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Transcribed Message

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Message: Jesus in the Storm

Mark 4:35-41

Well, to everyone, good morning. Welcome to Covenant Community Church. We are glad that you are here this morning on what I would argue is a wonderful weekend. It is a holiday weekend. A lot of us don't have to work tomorrow. And more importantly than that, college football really got going this weekend. Now, I'm an OSU fan. My team won, which means that with that one win, we've almost already matched our win record from last year. So, we all have a lot to be thankful for, and we're going to enjoy it this weekend because I don't expect next weekend to be as good. Lowell already mentioned it, but if you are a guest or a visitor, I would like to extend my welcome to you as well. We are excited that you have chosen to join us. For anybody who doesn't know me, my name is Jordan Allen, and I have the privilege of filling in for our senior pastor, Carlon, this morning. And today, as a result, we are going to be stepping out of the book of John and spending our morning in Mark 4, and we're going to be talking about the story of how Jesus calmed the storm.

Now, I do feel like I should lead off with this, that when I teach, since I'm not already going through a book verse by verse, I have the luxury of picking an isolated passage. And I've actually wanted to teach on this passage for a while now. I had this passage picked out as my next sermon even before my last one. But what I do is I tend to pick out a passage that I just want to study. And after having done that, I then come up here and present what I've learned, almost as if I'm doing a book report. The more I studied Mark 4, I became aware that there were so many directions that I think we can go with this passage. This specific story of Christ involves so much imagery and opportunity for application. And as a result, I want to make sure that I do address the imagery and, of course, have application.

But I want to make sure that we don't miss what I believe the text is actually saying. My hope is that we do what I believe was Mark's intent, and that is we learn more about Jesus through this passage, and we further understand that God has already delivered us from the

storms of our life through Christ. So with that being said, what I'm going to do is I'm going to read one time through the passage, then pray, and then we will dive in.

So, Mark 4, starting in verse 35: On that day when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side. And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was, and the other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion, and they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke, and he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with a great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

All right, let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for who you are, for your grace, for your patience, for your love, for your goodness. Lord, I ask that you be with us this morning, and I pray that you are glorified through this time. For it's in your Son's name we pray, amen.

Well, there is an argument that many of us are probably aware of that atheists will often use to challenge the Christian faith. The argument is actually traced back over 2,000 years ago and was first introduced by Greek philosophers, and it's called the Epicurean Paradox, or what is also known as the problem of evil and suffering in the world. Essentially, it's a philosophical argument questioning the existence of a perfect God by highlighting the apparent conflict between his divine attributes and the existence of suffering and evil in the world. The challenge is presented as this: if God is all powerful, if he's all knowing, and if he's all good, then why do bad things happen? Because when we travel down that train of thought, it often leads us to a question that everything or a lot of things ultimately go back to, which is, does God care? I mean, if God cares and he can stop bad things from happening, then why doesn't he? Does he even care?

In fact, in 2015, over 2,000 years later after the introduction of the Epicurean Paradox, the New York Times ran an article called "Googling for God", and in the article, the author discusses the most frequently searched questions about God. The number two question searched at that time was, why does God allow suffering? But what's interesting is the third

most searched question at that time was, why does God hate me? And I think it's interesting that there seems to be a connection between God allowing suffering and what we perceive as God's love. And as I read a Christian author's perspective on this, they summed it up well when they said, these questions reveal how dark our perspectives can get. The most devastating spiritual crisis isn't when we wonder why God isn't doing something. It's when we become utterly convinced that he no longer cares. And I bring this up this morning because if we're honest, we can sometimes find ourselves asking the question of, why does God allow my suffering? And how it can go from quickly from that to, God, do you even care? But I think it's within the depths of our suffering that we see our need for Christ and actually how much he does care. So, the big idea for this morning is moments of suffering reveal our need for Christ and his love for us.

But before we go any further, I do want to start with a little bit of context. The book of Mark was believed to have been written by John Mark, and it is widely believed that Peter and Mark were very close coworkers. In fact, we see in 1 Peter 5:13 where Peter actually refers to Mark as his son. It was believed that Mark was on the mission to Rome with Peter at the time of him writing 1 Peter. From that, most believe that Mark used Peter as his main source of information for the gospel. So this story probably came directly from an eyewitness there with Peter.

And as we read through the book of Mark, I think it's important to see that his heart was for people to learn more about Jesus and to follow him. Mark doesn't waste any time in revealing who Jesus is. As we see in chapter one, Jesus' baptism. And it's in that moment that Jesus is baptized, he comes out of the water, and everyone hears a voice of God from heaven saying, you are my beloved son. With you, I am well pleased. And from there, Jesus would start his ministry. He performed many miracles, and he would go on to call the 12 disciples to follow him.

However, along with revealing who Jesus is, what you'll notice at the center of a lot of Mark's writings is oftentimes suffering. Mark shares numerous stories of Jesus healing many people, and again, he starts this early in chapter one. Most people believe that Mark wrote at least part of his gospel, possibly in Rome at the time that Emperor Nero was in the midst of

persecuting Christians. And the messages of his book were based on Peter's teachings at that time. Now we don't know that for certain, but suffering was possibly on the forefront of a lot of people's minds as Mark was writing his gospel, and he was collecting the stories from Peter. So, it's with that context in mind that we see that Jesus is healing, he is teaching, and he is calling his disciples to follow him through chapters one, two, and three. And here is where we start chapter four.

in this moment, Jesus again is teaching near the Sea of Galilee, and the crowds are all around him. And as a result, he gets in a boat, he goes a little offshore, and he's teaching the crowds from the boat. And he had just concluded a day's work of teaching, and this is where we are going to begin our passage. So again, verse 35, on that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." Now it's important to notice whose idea it is to cross the sea at this time. This was Jesus's idea. He was the one who recommended going across the sea.

And I think this verse should give us pause in how we view the storms of our lives. Because sometimes when we talk about our storms, our trials, and we find ourselves asking, what did I do wrong? Why am I here? I didn't do anything. I think we view it that way sometimes because we see moments in Scripture where a storm is a direct result of a rebellion. For example, in Jonah 1:4, Jonah's in disobedience and he's fleeing from God, and God sends a storm as a consequence. But that's not what's happening here with the disciples. The disciples were not in disobedience. They were not doing anything wrong. They didn't need to feel ashamed or embarrassed by being in the storm. They were there due to their obedience in Christ. And I think we need to remember that truth in our lives, that sometimes people can be doing everything right and we still end up in the storms of life. It's not that huge mistakes were made in that moment.

We live in a fallen world and sometimes God allows the difficulties, tests, trials, and natural storms as a result of the fall. And sometimes He even directly leads us there so that He can do a work in us to bring us closer to Him, to reveal more of Himself to us so that we develop a perseverance in our faith. And I think that's what we're seeing here and we'll continue to see in this chapter. it's in obedience that we see the disciples respond in verse 36 where it says, And

leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was, and the other boats were with him.

Reading through Mark, what you'll notice is that he often doesn't give timelines, but he started verse 35 with, On this day, to show that this had been an all day event. From there they left just as he was finished. This implies a quick departure without delay. They didn't prepare an exit, nor did they go ashore first. They left just as Jesus had concluded His teaching. The reason for what appears to be an abrupt exit most likely was due to Jesus probably being extremely exhausted. Going back to the shore would not have offered silence, solitude, and rest as the crowd would have just surrounded Him more. And as we see from the rest of the verses, at some point, He was crossing the lake. He saw an opportunity to rest and He laid down and He was out. And I think this moment, Jesus reveals His humanity to His disciples. As we see the duality of Jesus being fully God and fully man in this moment, He was tired because He was human. He needed rest. The disciples took Him and started making their way across the sea.

It was as they were crossing that we see in verse 37 that it says, And a great windstorm arose and the waves were breaking into the boat so that the boat was already filling. Now Carlon spoke about the Sea of Galilee when he taught on John 6, but just in case, here's a little reminder. The Sea of Galilee is known for having quick and dangerous storms. It is 13 miles long, and it's 8 miles wide. It's not the biggest lake, but it is definitely not one where you'd want to be in the middle of it when one of these windstorms hit. Now the reason it has such unique storms was because the sea sits in a rather unique location. The sea sits in a valley and it is actually below sea level. It is the lowest freshwater lake on earth as it sits around 650 feet below sea level. But being in something of a valley, it's surrounded by hills and mountains. And as a result, the valley would trap in warm air throughout the day. Then the cold winds from the lakes and the mountains would come down and it would crash with the warm air on top of the water. And it would collide, and it would cause a disturbance on the water. Because the wind would have no place to escape so it would essentially just kind of get funneled around there. Then as the warm air and the cold air colliding, the warm air rises and it turns into a thunderstorm. You know, I've practiced this. I've thought about it. But as I'm standing up here,

it just occurred to me that I just explained to a room full of people who live in Oklahoma how a thunderstorm starts. I've been living out of state for too long. Sorry for wasting your time.

But that is something that would happen really rapidly. Even to this day, the Sea of Galilee can go from completely calm to a storm with six to ten foot waves in a matter of about 30 to 45 minutes. However quick this storm was, we know that this specific storm was a big one. So much so that Mark's gospel, the word he used in Greek to describe this storm is a word that is used interchangeably with hurricanes. So this was a violent storm. Now obviously we do not think that it was an actual hurricane. This was simply a windstorm that turned into a real storm. But he felt the best way to describe it was to compare it to one of those. But this wind would have been violent and it was causing the waves to be extremely big.

We also know is that it's repetitive because the verbs here also indicate that there was a continuous amount of breaking and filling of the boat. Now for me, it's hard to imagine that that's the storm being described and then we see how Jesus is responding to the storm in verse 38 where it says he was sleeping. So traditionally, this verse is one that has caused a lot of debate and challenges. There have been a lot of different perspectives on this verse and I don't think all of those perspectives that I've heard are wrong, but I do think some of them are incomplete.

So I'm actually going to spend a little bit more time addressing this verse because often, in my opinion, this is where there's an attempt to focus more on the imagery and the application. And when we only focus on that, we can sometimes find ourselves with further challenges or an incomplete picture. The idea that Jesus is sleeping in the midst of the storm was not something that has set well from an allegorical perspective. Needing it to make sense, people have wrestled with this verse. I mean, how could Jesus be asleep when the disciples needed him? That's not very reassuring. And when only focused on the imagery, that actually might not be a good look for Jesus, that he sleeps during our storms.

Over the years, a lot of people have even suggested that Jesus wasn't really asleep here. He was pretending and he was just testing the disciples and he was waiting for them to cry out to him. Now I do think that this moment was a test, and I do think Jesus wants his disciples to

cry out to him, but Mark is extremely clear here when he says that he was in the stern asleep and that they had to wake him. We can take from that that he was actually asleep.

So then in time, there was a shift to make the imagery and the allegory still work. By simply focusing on the application of the verse, it became, well, yes, Jesus was asleep, but only because he had perfect peace. And that's the application that we need to take away from this passage, that we need to have peace like Jesus in this moment. Now obviously I do think there's something to be said about that as well. Jesus was able to sleep because Jesus did have peace. He was not afraid of the storm. So again, I'd say there is some truth there. And of course we need to have peace and we need to trust God. We need to have faith. But I don't think it means that storms shouldn't impact us, bother us, or we should be able to even sleep right through the storms of our lives without a care in the world because that's what we see Jesus doing here. I don't think that's the only application we're supposed to take away from this at all.

The reason for that is because later in Mark 14, right before Jesus was arrested and taken to the cross, he was in the garden of Gethsemane and he was facing his greatest storm. And here's what Jesus said about this moment in verse 34: My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. He said to them, and he's talking to his disciples, stay here and keep watch. It doesn't sound like Jesus was at peace in this moment, at least in the way that we view peace, as he was sweating drops of blood as it says in Luke 22. And where were his disciples in this moment? Do you remember? They were asleep.

So, what happened between chapters 4 and 14? You know, did Jesus' faith really decrease? Did his disciples' faith really increase so much that they were able to sleep on this night when Jesus was restless? Is this a moment of the student becoming the master? Of course not. But it doesn't sound like Jesus had peace and rest on this night like he demonstrated peace and rest on the boat. Now to be very clear, Jesus never doubted God's will, as he said in Luke 22, not my will, but your will be done. So yes, Jesus was at peace with the will of the Father, but he wasn't looking forward physically to the cross because he knew the pain would be excruciating. His peace in the garden looked very different from his demonstration of peace on the boat. The truth is, our storms, by definition, are going to be chaotic. And we often see peace and faith as one, and they are often intertwined. But we can be in a moment with

absolutely no peace and no rest, and our faith can be stronger than ever. Our peace is going to be shaken at times, but our faith doesn't have to be, and I think Jesus proves that here. So, going back again to chapter 4, I don't think we need to be over-focused on making this work from an application standpoint either and trying to figure out what it externally looks like to be at peace. Finally, I also say all that because it also never says that he was at peace to begin with. It says that he was asleep.

Then the question then becomes is, well, what do we do with this verse? Well, I do think there is some application that we can pull away from it outside of the ones that I've already mentioned. First, Jesus being asleep is not something that should cause us problems. As I said earlier, he was tired because he was human. For someone to fulfill the law and to represent all mankind, they had to be fully man. Christ's humanity is not something that we need to try to undermine here. I think he was tired, and I think he needed to sleep.

Second, I think we need to understand that Jesus' level of care never changed throughout this passage. I think this moment shows that sometimes we can interpret Jesus's not responding as quickly as we want, as not caring, which is what I think the disciples did. Notice, they didn't ask him to do anything here. They had seen him perform miracles. Some of them were even at his baptism and heard the voice of God from heaven. And in this moment, they approach him, and they say, Teacher, do you not care that we, yourself included, are going to perish? They started by challenging what appeared to be his indifference. Do you even care, Lord?

And I think it's funny how we do this sometimes. We want help, but for whatever reason, we don't ask for it. And we get mad when we don't get the help that we never asked for, but we think we deserve. I think that's what's happening here. I'm doing my part, Lord. I'm keeping the boat floating. Where are you? You don't appear to be doing anything. Do you even care?

I think it's important to see that silence is not the same as absence with God. I wonder how much the disciples tried to do on their own before they cried out. I think it may have started from a good place of wanting to let Jesus sleep, but it feels like they were more interested in keeping the boat above water for Jesus out of their own strength than by trying to

keep the boat above water with Jesus by going to him earlier. I think from that, we can see that they should have gone to Jesus sooner.

But suffering often reveals the truth that existed all along, doesn't it? When times are going well, we can sometimes have a delusional strength in ourselves. Suffering shows that we have always been completely dependent upon God. Suffering can reveal the idol of self and our misdirected faith in our own strength. Suffering often reveals our double-mindedness. I think we see some of that here as the disciples go to Jesus.

From that, we see his response in verse 39, where it says, And he awoke, and he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Now this is a very significant moment for the disciples. And I think this verse right here is at the heart of this story. It's not that Jesus simply calmed the storm, it's that Jesus was able to calm the storm.

That might seem like a confusing and obvious point, but it's one that would have been significant to the disciples at the time. Because if you're like me, you might be wondering why the disciples didn't wake him up and be like, Hey, can you calm the storm, please? I don't know this with certainty, but I don't think they actually knew that calming the storm was even an option at this point. Again, I don't know this with certainty, but I think their view of God was too small. Jesus had performed miracles. He had healed people through chapters one, two, and three. Why was this moment more significant? Why were they amazed by this moment? More so than the healings. You'd think healing somebody would be enough to convince the disciples who Jesus was.

However, if we look back in the Old Testament at somebody like Elijah, somebody the disciples would have known about, we see him perform miracles as well. Elijah was a great prophet. Through prayer and the power of God, he multiplied food. He raised the widow's son in 1 Kings 17. Seeing signs and miracles in the scripture was something that the disciples had heard about. They may not have seen it in person, but they had heard about somebody doing it in the Old Testament. However, as great as Elijah was, Elisha, Moses, and any of the Old Testament prophets, nowhere do we see in scripture anyone other than God controlling the storms. Authority over the storms was reserved for God and God alone.

You know, I mentioned Jonah already, but here are a few more references to God controlling the storm. And this is just from the book of Psalms, and I'll put those up on the screen. But Psalm 65:7 says, "Who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of the waves, and the turmoil of the nations." Psalm 89:9. You rule over the surging sea. When its waves mount up, you still them. Psalm 93:4. Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty. Psalm 107:29. He stilled the storm to a whisper, the waves of the sea were hushed. Here in this moment, Jesus calms the storm in an instant. This was a moment in that it pointed to Jesus having authority over nature as only God can. In this moment, once again, Jesus reveals his divinity to his disciples. Every moment in scripture where weather, nature, are being altered, it's clear that God was the one who's doing it. Elijah praying for rain, Moses in the plagues, Joshua in the extended day, Noah in the flood, all credit to God, and even the ones I didn't mention. But here, unlike every other great prophet, Jesus calms the storm with his words. This was a powerful moment and a reminder for the disciples.

I think this is what we're supposed to see here. This is what I think what Mark was wanting his readers to see. Not that our storms will be stopped, but that Jesus' identity as the Messiah was once again revealed within the storms. Believe me, I would love for this to be a story about Jesus calming the storms of our life if we just go to him, but I don't think that's what this passage is about.

The reason for that is we see later in Acts 27, Paul, who had been taken prisoner, and he was going through his own challenges. He was going through his own metaphorical storms, and he was on his way sailing to Rome when a storm, a literal storm, hit his ship. And as the ship is facing the storm, an angel visits Paul and tells him that he and everyone on this ship will survive. But this is what Paul said of the encounter. He was talking to the people of this ship. Paul says, "For this very night, there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I serve and belong and whom I worship. And he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar, and behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I've been told, but we must run aground on some island." Paul, you're going to make it through the storm, but it's actually not going to get better. It's going to get worse. And God's not going to calm the storm. You're actually going to have to

crash. Sadly, sometimes God grows us in our faith when we see him calm the storms of our lives, but sometimes he also grows us in our faith when he doesn't calm them, and he just gives us enough strength to make it through them. Going back to chapter four, I believe this moment was about revealing who Jesus is, not about us having an easy life, not about our trials being shortened, not about us just having a certain kind of peace, as much as I might wish that were the case.

And from that, we see Jesus' response to the disciples in verse 40. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" It's hard for me to imagine what it would be like to be in this boat in the middle of the storm. However, these were experienced fishermen. If these men were scared, they probably had a good reason to be. This was probably a storm that anyone would have been afraid of. And because of that, I think we really need to understand Jesus' response here. He's not calling them out because they reached out to him or that they woke him. I don't think he's even addressing them because they were afraid. I think any of us would have been. God loves it when his children come to him, when we talk to him, when we cry out to him in the dark. Matthew 11:28 says, come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Psalm 55:22 says, cast your burdens on the Lord and he will sustain you. He will never permit the righteous to be moved. Going to God is never the wrong answer. No, instead, I think this moment revealed a few things in the disciples.

First, how little they still understood. They didn't ask him to calm the storm. They were shocked that he was even able to, revealing that they didn't fully get it, that he has the authority. Their view of God was too small.

But also, I think he was addressing them because of their lack of faith in his character. What often makes faith fall apart isn't questions, and sometimes it's not even our doubts. We have all had questions, and if we're honest, we have all probably had moments of doubts that have crept in. Yet our faith doesn't fall apart in those moments. Faith falls apart when we become too certain of all the wrong things. They didn't ask, why aren't you helping? Is there anything that you can do to get us out of this? Those would have been fair questions and revealed that they still had faith. God, why are you allowing this to happen to me? This is still a

prayer of faith. We see similar and passionate prayers throughout the book of Psalms. But instead it was in this moment, Jesus isn't responding in the way that we want him to.

So we can ask the question, does he even care? I don't think Jesus is correcting them because they're afraid. I think any of us would have been. I think he was correcting them because of what they did with that fear. That's what I think is at the heart of this test. What Jesus is wanting to address – how quickly they believe the wrong things. And we see how God is going to use this moment as a test or a learning opportunity to sanctify his disciples. Because it's important to know when Jesus said to them, why are you so afraid?

The word for afraid here is a Greek word, *delos*. And that word is just often used interchangeably with being timid and cowardly. Being timid and cowardly is something that often prevents us from going all in on something. Jesus is saying, why are you so afraid? Why are you not all in yet? Where is your faith? You have been with me this whole time, and yet how little your view of me is. And how you started believing the wrong things, like questioning my level of care. And how quickly that rattled your faith.

From here, I think we see the purpose of this test as we see an important shift in the disciples in verse 41, where it says: And they were filled with a great fear and said to one another, who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? We just saw that Jesus corrected them for being afraid, timid, cowardly, not all in. And now it says the disciples were full of a great fear. Now, what is interesting here is that the word for fear is different from the previous verse. Here in verse 41, the word for fear here that is used is a Greek word, *phobos*. And so obviously it's different from *delos*. When the authors used the word *phobos*, it was often meant to be understood that someone was filled with astonishment, amazement, reverential fear, and a humble submission. Jesus didn't want his disciples to be double-minded. He wanted them to know who he was and to be all in with him.

It's important to notice that the disciples may not have been able to articulate it, or even they may not have even noticed it at the time, but they felt it. They were changed by the storm. The storm served a purpose. Whether we recognize the change in the moment or maybe ever at all, God does not waste our pain. God does not waste our storms. He wants all of who we are. And it's knowing that even if the boat crashes like with Paul, I'm all in.

You know, we have the luxury of seeing how the disciples started, but more importantly, we have seen how they finished. From being afraid of perishing in this moment to being persecuted, and some eventually being put to death for their faith. We are able to see the growth of their faith. And it started with Jesus having to continuously reveal himself to them, even within the storms. We often want God to simply remove us from the storms, to get us out of the valleys. But often the valleys and the storms are the places that God allows us to go, because he is often more interested in doing work within us, within the storms, than delivering us from them. Mountaintops are wonderful, but valleys produce growth. We find new perspectives in valleys and in storms.

One of those perspectives is an eternal one. When we turn on the TV, and we see something horrific, like what we saw this week in Minnesota, we are reminded that we live in an evil and fallen world, and that this world is not our home. This world is the closest to hell that anyone will get who has already placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. And what happened this week grieves God. Our sin grieves God.

So we ask, why does God allow suffering? Why does he allow things that grieve him? Truthfully, it's because he is so gracious. He is so patient. He is so loving. Because I think this week sadly proves that the only way for suffering not to exist in this world would be for him to just take us home, to be in the presence of the King, to remove man entirely from the equation. But God is not yet done calling others to him. And I don't know about you, but I am extremely thankful for his patience and his grace as he waited through all the storms before me because he loved me enough to call me to him. And as a result, I have to wait, and at times I have to suffer because I know that God is on the move and he is not yet done calling others to him.

Does that truth make our storms any easier? No, but I can trust his character. A quote that has often contributed to CS Lewis says, pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures. He speaks to us in our consciousness, but he shouts to us in our pains. It is a megaphone to rouse a deaf world. And I think that's what's happening here. Jesus is revealing himself to his disciples and he is letting them know that he is the answer to the storm.

Before we get ready to conclude, I do want to say this. My heart for today is not to put a spiritual band-aid on whatever it is that anyone is going through. I am fully aware that maybe

today it might be easier for me to be standing up here than for you sitting down there. I'm sure some of you feel like you are going through storms right now. And for some, I'm sure it's excruciating. Maybe your storm has been your whole life. Maybe you've seen God calm somebody else's storm while he's telling you that you just need to weather yours. I do not mean to sound insensitive or like I'm questioning anyone's faith because a storm might be hard for you. Nor do I mean to imply that anyone's feelings are invalid. The reality is, is that every storm is hard when you're going through it. Each storm is unique.

If God is going to use whatever it is you're going through, then it is also going to be challenging so that we can grow from it. I have no intention of devaluing any storms in your life. And it's with that mind that I'd like to encourage everyone to think about how we approach people who are in the storms of their life. It's important that we notice what Jesus didn't do when the disciples woke him up. He doesn't tell them not to worry about the storms, to calm them down. He doesn't even try to talk them off the ledge in that moment. Scripture says that he didn't even address them until he delivered them.

Now, to be very clear, there is nothing wrong with coaching people and giving them the right answers to the storm. Scripture is full of verses that tell us to fear not or to cast our anxieties on him. Training and equipping people to navigate the storms is extremely valuable, and it's part of our jobs. But there are times when people are so much in the midst of storms that all they can see is pain that they're not ready yet to see God's purpose. So sometimes instead of shouting out to people from the shoreline that, hey, the storm's not that bad. It could be worse. Just have more faith. Sometimes it's better just to climb into the boat with them. Not to fix them, not to control them, not so that we can steer so that we can be the ones that deliver them, but just to ride the storm out together in community. Show them what faith looks like as we climb into a boat that they think is going under because we know that it's not because we know that Christ is in the boat with us.

It hurts me to say this as I'm standing up here talking. But people often don't remember the things we say anyway. They remember the way we make them feel. Our presence can sometimes be just as meaningful as our words in those moments. So once again, a practical application from this passage, I think points to our need for community and to be in God's word

on a regular basis. If you are not in a community group or a covenant group, then you are choosing to face the storms of life on your own. But you are also not putting yourself in a position to be there as a blessing to others. And when we are not in God's word on a regular basis and we are not filling our minds with truth, it becomes a lot easier to believe the lies.

I've always thought it was interesting. You never have to remind yourself to believe lies. But you have to remind yourself on a regular basis to believe truth. Again, when we have questions, concerns, doubts, hurts, and we pour over scripture, our faith typically grows. But it's when we aren't filling our minds with truth and we start believing the lies, that's when our faith is rocked. We aren't inviting Jesus into the boat with us in those moments. God's word and community are essential.

As we begin to wrap up, we can ask the question, what can we take away from this? And I think that is this. Sometimes God is more interested in revealing himself to us in the storms than immediately delivering us from them. Because of who he is and his love for us, we know that we can trust him in the hard times. I wish it only took one storm to learn what God is teaching us. But sadly, there are so many storms on the horizon. And sometimes I know they just don't seem to end. We need to remember though, it's not about perfection. It's about progress. It's about sanctification. Storms are often the place that God allows us or even calls us so that he can do a work in us. And as we saw from John 6, when Carlon spoke about that, the disciples were called into a storm shortly after this one to learn a very similar lesson. It wasn't a one and done for them. When we find ourselves asking, God, do you care? We need to remember that this story, when we read it, it's not an isolated story or just an isolated storm. We have to understand that this was written at a time of suffering. And this is just chapter four of Mark's book.

Towards the beginning of his book, we're presented with a question to Jesus of, do you even care? And the book of Mark concludes with his death and his resurrection in chapters 15 and 16. So did Jesus care for the disciples? Does God care for you and I? Enough to send his son to die an excruciating death in our place. We're often directed to a place of suffering where we find ourselves asking, Lord, do you care? So that he can reveal to us exactly how much he's already done and how much he cares. To put it in a different way, going back to the Epicurean

Paradox, there's a quote that says, the atheist says that the problem of suffering is the greatest argument against the existence of God. But yet it's only in our suffering that we see that God is the only solution to the problems of suffering. It's not that help is coming. It's that help arrived.

And that solution came in the form of Jesus who came and lived a perfect and sinless life, who willingly went to the cross and died for our sins. He did not stay dead. He rose again three days later, defeating the grave, defeating the storm of sin and separation and providing us a way to spend eternity with him. And if we confess our need for him as our savior, we believe that Jesus is the son of God and that his death and resurrection was enough, and we invite him to be Lord and savior of our life. Then we can have a relationship with him because that's what the scripture is about. That's what Mark wants us to see here. And I think that's what we're called to take away from this passage this morning.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that you provided a way to spend an eternity with you. Thank you that you didn't leave us in our suffering, but that you sent your son who came and suffered in our place. Thank you, God, that you are sovereign, in control, and you work all things for your glory. God, I do not pretend to understand why we suffer in the way that we do or why some suffer more. I pray that you draw near to those who are walking through the storms of life right now. I pray that they wouldn't face those moments alone. I pray for boldness to ask for help and I pray for wisdom to respond. I pray that our church would provide community that is necessary to get through some of the most difficult moments. Thank you, Lord, that this world is not our home, that you care so much that you are preparing a better place for us. May we bring glory and honor to you today. For it's in your name we pray, amen.