more sensitive to Naomi’s fear, took her hands, and said, “here’s what we are going to do. We going to memorize Ps 4:8, then we are going to pray for safety and peace, and then we are going to sleep.” And that’s what they did. Later Naomi said, she just laid in bed repeating that verse over and over again until she fell asleep.

So it was that Jesus slept in the boat. Exhausted, yes. But fully assured of His Father’s sovereign care and protection. This is not to say that we shouldn’t seek shelter in a storm or take safety precautions. But peace comes not from the precautions we take but from knowing the protective hand of God that covers us.

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

The Jesus sleeping in the boat, as its 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 fail to grasp 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 in vs. 38 they say, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” **Life Principle: Unbridled fear will distort your vision of God.** When you are tempted to fear your circumstances more than you fear or trust 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 a mere word: “*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 immediately at Jesus’ word.

And guess what the disciples’ reaction was; *megas*, mega-fearful. Vs. 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*. Their fear of death was transformed into the fear of God. 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.

I would suggest this is the one reason why we should not complain about the weather. Weather is not a freak of nature. It is from the hand of God.

- Ps 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.”

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.

I want to take the rest of our time to explore the relationship between fear and faith. As we learned a few weeks ago, ***Fear is a God-given natural response to danger that is meant to serve you but not enslave you.*** Fear itself is not sinful but your response to it can be. If you allow fear to enslave you so that you fail to trust the Lord, you have allowed fear to lead you into sin. So what is controlling fear or enslaving fear?

- *Controlling fear is* what we experience when we view our circumstances as bigger than God.
- *Controlling fear is* the absence of faith.
- *Controlling fear is* unbelief (practical atheism). It denies the true nature of God, that He is all-sufficient, all-powerful, all-wise, and perfectly good.
- *Controlling fear* reveals idolatry—that we are trusting in some security other than God.
- *Controlling 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.

Have you noticed that it doesn't help to just tell your kids not to be afraid or that it's not particularly helpful for someone to simply tell you, "don't worry." Those exhortations to not fear or worry are only helpful when they are accompanied by a biblical truth that gives us reason not to fear. *You have to know what to believe in place of fear.* For example, God says in [Isaiah 41:10](#), "do not fear...for I am with you."

*To overcome fear you need to do the opposite of fearing your circumstance which is single-hearted worship from a believing heart and a mind disciplined in the truth.* Why do I say worship? Because what you are doing

is putting God in His rightful place—resting and rejoicing in who God is and rehearsing what He has promised.

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.<sup>2</sup> 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. Emotions are a response to how we interpret our circumstances based on our internal beliefs.** 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. Nor are you a helpless victim of how you feel. This is incredibly liberating when it comes to fighting intense emotions like anger or fear. *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 what is right.* Our response to our circumstances is determined more by what is in our hearts than what happens to us. And what is in our hearts is determined by the truth (absence of truth) that we ponder.

Emotions are helpful in that they reveal what is in our hearts. Emotions alert us to an opportunity to respond to a negative situation in a God-honoring

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<sup>2</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, pg. 143.

way. But our emotions were never meant to control us—we are to be mastered by none other than the Holy Spirit of truth and the Author of God’s word.

When we find ourselves in a dangerous situation, the initial feeling of fear serves as God-given signal to seek safety and to turn our hearts to trust in God—to pray! But when the feeling of fear strikes, what we do next is absolutely essential. If our fear does not immediately drive us to God, it will become a downward spiral that kidnaps our hearts as we allow our thinking and actions to be driven by fear rather than clinging to confident hope in God.

So what should we take from Mark 4 into our daily lives? ***Our faith in Jesus need never be overcome by fear because He is sovereign over all our circumstances as our 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 bow to earthly fears or will we fight the fight of faith with the sword of truth?* 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.<sup>3</sup>

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. (Lloyd-Jones: *“The first thing I must do when I find myself in a difficult position is to refuse to allow myself to be controlled by the situation.”*<sup>4</sup>)
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? What’s the underlying fear that your circumstances reveal?
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 banter car salesman vs. homeland 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 need help, find a friend who knows the Bible well enough to help you find relevant truths.
5. **Pray and Preach those truths to yourself repeatedly until Biblical truth dominates your perspective.** Discipline your mind in a singular God-ward direction.
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. (Fear tends to paralyze us)
10. Adopt a Philippians 1:21 attitude for life: “to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Faith Challenge: “If Jesus has authority over the laws of nature to perfectly still a raging sea with a mere word, then certainly He has every power necessary to intervene in my life as I trust in Him.”

Prayer Challenge: “Holy Spirit, show me the root of unbelief that is feeding my fear and the truth of God that alone can overcome it.”

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<sup>3</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, pg. 147.

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