



## TRUSTING GOD THROUGH THE STORMS OF LIFE

Pastor Brian Long // January 14, 2024

Text: Mark 4:35-41

Big Idea: Jesus is Lord of all and can be trusted to bring peace in the storms of life.

### **\*\*Debt Paydown Celebration\*\***

Over the past several years we have been working on accelerating our pay down of our debt on our church home here on Merrychase Drive. First in 2015 we targeted our oldest note which was just north of 900k at that time. 18 months later together we paid off that note.

Next, we set our sights on Education Center loan. In 2017 it was @ \$2,415,000.00. Now, after hundreds of you got involve with one time and regular monthly gifts...along with a few larger year-end gifts in the last few months of 2023. I am thrilled and honored to announce that our church home here on Merrychase is DEBT FREE. Our loan is paid in full!!

Congratulation Foothills Church: Over the past 9 years we've all worked together, and did our part, and paid over \$3,369,000.00 towards debt reduction. What's more, in the middle of that effort you also raised nearly a million dollars for our venue expansion project allowing the classic service to move to the Worship Center and our Main service to move into this space.

Now, some of you are aware, we own a couple lots down here on Merrychase. The largest parcel right next to the park we own free and clear. We have a small balance on the parcel next to the Lighting Unlimited Store. It's a liquid asset and we could sell it if God leads us that direction.

Finally, we own our Office Building on the corner of Hwy 50 and Cambridge with a mortgage just under 1 million remaining. We are managing that monthly payment well because it is roughly the same amount it would cost us to rent commercial office space, if we didn't own the building.

Now, those of you who have been giving to our debt reduction effort might be asking, "What's next?" Now that we are debt free on our church campus, it makes sense to redirect all our church mortgage payments to retire the remaining debt on the office building on Cambridge road.

Maybe you could redirect your debt reduction giving to help us accomplish that. Or you can redirect your giving to Alliance Missions, or scholarships for Students for camps and retreats, or to the benevolent fund.

Thank you, God, for this milestone for our church. Thank you to the hundreds of you who faithfully, consistently participated in this effort. God bless you with his overwhelming faithfulness for your generous giving.

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**Introduction:** In this New Year...with Christmas behind us, and our sights on Easter...we are looking at the life and ministry of Jesus through the eyes of the Gospel of Mark. Remember, Mark's account is "All thriller and no filler." It moves fast, is direct, and to the point.

Our series title is *Jesus is for you!* Last week we saw that Jesus is for your healing. As we step into our text for today, we're going to see that Jesus is for your peace as you navigate the storms of life.

There is a myth that sometimes resides deep in the hearts of Christians. This myth lives under the surface but then raises it's ugly head when we encounter rough waters in our lives.

The myth is that bad things don't or really should not happen to good people. The subtle belief is that if I walk with Jesus, I'll have his favor, and he will insulate me from hard times in life.

While most of us might not readily admit that belief, in the middle of unimaginably difficult times, even the most mature believer is likely to catch themselves asking, "Why is this happening to me?" Even the most mature believer will experience feelings of fear and wonder with surprise, "How could God let this happen to me?" These types of questions reveal this subtle belief I'm talking about when I follow God, I will enjoy his protection.

Our text today has some crucial truths for us to keep in mind as we encounter and navigate through the storms we face in our lives. And right out of the shoot it debunks the myth. Truth is...sometimes followers of God encounter serious storms. Turn to Mark 4:35-37.

### **Sometimes God followers encounter serious storms (vs.35-37).**

Notice that Jesus leads his disciples along with a few other boats on a cruise across the Sea of Galilee. It's Jesus idea to set sail. His followers immediately comply. Once they set out, a serious storm blows up and threatens to sink the boat and everyone on board.

These storms were fairly common. The way the hills and valleys around the Sea of Galilee were shaped it was common for winds to get funneled through them in such a way as to generate serious windstorms even on a clear day. And that's what happened in this situation. The word used for storm here emphasizes that it was a *fearsome storm*, perhaps more intense than usual.

I want you to see that these followers of God, these disciples were only doing what Jesus had asked them to do. They had jumped to respond to his suggestion to take a little cruise to the other side of the lake. They hadn't done anything wrong; they weren't in rebellion; they were just doing what God had led them to do and yet they encountered a serious storm.

This needs to be a lesson to us. Sometimes followers of God encounter serious storms in their lives. Now, granted storms can come as a result of direct rebellion from God and his Word. It's always important to evaluate

and make sure the storm you are weathering is not simply the consequences of your own poor choices.

Many times the storms we face are just the storms that come with life as we know it. Followers of God will likely face all types of serious storms: Prolonged Emotional struggles, depression, chronic physical illness, cancer, job loss, marriage failures, relational crisis, car accidents. Add to that natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, tornados or tsunamis. There are countless types of storms that we are subject to in this life. The Bible tells us that walking with Jesus doesn't insulate us from these.

In fact, Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:12, *"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trials you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you."*

Peter is speaking specifically about some persecution they were experiencing for being Christians, but the reality still applies. Christians should not be surprised by suffering.

And James even goes so far as to say that when we encounter trials of various kinds, we ought to be encouraged by that because *"the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."* - James 1:2-4

**[Transition]** - Like storms on the Sea of Galilee, storms in the life of a believer are often inevitable. We can't keep them from happening, but we can choose how we navigate them. Let's see how these followers do. Picture this scene....big storm, big waves, boat sinking...hearts sinking... Read verse 38.

### **In the middle of storms, it can feel like God is disengaged (v. 38).**

How is it that Jesus is sleeping at the back of the boat during this ferocious storm? It underlines his humanity and need for rest after a long day of pouring into the lives of others. In fact, this is another characteristic of Mark's gospel. It often draws attention to the humanity of Jesus.

Jesus is in the back of the boat dead asleep from adrenaline withdrawal, no doubt, he's had a long period of teaching. But his ability to rest in the midst of this storm also reveals his depth of his understanding and confidence in his heavenly Father. He is able to rest in the middle of this storm because he has complete confidence in his Father's watch-care of his life. Sleep comes more easily to the one who is resolutely confident in God's care of his life.

David knew this peace in soul and resulting rest in body when he wrote in Psalm 3:5, *"I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side."*

Psalm 4:8, *"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety"*

As Jesus, the carpenter slept, these expert mariners are panicking in this storm. I'm sure they had seen storms before. I imagine that at first, they simply relied on all their sailing skills and did their best to navigate this storm as they had done countless storms before.

But, in this storm their past experience and sailing skills were not effective and they became frantic as they realize their lives were at stake. Eventually, they cry out to Jesus and frantically wake him accusing him of not caring that this storm is about to kill them.

Isn't it interesting? It's easy to sing God's praises when skies are clear in our lives. But it much harder when the storms move in. In the middle of the storms when the waves rise high and we get overwhelmed, it can seem like God is either asleep at the helm or maybe even overboard. It is so easy to feel that God has abandoned us or is indifferent to our struggle and heartache. This is a common experience for God followers like you and me. *When fear floods in, our faith gushes out.* It happened to these disciples, and it often happens to us.

**[Transition]** – So, how can we counteract this? When we navigate the storms of our lives how can we experience less fear and more faith? Our story teaches us that it is beneficial to remember three important things about Jesus.

### **In the middle of storms, remember a few things about Jesus:**

#### 1. Remember Jesus is in your boat.

Initially, I suspect these disciples relied on their own ability to fight this storm. They had skills, they had experience...they had been through storms before and they had managed to get through it, but this storm was different and soon they became overwhelmed and in desperation verse 38 tells us they turned to Jesus.

When we find ourselves in storms in our lives, we have to remember that Jesus is in our boat and call out to him right from the start. I wonder what would have happened if these disciples would have called out to Jesus as soon as the storm began to brew?

This is one of the greatest things about knowing Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior; when you face the storms of life, Jesus is in your boat. That's important reassurance. When Jesus is in your boat, believe me, He won't let it go down.

If you're facing a storm in your life right now, and you don't have a personal relationship with Jesus, you can change that today. You can change that by asking him to get in your boat and he will help you navigate the storms of your life so that you are not left to go it alone. Simply tell him, "Jesus, I need you to get in the boat of my life because the storm I'm in right now is totally overwhelming to me. I need your help."

[**Transition**] - With Jesus in your boat, the second thing to remember is He is Lord of heaven and earth and has power over all. Look at verses 39 and then at verse 41.

2. Remember Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth (vs. 39-41).

Notice what happens when the frenetic disciples turn to Jesus. Jesus got up and with **two words** (See-o-pah-o, phee-ma-o) "quiet, be still." With two words he displayed his divine power to calm the raging storm. Jesus protected his followers from the deadly storm, and he can protect us from the deadly storm of sin and the deadly storms of circumstances of our lives.

The wisdom of the Proverbs reminds us of the difference it can make when we walk closely with God through the storms of our lives. Proverbs 3:23-26, "... *when you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*"

Peter is clear in 2 Peter 2:9 that God is well versed in how to preserve his followers through the storms and trials of their lives. "...*the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials...*" He is Lord of heaven and earth... and he's is for you!

[**Transition**] - The third thing we have to remember in order to navigate the storms of our lives with more faith and less fear is to remember that Jesus is completely trustworthy. Having calmed the storm, Jesus asks the disciples two questions. Look at verse 40

3. Remember Jesus is trustworthy (v.40).

When you read these questions in your head, what tone of voice do you hear? Often when these questions are read, they are read with a tone of anger, disgust, or a spirit of rebuke as if Jesus is irritated at them and in their face, confronting them. It's difficult to know the tone Jesus is using here to ask these questions. The context and the language are not definitive.

I actually think it's very likely that Jesus asked these questions with a tone of tender sadness and compassion for their inability to trust him. He is sad for them that they are unable to trust...so they are forced to deal with the fear and the anxiety that results. He doesn't want that for them.

**[Illustration]** - I believe Jesus would likely have asked these two questions in the tone a loving father might ask them of a young child who remains paralyzed on the side of the pool, afraid to jump in despite their father's repeated promises and faithful track record catching other siblings when they jump off the side into the water. "Why are you afraid?" "Are you afraid I won't catch you?"

When we find ourselves in the storms of life it is important to remember these three important things about Jesus.

1) Remember Jesus is in your boat. If he's not, invite him in.

2) Remember he is Lord of heaven and earth and all powerful over it. The One who is supreme over all the universe is in your boat.

3) Remember he is completely trustworthy.

He longs for us to trust his power and his ability to bring us through the storms of our lives.

I wonder if any of the disciples stopped long enough in their panic to wonder, "If Jesus isn't worried, maybe I don't need to be?" I mean, I can picture Jesus waking up mid-storm to find all his disciples doing their best to sit and rest because he was. I can just hear them, "since you were chilln' through this, we figured we'd chill too." What a ride that would have been.

**[Transition]** - Now, let's talk about another truth that's part of this conversation. ***Sometimes Jesus calms the storm...but, sometimes he lets the storm rage, and he calms his child.***

***Let' me tell you what I mean:***



1. Paul in the midst of his hardships in ministry said, *"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."* *"Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."*  
-2 Corinthians 4:8-9; 16-18

In other words, being a Christian doesn't insulate you from really, really hard things happening to you. But, in the midst of it, God promises to enable you to endure it and even grow through it. With God there is no useless pain. He uses the difficult things to strengthen us and make us better people.

2. In Philippians 4, Paul gives the secret to how he is able persevere through the storms of life when he says that through prayer *"the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Philippians 4:6-7

This means the peace and calm of God will watch over and protect your heart and mind. You'll be calm in the midst of the storm. It won't make sense. People will wonder how you're doing it. It's a peace that passes understanding.

3. God's presence and help enabled David to write this: *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging."* -Psalm 46:1-3

In other words, God never leaves you in the middle of storms. Instead, he provides a safe place, and he gives you the strength you need. He gets you through the fiercest storms.

**[Transition]** - We've already seen that to navigate the storms of life it is critical to get Jesus in your boat. Then we have to call on him. Then we have to trust him.

That last part is perhaps the most difficult piece: trusting. Getting Jesus in the boat is one thing...believing that he is Lord over heaven and earth is another important thing. But trusting him when the waves are breaking into the boat of your life is a whole other challenge.

**[Transition]** - Are you facing any kind of storm in your life right now? Are you struggling to trust? How can we increase our ability to trust? What practical things can we do to help us navigate the storms of life with greater abilities to trust?

**Practical tips for how to increase our ability to trust as we navigate the storms of life:**

1. Give time and effort to develop a close personal walk with Jesus. This is important because relationship always precedes trust. The closer your relationship, the stronger your trust will be. If Jesus is not yet in the boat of your life...invite him in and he'll come on board and help you navigate.
2. Give time and effort to get to know God's Word. Hebrews 4:12 teaches that God's Word is living and active and powerful. Keep in mind, in our story today, Jesus calmed the entire storm with two words!
3. Give time to prayer. Call out to him throughout your storm. Ask him to sustain you through the storm. Your prayers don't have to be long and verbose and complex. Simple works.
4. Remind yourself of God's help in the past. The importance of memorials in the Bible. Keep a record of how God helped you in the past and review it ("Pile of Stones" notebook). Review the Bible's record of God's power and faithfulness.

5. Seek out support from other God followers. God will use them to help you with the above. They can join with you in prayer...they can help you remember God's promises in his Word...they can help you recall God's faithfulness in our lives today.

**Prayer for our people...those in storms...those standing with others in storms.**