

## **“Who Then Is This?”**

Mark 4:35-41

[Update on Kinney; 80 yr old woman—“keep giving us the Word!”]

[Read passage]

### **Intro: Faith and Fear**

There is a connection in this passage between the *presence* fear and the *absence* of faith. When faith in Jesus and who he is FOR us is absent (or minimal) in our hearts, we will often fear what we’re facing. *Faith in who Jesus is for us is the key to fighting fear.*

Now, we have to be careful: Don’t make the mistake of thinking fear only means being worried/anxious/scared. That’s certainly the way the disciples’ fear is manifested in this passage. They’re in the middle of a raging storm and they’re freaking out.

But what this passage does, is it presses into the heart of fear. So often we tend to address the manifestations of fear and we fail to get to the root. And the root is unbelief.

The disciples were in a dire situation. If they didn’t do something, they would all die. Of all situations, you’d think they be given a pass on their fear—like it’s ok to be fearful when you’re in the middle of a hurricane and you’re on the brink of death.

But here's the thing: the problem, in and of itself, was not that they were fearful. The problem was that their fear revealed they did not know who was in the boat with them. They did not know who Jesus really is...because if they did, they would not have feared.

So this passage is not mainly about fear. Fear is just the symptom of the real problem. This passage is about knowing Jesus—more specifically, knowing who Jesus is FOR YOU. When you TRUST who Jesus is FOR YOU, you will have a settledness for your soul no matter what you're going through.

So we gotta know who Jesus is, don't we? We all probably know the right answer. But here's the reality: every time we are sinfully fearful....every time we...

- Obsess about the unknown of the future
- Doubt the character/promises of God
- Become unproductive and we can't move forward in life because we're debilitated by fear
- All our focus is on our circumstances rather than on the Lord
- Manipulate or control others because of fear
- Are willing to sin out of fear
- We are sinfully fearful...

...we reveal (at least in that moment) that we don't know Jesus...perhaps not as we ought. We might SAY he is God for us, but our hearts are not EMBRACING him as God for us—because that's what true faith is.

And that's where this passage is moving; it paints a picture of who Jesus is FOR US so that we might, in faith, embrace him as that. And so, Mark begins with the disciples' *misunderstanding of Jesus* that leads to fear, and then he demonstrates a *right understanding of Jesus* that leads to faith.

### **A misunderstanding of who Jesus is [v35]**

Now, you gotta understand what happened "on that day" — because it will explain why he's taking a nap in the boat in the middle of a storm. At the very least, he'd been doing a lot of teaching that day because the day could've started back in 4:1 when he began teaching a bunch of parables, but I think the day began all the way back in 2:23.

There's a lot that happened from that point until now. So if that's "the day," then Jesus' day began with...

- The Pharisees nitpicking Jesus, watching his every move, so they could accuse him, and they did accuse him and disciples of breaking the law because they were plucking grain on the Sabbath. And Jesus had to correct their misunderstanding.
- Then, later that day, he sought to do good to a man by healing his withered hand, but it was on the Sabbath in the synagogue and there were more religious leaders there to accuse him of breaking the law. So he had to correct them of their misunderstanding of him.
- Then he tried to withdraw with just his disciples but he was followed by a massive crowd so big that he had to get into a boat to teach them.

- Then he healing more people and casted out more demons.
- He eventually went home (which you think would be a safe haven) but his own family accused of being out of his mind.
- Then, shortly thereafter, the scribes said he was possessed by a demon. (I've had things said of me that weren't true, and that's tough; but no one has ever said I was possessed by a demon.) Talk about a misunderstanding!
- Finally, to wrap up this day, Jesu began doing a series of teachings on parables about the kingdom to another massive crowd.

And it says in [v35, "on THAT day, when evening had come"]

There's was a whole lot of misunderstanding of who Jesus is in just this one day. So, by the time evening comes, Jesus tells his disciples to leave where they are to go to the other side of the sea of Galilee. It's possible he just wanted to catch a little break. But more likely, his desire was to do more ministry and preach the gospel to those who've yet to hear. Listen to what he said in 1:38? "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for this is why I came out."

He was on mission to preach the gospel, no matter how full or difficult his day was. And so he just goes. [v36, "just as he was"]

Remember, he had to get into a boat to teach the crowd because it was so large. So after he's finished teaching, he tells his disciples, "Let's go." So they hop in the boat and take him,

just like he was—already sitting in the boat. And notice it says, “other boats were with him.” I think that means that more people followed.

People continue to be intrigued by him. “He’s an interesting teacher, he’s a miracle worker, let’s see some more of what he’s able to do.” And so a bunch of people get into boats to follow him, but they don’t have any idea what’s about to happen. [v37]

This is describing the intensity of the storm. “Great windstorm” can be translated “furious squall” or even “hurricane.” It was intense. Then it mentions waves crashing into the boat, and filling the boat with water. Clearly, Mark is showing us: Their lives are at stake.

*I remember a guy telling a story about a time when he was a little boy on a boat in the sea and all of sudden it started to rain. And it really scared him because he’s heard of stories and seen movies of boats caught in a storm. But the captain said something very interesting. He said, “It’s not the rain you have to worry about; it’s the wind.”*

Why? Because wind produces waves and waves flip boats and make boats sink. And that’s exactly what the disciples feared. Now, remember: these guys were experienced fishermen. When Jesus called his first disciples to be his special followers, remember the occupation of the first four (Peter, Andrew, James, John)? They were fishermen. These guys earned their

living by spending most of their time on the sea. They were not strangers to bad weather. They were experts. And yet even THEY were freaking out!

The point is simple: The storm was really, really bad. And if there's ever a time to flip out, it would be this. But what is Jesus doing? [v38a]

He had a long day! He's tired! But we all know, and the disciples know, that normal people don't sleep through storms like this. It doesn't matter how tired you are or how heavy of a sleeper you are, your body can't rest when you're on a small boat in the middle of the sea that's being tossed around like a ragdoll and is filling with water.

Did you know that the only time we have record of Jesus sleeping is during a storm? You can't find a place in any of the four gospels that mentions Jesus sleeping, except during a storm. That's certainly not to say he ONLY slept during storms. But it is curious that the gospel writers (including Mark) felt the need to record him sleeping ONLY during a storm. Why do you think that is?

There's a connection between this passage and the passage before where Jesus teaches a parable about the farmer who sows seed—representing the preaching of the Word. Do you know what that farmer did after he sowed the seed? He went to sleep. Jesus had been sowing the seed of the word all day

long, and so now he demonstrated his steady, resolved confidence in the Word by going to sleep.

Now, contrast that with the disciples (these experienced fishermen)—*sleep* is the last thing on their minds. *Survival* is at the forefront of their thinking. And so what do they do? [v38b]

“Do you not care?” That’s their question to Jesus...a question many Christians ask in their hearts in the middle of a storm. “Do you not care?” What does that question imply about a person’s perception of Jesus, at least in that moment? What are they revealing about what they believe about Jesus in that question? “He doesn’t care!”

That’s where we’ll go if our view of Jesus is off base. If we let fear rule our hearts rather than faith, we’ll start to believe things about Jesus that are so off base—like: “He doesn’t care about me! He doesn’t care what I’m going through! He’s probably sleeping on a cushion right now as I suffer.”

So the question: Is that true? Does Jesus care? Church, does Jesus care?? We know he does! How do we know? How do you know Jesus cares when it LOOKS LIKE he doesn’t? When it FEELS LIKE he’s sleeping as you suffer?

When the disciples ask the question, “Do you not care?”...what is it that they think he doesn’t care about? They ask, “Do you not care that we are PERISHING?” Now, that word for “perish” would’ve caught the attention of Mark’s original readers. It’s

the same word used in other places in Mark's gospel to describe what happens to the person who ultimately rejects Jesus for salvation. What happens to that person? They "perish."

For example, Mark 8:35—"Whoever would save his life will LOSE it [same word! "Let his life perish"], but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." In other words, Jesus is saying, "If you cling tightly to this life apart from me, you will perish...you'll be lost forever...you'll receive your just punishment from God; but if you let your life apart from me go (let it perish), and cling to me, then you'll live...you'll have everlasting life...you won't perish."

So that word is used in contexts to describe what happens to the person who fails to trust in Christ for salvation. They perish. So when the disciples ask Jesus, "Do you not care that we are PERISHING?", the original readers would've connected the dots that this is a mini-picture of the ultimate perishing that all sinners deserve.

And we KNOW Jesus cares about THAT. That's why he came! He came to deal with our greatest problem; namely, we deserve to perish eternally because of our sin against a holy God. He cares about that! How do we know?

Interestingly, that same word for "perish" is used in other contexts in Mark to describe what happened to Jesus when he died on the cross. In 3:6, just after Jesus healed that guy with



the withered hand, Mark says, “The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to DESTROY him.” That’s the same word for PERISH. “How to PERISH him.” And what did these religious leaders end up doing? What was their way of DESTROYING Jesus? They nailed him to a cross! See what this means? In a very real sense, on the cross, Jesus PERISHED for us.

“Don’t you care that WE are perishing???” , the disciples asked. And what’s the answer to that question? Does Jesus care? We know that he does because he perished/was destroyed/died in our place...so that we wouldn’t have to perish forever in hell. And if he cares about our ultimate perishing like that, don’t you think he cares about what you’re going through right now?

Here’s how Paul puts it in Romans 8:32 (which, by the way, is in the middle of a teaching on suffering in this life)...he says, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” See his argument? He’s saying, “Which do you think is more difficult for God? To give you all things [referring to all the blessings of the glory that will come in eternal life]...THAT or giving up his only Son for you? The answer is: the latter. Therefore [the point is], if God did the most difficult thing that could possibly be done, don’t you think you can trust him with the difficult thing you’re going through right now?”

That’s what we need to cling to when the storm hits. It’s easy to say you believe Jesus cares when life is smooth sailing, but

when we're in the middle of a storm...that's when our hearts are laid bare and what we truly believe about Jesus comes out. And too often, fear clouds our view of Jesus and we actually believe crazy things like, "He's indifferent to what I'm going through. Jesus, don't you care??" How do you know that when it LOOKS LIKE he doesn't? Because he endured the most intense storm imaginable—drinking the cup of the wrath of God FOR YOU. He cares about you!

Listen, your view of Jesus WILL DETERMINE your response to the storm. So, we gotta have a RIGHT view of him, don't we?

### **A right understanding of who Jesus is**

That's where the passage moves next. We need to have a right understanding of who Jesus is. What he is about to do reveals who he really is. [v39]

Notice the calm and controlled power. Isn't this the kind of person you can trust? It's really hard to trust a person who's in a frenzy. Imagine if Jesus woke up and he's just as frantic as the disciples. That's not gonna make them feel better!

*I remember calling a call-center for help with computer—I tell them, "My computer just has a blue screen with white writing on it that I can't read."*

- **WHAT IF** they say, "Oh man! That's awful! You might as well just throw it in the trash! It's doomed; you've lost everything."

- *Rather they say, “Ok sir, no problem. I can help you with that. Just follow my instructions and we’ll get through this.” Then I feel calm.*
- *But what was a bit frustrating was, after they walked me through everything, they eventually said, very calmly, “Ok sir, this is no problem. What you’ll need to do next is go to the store and buy a new computer.”*

*They were calm and controlled, it gave me peace, until I realized they didn’t have the ability to fix my computer!*

Not so with Jesus. Not only does he NOT freak out and he remains calm, but he actually has the power to do something. He calmed the storm with just his WORDS.

Now, what does that remind you of? In Genesis 1 God spoke creation into existence. When God speaks, stuff happens! But here, Jesus is not speaking creation into existence. He is speaking order into a disordered creation. When God originally created the earth, there were no storms like this. There was only peace. This storm is a representation of the chaos that sin brought into the world.

In fact, in the OT the sea was understood by Jews to represent chaos. Listen to the imagery of Psalm 46: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, *though its waters roar and foam*, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”

The sea was pictured as this unknown abyss of chaos and so it was often used as a way of describing chaos. But here's the thing: In the OT, the ONLY one who has power over the chaos of the sea is God himself. Psalm 107:29 says, "[God] made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed."

God did it. And that's exactly what Jesus does in our passage. One person said, The "ultimate purpose [here] is to show that Jesus does what only God can do." (Edwards, 150) Which means, if ONLY God can do it, and Jesus does it, then what does that say about Jesus? This explains why he asks the question he does in [v40].

Faith in what? Or whom?? Him! What are they supposed to trust about him? First of all, that he does care. "Why are you so afraid? Don't you trust that I care about you? Don't you know my heart by now."

But even more, they need to trust NOT ONLY his heart towards them; but they need to trust WHO he IS FOR them. And it's their lack of trust in WHO HE IS that breeds fear in their situation. Notice the connection Jesus makes between the presences of FEAR and the absence of FAITH. [v40]

See that? Let's restate that into the form of a statement. V40—"You are so afraid...you still have no faith!" Isn't that what Jesus is saying? "You're afraid...you have no faith!" But wait, doesn't it seem like there is an implied "because" between those two

statements? —“You are so afraid BECAUSE you still have no faith!” Isn’t that his point?

Now, what does that mean? He’s saying, “If you believed/trusted who I really am...then you wouldn’t be so fearful in the midst of this storm.” Really? Is that true? These guys were about to die! Cut ‘em some slack! But it is true. If they REALLY knew who was in the boat with them, would they have feared like all hope was lost?

So the question becomes: Who is Jesus, really? And that’s exactly what the disciples want to know. [v41]

That question is the key to this entire passage. When the disciples ask, “Who then is this?” They knew exactly who he had to be, they just couldn’t believe it. But there was no other possible answer. The wind and the sea OBEY God ALONE, and no one else! Yet, they obeyed Jesus. “Who then is this?”

*Knew of a guy who met regularly with Muslim college students for a Bible Study through Mark. When they came to this passage, the Bible study leader ask, “So, what’s the answer to the disciples’ question, ‘Who then is this, that even with wind and the sea obey him?’ They were quiet...and then one person timidly said, “Well, I guess he’s God.”*

That’s clearly what the disciples recognize. So they feel comfort, right...knowing that God is in their midst calming the

storm? Comfort came over their hearts, right? Wrong. What does the text say? [v41, “They were filled with great fear.”]

It’s interesting: their fear shifts from being on the *power of the STORM* to being on the one who just demonstrated power *OVER the storm*. Which means, they’ve come to the realization that God himself is in the boat with them.

No one, who is knowingly in the presence of God, approaches him casually. There is a holy fear we have when we’re in the presence of God. But nevertheless, for the disciples, they stopped freaking out. There is a stillness and calm that has come over them, but now coupled with a different kind of fear—a good fear...a fear, not of the power of the storm, but of the presence of God who is more powerful than any storm.

## **Conclusion**

Did you notice the similarity between what happens to the sea and what happens to the disciples. Jesus rebuked the sea saying, “Peace! Be still!” And it went from raging and chaotic, to calm and tranquil. Similarly, the disciples went from freaking out in a wild frenzy, to being calm and still.

What Jesus does with the sea in this passage is a vivid picture of what he does in our hearts when we truly see him for who he is. When we fail to trust who he really is (that he is God with us and he is God for us)...when we don’t see that, our hearts are unsettled, like a storm tossed sea. But when we come to the place where we truly recognize him for who he is, there is a

settled calm and peace in our souls, because we hear his firm but gentle rebuke: “Peace! Be still!”

I love the way Psalm 46 ends. Remember, the sea is raging, the world is in chaos, and God demonstrates his mighty works to show his power over the chaos. And then the voice of God himself breaks in and says, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

Isn't that exactly what Jesus is doing in this passage? And isn't that what we most need in the storm? When our hearts are unsettled and there's a lack of peace, what we need most is not to freak out and try to be in control and take matters into our own hands. What we need, FIRST and FOREMOST, is to BE STILL and KNOW that GOD IS GOD and we are not. He's got this!

So, the next time you're tempted to fear, answer that question: Who then is this? Who is he? Who is Jesus for you? Is he indifferent? Is he powerless? Or is he God? And then let that trust in who he is allow you to find peace for your soul.