

## **Mark 4:35-41<sup>1</sup>**

### ***The Lord Is There With Us***

35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."

36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.

37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

## **I. Introduction**

Story is told that the stock market was once experiencing a great deal of fluctuation. So investors felt very insecure. One investor went to his stockbroker to gain some reassurance. He asked his broker if he was worried.

The stockbroker told his client that he was sleeping like a baby. The investor was amazed at his broker's ability to take all these fluctuations with so much confidence.

"Really?" the investor responded, "even with all the fluctuations?"

The stockbroker answered, "Yes, I sleep just like a baby. I sleep for a couple of hours, and then I wake up and cry for a couple of hours. Just like a baby."

In our text today, we find Jesus sleeping like a baby in the middle of a storm. He was really sleeping like a baby in that there was such a deep calm and peace in his sleep. He could have gone on sleeping as if all was well under control.

But it was not so for his disciples. They were desperately trying to control the ups and downs of the raging waves in a sudden storm.

Today, we want to learn what they learnt on that occasion so that we carry away with us one promise of the Lord for us.

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<sup>1</sup> 1984 NIV

We will do this by making some important observations on this passage. First ...

### **I. “Let us go over to the other side.” (v. 35)**

Whose idea was it to get into the boat? The answer is very plain in the text. When evening came, at the end of a long day of ministry, after Jesus and his disciples had spent hours ministering to the needs of people, it was Jesus himself who said, “Let us go over to the other side.”

Several of them were fishermen who knew the Sea of Galilee intimately. They had sailed on the lake themselves many times in their fishing boats. They could now look forward to a few hours of rest.

It all started very well. As the boat left the shore, the lake was so calm that Jesus decided to go to sleep in the stern, resting on a cushion. Suddenly a great storm arose, the wind rushing down across the mountains, whipping up the waves and causing them to come crashing into the boat.

Question: What had these men done wrong that they ended up in a storm?

Answer: Nothing!

*Life will come with storms, but not every storm we face comes because we did something wrong—we can end up in storms because we obey Jesus just like the disciples.*

You might say that it was Jesus who led his followers into a storm that night. These men had followed the Lord’s bidding and done what He told them to do. Yet they faced one of the most terrifying nights of their lives.

You can be certain that many of these men in the boat knew the lake well enough and familiar with such a rough condition. Men like Peter, Andrew, James and John had all plied these waters virtually their entire lives as fishermen.

These men finally went to awake the Lord from his sleep. But before that, what might these veteran experts on the high seas be doing? I believe like any expert when faced with a familiar situation, the human tendency is to take charge and be in control.

So while the Lord was still in his slumber, these disciples probably tried to turn the sail in order to catch the wind and outrun the storm. But the wind was too strong for them. They probably tried to row through the waves. But the waves were too high for that. They must have tried to bail out the boat. But there was too much water for that. They did everything they could to get out of the situation while Jesus was still sleeping in the stern.

Well, isn't this exactly what we do in so many of life's storms? We respond by trying to gain control of the storm. "What must I do to get this thing under control?" We are always seeking to be in control of life. And while we are seeking to be in control, Jesus is right there with us. But we don't even think of asking Him. And so the storm continues. And we reach the point of terror in the storm and of anger with the Lord.

Finally, these men decided to wake up Jesus and ask him a question. We observe that they ask him ...

## **II. "Don't you care if we drown?" (v. 38)**

They asked, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" But it was not so much a call for help. It was more a charge made out of sheer desperation and frustration.

We today can ask the same question but rephrased in different ways:

- Lord Jesus, don't you care that my marriage is falling apart?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that my girl friend/boy friend has deserted me?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that I have no money?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that I feel so alone?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that I want to give up on my life?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that my loved one has died?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that I lost my job/cannot find a job?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that I am struggling with my studies?

The idea that Jesus who died for us would not care about our pain or our anxiety or our fear makes no sense at all. Yet this is the feeling many of us have simply because there is a storm.

Perhaps, we presume that we are not supposed to have storms in life. After all, we have believed in Jesus in order to avoid storms in life. He is supposed to keep life under control and to protect us from storms, struggles and problems in life. But know this—the Lord cares just as much when the tempest is raging as when the seas are calm and the sun is shining.

I believe at this point in their spiritual journey with the Lord, the disciples' knowledge of Jesus was still very much based on theory than on trust.

We see this in their accusation of Jesus—"Don't you care if we drown? How can you sleep? Aren't you going to help us trim the sails or row the boat or bail out the water? Do your share!"

The disciples had heard the words and seen the works of Jesus as they ministered with him. But these words and works were still very much mere theory to them ... and we are often like them today.

*Jesus is more a nice theory to us than a near Saviour whenever we view life according to how well we are in charge or in control.*

But know this—He is the Captain of our boat of life, and He will not abandon us even if the boat is sinking.

“Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” How wrong the disciples were about the Captain of their boat of life!

Next, observe that when Jesus awoke, he spoke three words ...

### **III. “Quiet! Be still!” (v. 39)**

Eugene Peterson offers this colourful paraphrase of what Jesus said and what happened after that—“Awake now, he told the wind to pipe down and said to the sea, ‘Quiet! Settle down!’ The wind ran out of breath; the sea became smooth as glass.”

And just like that the storm ended. Then turning to his desperate and frustrated disciples, he said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

He rebuked them:

- “You have heard my words, the claims I have made and the teaching I have done.”
- “You have seen my works, the healings I have done and the demonized people I have set free.”
- “My words and my works should have resulted in faith in your lives, but you still have no faith.”

For some Christians today, the Lord may paraphrase like this:

- “You come to church Sunday after Sunday to learn about me, my words and my works. Yet you still have no faith.”
- “You still think life is up to you, that you can handle the storms of life; that you have the wisdom and the strength and the energy to be in control of life. And now you cry out to me in anger and blame me for not caring for you.”
- “You know me in your head as nice theory, but you still don’t trust me in your heart as near Saviour.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you still no faith?” The answer is really “yes” and “no”. Yes, they truly believed in him. But no, their faith, though real, was not yet robust enough.

And how do you get the faith that enables you to survive the storms of life? The answer from the Lord to us today is to get in the boat with Him, and ride with Him wherever He wants us to go.

- Where there are no storms, there is no danger.
- Where there is no danger, there is no fear.
- Where there is no fear, there is no testing.
- Where there is no testing, there is no learning.
- Where there is no learning, there is no growing.
- Where there is no growing, there is no faith.

So it is for all of us who follow Jesus. There are no shortcuts along the pathway of spiritual growth.

- The storms of life are not a detour.
- They are not a mistake.
- They are not a trick or a trap.
- They are not sent to destroy us.

Our storms are allowed by the Lord to cause us to reach the end of ourselves so that we will cry out to Him in utter desperation, “Don’t you care if I drown?” When the storm seems about to overwhelm us completely, the Lord rises and commands all the elements attacking us, “Quiet! Be still!”

“Storm, be quiet and still, and know that I am the Creator of the universe!” “Disciples, be quiet and still, and know that I am with you!” And the sea became calm almost immediately.

*We will find the Lord most caring when we are most willing to let Him take charge and take control.*

“Quiet! Be still!” These were the most caring words of the Lord for His disciples when they accused Him for being uncaring.

But a new terror was suddenly aroused in the disciples. We observe that the disciples were terrified and asked each other ...

#### **IV. “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” (v. 41)**

From the Old Testament, they knew that only God could do what Jesus had just done. Only the Creator could control nature the way Jesus had just done. They were overwhelmed by the reality that Jesus is divine. He is the Lord of all storms.

Indeed, they might have failed the test of faith in this storm. But it had done something wonderful—it had given them deeper spiritual insight as to who really Jesus was.

*Our failure in the storm need not be fatal in our spiritual journey—it can deepen our appreciation of who Jesus is in our lives.*

The disciples saw Jesus did many miraculous works in the past. But those were for the storms of other people, not of themselves. Those were second-hand encounters that somehow didn't seem to strike them with the awe of God's presence.

But this time on the lake of Galilee, what Jesus did was for their eyes only. It was first-hand encounter with the Lord that hit them with the powerful realization that they were in the presence of God.

- God is involved in our lives
- The Creator of all
- The Sovereign Lord of all
- The Controller of all
- God is here with us!

## **Conclusion**

All of us have experiences when we feel utterly left alone by God. When life tumbles in around us, even after we have tried to serve God to the best of our ability, there are moments when we feel that God has left us completely.

This story of Jesus calming the storm shows us some features of our faith journey with the Lord.

- Jesus is the Lord of the wind and the waves.
- When He calls us, we obey and get into the boat.
- When the storm comes, we cry out to Him.
- Though He seems irresponsive at first, He eventually calms the storm.
- When the storm is over, our faith is stronger.

One of the things that the Lord impressed upon me after I stepped down from full-time pastoring was to take time to minister to some of the unsaved in my extended family. One such person was an elderly aunt. She stayed with two other elderly aunts in the same apartment—like a self-owned elderly home.

This particular aunt had been plagued with many physical problems. One time, she had surgery done to correct a back problem. I took time to visit her both before and after her surgery to encourage and pray for her.

After she was discharged, I visited her one day at her home. After I had prayed, she said to me, “Thank you for coming here to pray for me.”

I took the opportunity to tell her that if she would believe in Jesus Christ, she could actually pray to Jesus Christ on her own. I then went on to share the Gospel with her.

To my pleasant surprise, she said, “I did say a prayer to believe in Jesus Christ some time ago.” I learnt that it was during an evangelistic event held in a church attended by one of my cousins.

That helped me to freely talk about spiritual things with her and the other two aunts whenever I visited them.

Sometime later, this aunt faced an even greater health challenge—a malignant growth was detected in her body. Surgery was advised. After surgery, she would need to go for regular therapy over a period of 12 months. For various reasons, she was not keen to be treated. In fact, she preferred death than treatment. It took some persuasion before she finally agreed to be treated. As an encouragement to her, I told her that I would commit myself to drive her for treatment and therapy so that she would not have to worry about transportation.

On the day when she was about to be wheeled in for the surgery, I was there to pray for her.

Not long after the surgery, she returned to the hospital for the review and biopsy report. And guess what? The biopsy showed that there was no malignancy and so no follow-up therapy was needed.

When I talked to her, I was expecting her to say something like, “I should have sought a second opinion. Then I might be spared from this false scare.”

Instead, she said this, “You prayed before the surgery. I sensed Jesus was with me. So now I thank Jesus for turning something bad into nothing bad.” She believed that it was not the doctor’s mistake but the Lord’s miracle in her life.

I am sharing this not to tell you that when I pray for healing, God will always answer me. I am sharing this to tell you that when we prefer to die than to live because the storm of life is hitting us so hard, remember this—when the boat of life is hit by a raging storm, the Lord is still there with us.

Are you in a storm at this very moment? And you sense more fear of the storm than faith in the Lord. Think of that small boat on the Sea of Galilee again. It faced a raging storm. But it did not capsize.

Remember that you are not alone though it may feel that way now. The Lord is still with you though circumstances may seem to be saying otherwise. So fear not; keep believing for there is no storm so big that the love of the Lord is not bigger still.

The Lord commanded the noisy winds, “Quiet!” He rebuked the turbulent waves, “Be still!” But He was not merely speaking to the noisy winds and turbulent waves. More significantly, He was speaking to the disciples who were noisily complaining at Him and frantically fighting the storm on their own.

And today, He may be speaking the same to some of us who are grumbling in our hearts and scrambling with our hands, “Quiet! Be still! Stop fearing and start trusting. I am always here with you.”

- We must move from control to trust.
- The only way to control life is to trust the only one who can control it.
- Our knowledge about Jesus must become trust in Jesus through storms.

At the beginning of this sermon, I mentioned that the Lord wants us to take home one promise from Him. Here it is—*“I am always there with you, even in the storms of life.”*

And may the reality of the Lord’s presence with you be your strength, peace, joy and comfort in all that you face in life. Amen!