

Mark 4:35-41

Theme: Does Jesus care?

- 1) *He cares enough to allow the storm.*
- 2) *He cares enough to stop it.*

<sup>35</sup> *That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."* <sup>36</sup> *Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.* <sup>37</sup> *A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.* <sup>38</sup> *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?"* <sup>39</sup> *He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.* <sup>40</sup> *He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"* <sup>41</sup> *They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"*

Disaster strikes. An unexpected drought burns your farm land. A gun man opens fire in a theater. A tornado comes barreling through a town heading for your house. What is your first reaction? Fear. Doesn't God care if we perish?

Yes, Jesus does care. He cares enough to allow disaster and he cares enough to stop it. He wants us to trust him regardless of the circumstances, because everything he allows in the Christian's life is because He does not want us to perish eternally.

Part One: *He cares enough to allow the storm.*

Our sermon text finds Jesus by the Sea of Galilee. It was evening. Jesus spent much of the day teaching how the kingdom of God grows through the preaching of the Gospel. He was most likely very tired and *said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."*

*Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat.* The disciples were happy to help Jesus. They didn't mind that he slept in the back of the boat. All seemed well, until *a furious squall came up.*

Now, it should be said that severe storms were common on the sea of Galilee. The geography of that area lends itself to them; much like the geography of Central United States lends itself to tornados. But just because those storms were common, does not mean that they were any less terrifying and deadly.

And, humanly speaking, the disciples had every reason to be afraid. *Waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.* Imagine the scene: the disciples working hard trying to steer the ship as wave after wave pounded them. They were coughing up water as the lake kept spilling into the boat. The disciples were scared to death – and *Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion.*

"How could Jesus sleep? Doesn't he feel the waves and wind? Doesn't he hear our cries? We're dying here, and he is sleeping like there is total calm." *The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"*

What the disciples did was good and bad. It was good that the disciples finally turned to Jesus for help. The LORD says: *"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."* (Psalm 50:15) Sadly, they don't ask Jesus for help, trusting in his compassion and power. Rather, they asked him out of fear for their lives. They are upset that Jesus isn't doing anything; that he seemingly doesn't care.

But Jesus does care that they are perishing. This is why he kept on sleeping through the storm! You see, Jesus realized that there was a far greater danger to the disciples than the wind and waves. The disciples, together with all people in this world, were perishing from sin and unbelief. Jesus was born because He didn't want mankind to perish. He came to live the perfect life we all fail to live, and thereby win the righteousness we need to stand before God. He came to take all our

sins upon himself in order to suffer and die for them all. It is because we are all perishing that Jesus came to rescue us from sin.

But that rescue from sin would do no good if it was not received in faith – faith that trusts in God and his goodness, faith that clings to Jesus regardless of circumstances.

Jesus knew that the devil, the world and the disciples' own sinful natures would try to lure their hearts away from him. He saw this danger, and this is why he allowed the storm to come, this is why he allowed the disciples to struggle so hard – in order to test and strengthen their faith. And to give them a picture of faith, Jesus slept secure in the back of the boat. How is this a picture of faith? His calm sleep showed that He was not afraid, but trusted His Father's loving providence, regardless of how dire things got. And Jesus wanted the disciples to have this same trust in Him, His power and His love.

Sadly the disciples did not display such trust. They saw Jesus as their teacher, their master, but not their all powerful God. They even questioned his love.

Sadly we too often act like the disciples when storms arise in our life. If we lose our job, fall ill unexpectedly, lose a loved one, etc. . . . we are tempted to question God's goodness. We wonder why he didn't answer our prayers, why he allows this situation to happen. We might even begin to wonder whether or not God loves us, what we did to anger him, whether or not he still cares.

Dear Christian, Jesus does care. He cares so much about our eternal salvation that he allows storms to arise in our lives. He cares so much for us, that he wants to make sure nothing separates us from him. And so he sometimes takes away the idols of our hearts, the things or people we are tempted to love and trust more than him. He shows us that we cannot rely on our own strength and understanding. He wants us to look to him and not our bank account for our daily bread. He wants us to fear, love and trust in him above all things, so he graciously takes away, or threatens to take away, those things that compete with him in our hearts. And so he sends the storms to teach us, to test our faith and strengthen what needs to be strengthened.

### Part Two: He cares enough to stop it.

Now, put yourself in Jesus' place for a moment. You are the Son of God, who came to this earth to pay for the sins of all people, so that no one would have to perish. You have been with the disciples and shown them your love and power. You have instructed them both privately and publicly. Whom would you rebuke first: the disciples for their insulting question, or the wind and the waves that have only done your bidding?

Jesus is not like us. In love *he got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.* It took two words for the wind and waves to recognize the voice of their creator and obey. The disciples heard Jesus many times and still didn't recognize exactly who he was. But now they see.

Then *He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"* Notice that Jesus does not berate the disciples for their lack of faith, rather he merely points out that all their fear was for nothing. Didn't they understand who he was? Didn't they see the miracles and hear his preaching? Didn't they believe that he is the all-powerful Son of God, the Messiah, who loves them dearly and would not allow anything happen to them if it didn't serve their eternal good?

And let's apply Jesus' question to us. When storms arise in life, why are we so afraid? Do we trust God to keep his promise to work in all things for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28)? If we have Christ, what are we afraid of losing? Do we still have no faith in his power and love?

As Jesus was with the disciples through the storm, so Jesus is with us, as He promised: *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.* (Matthew 28:20). Through the prophet Isaiah, Jesus promised: <sup>9</sup> *I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you.* <sup>10</sup> *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.* (Isaiah 41:9-10) With promises like these, is there any reason to fear?

But someone might ask: "What if my storm is an illness like cancer. What if it ends in my death or the death of my loved one. Why didn't Jesus calm that storm?" And who's to say that He didn't? God never promises that the difficulties we

face won't end in death. They may well end in death, but that does not give us any right to fear or question his love. Why not? Because death is a blessing for the believer! <sup>15</sup> *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.* (Psalm 116:15). *The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil.* <sup>2</sup> *Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.* (Isaiah 57:1-2) What better calm is there than being at eternal rest, far from where any evil can touch us? Yes, the Christian can even face death confident of God's love, protection and power to resurrect him on the last Day!

The demonstration of Jesus' power and love had its desired effect on the disciples: *They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"* Now it must be understood that the word "terrified" is not the same word used to describe the fear the disciples felt during this storm. One commentator puts it this way: *"This 'great fear' is the feeling of overpowering awe that was caused by the revelation of almighty power. This feeling is bound to overcome weak mortals when, in their littleness, they meet the Omnipotent and behold his might. The disciples were not afraid of Jesus, did not run from him, but now looked upon him with the greatest awe."* (R C H Lenski)

Yes, just as Moses, Isaiah, and all the prophets of old were afraid when God made his presence known among them, so now the disciples realize that God is with them in the boat. The fear they felt for Jesus was a proper fear. Who is this? Not a mere man, but God himself, for only the LORD can still the storm to a whisper, and hush the waves of the sea (cf. Psalm 107:29)

So we too can know from Scripture that Jesus is more than just a man. He is our Savior and God who loves us, and works in all things for our eternal good. There is no reason for us to be afraid when disaster strikes. Cling to the LORD in faith, and He will see you through the storm, for it is his love that allows it, and in love he will bring it to a blessed end, as He promises in Psalm 91

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

<sup>2</sup> I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

<sup>3</sup> Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

<sup>4</sup> He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

<sup>5</sup> You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,

<sup>6</sup> nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

<sup>7</sup> A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

<sup>8</sup> You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

<sup>9</sup> If you make the Most High your dwelling-- even the LORD, who is my refuge--

<sup>10</sup> then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.

<sup>11</sup> For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;

<sup>12</sup> they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

<sup>13</sup> You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

<sup>14</sup> "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

<sup>15</sup> He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.

<sup>16</sup> With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."