

Mark 4:35 ff
Jesus Calms The Sea

EX: Playing Poker as a kid trying to be cool – I'll see that and raise it

That came to mind as I read this passage because it's almost as if Jesus said, "I'll see that fear and raise it."

The disciples and Jesus were in a storm on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples were afraid, but Jesus was asleep until they woke him up. What happened next actually raised their fear level in an astonishing way.

35 On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." 36 Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. 37 And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. 38 Jesus Himself 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?" 39 And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. 40 And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" 41 They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Cf: Matt 8; Luke 8

The Sea of Galilee is situated in an area that is ideal for sudden storms to come up. It sits in a basin of hills and mountains that presents opportunities for wind tunnels to come both the east and west. The worst storms typically happened during the day so much of the fishing was done at night. This narrative takes place in the evening so we can understand their fear. Even veteran fishermen weren't expecting this type of storm in the night.

*** In 1986, near the Sea of Galilee, archeologist found the intact remains of a boat that carbon 14 dated back to the first century i.e. around the time of this narrative.

The boat was twenty-seven feet long and 7 feet wide. The sides were four feet high. It would likely hold a crew of 15 men to work the sails and oars. A built-in bench would be in the back of the boat (the stern)

Jesus had finished teaching parables about the kingdom, and as we saw in 4:1, he was teaching from a boat because the crowds were pressing in.

v. 35 Jesus initiates the voyage then goes to sleep on the cushion in the back.

Scripture does not ignore the humanity of Jesus – he sleeps and eats like the rest of us. He must have been tired, so tired that he slept through a storm, in a boat.

v. 38 they decided to wake him up. Why? He was not a fisherman. Did they think he could do something? They simply seemed perturbed that Jesus didn't care about their situation i.e. "we are perishing." Their 'question' was really more of an accusation..."Don't you care that we are perishing?"

They woke him to rebuke him, but He didn't dwell on that. He calmed the storm.

EX: How do you like it when you are asleep, and someone comes to wake you up so they can rebuke you?

** Have you ever gone to God like that? You weren't really sure he could do anything, but you at least wanted to let Him know that you were disappointed that He didn't seem to care.

** During times of apparent danger or of real fear, one of our biggest mistakes is to think that God doesn't care.

In our minds, if He cared he would _____ stop the threat.

Scripture does not ignore the humanity of the disciples. They are a lot like us, or we are a lot like them.

V 39 Jesus rose and rebuked the wind first, not the disciples. Then he spoke to the sea, "Peace, be still." Jesus calmed/rebuked the sea as if it were an unruly heckler. Note: the same word in 3:12 for rebuking an unclean spirit.

"silence, be muzzled" and there was "mega calm/tranquility"

v. 40 Jesus then turned to the disciples and gave a gentle rebuke with two questions:

Why are you so fearful/ timid? (fearful (deilos / dread) = faithless/ timid/ fearful)

Where is your faith?

The purpose of the display of divine power was to strengthen the faith of his followers. They had seen his power already, but now they needed more reassurance.

At this point you might expect the disciples to be calm as they pull themselves together and realize that all is calm. There should have been a collective sigh of relief, but there was MORE fear.

THIS IS A MEGA STORY –

The Greek word mega is used three times... **Mega storm, mega calm, mega fear.**

We don't see it in the English translation because we get "fierce gale of wind", perfectly calm, very much afraid." But in Greek it is mega, mega, mega. It sounds like a fraternity Tri - Mega

It was a mega storm. The waves were crashing over the boat, and it was filling up. **THEY HAD A REASON TO BE AFRAID.** EX: boat trip off Cancun... I was praying.

They wake Jesus up from his sleep and he brings **MEGA CALM** by simply speaking to the wind and the waves.

Note the THIRD MEGA – the response of the disciples. "They feared a mega fear"

The text never says that they were afraid.

Jesus identifies their fear with a question, "Why are you afraid?" Or "timid/ faithfulness".

Jesus knew their hearts just as He knows ours.

He follows with the question, "How is it you have no faith?"

A common exchange in the Bible is between men and God or angels of God. People are afraid and God comes to them and says, "Fear not" or "Don't be afraid."

Those are situations where people had not encountered God before. But here Jesus doesn't say, "Fear not". He says, "How is it that you have not faith?" i.e. He might as well have said, "You guys have been with me now for a while and have seen numerous miracles, yet you still have no faith."

REMEMBER, scripture doesn't give a rosy picture of the disciples. They are like us.

The two questions from Jesus, "Why are you afraid? And "How is it you have no faith?" show that there is a connection between fear and faith.

This is not easy to unpack in terms of specific proportions, but there is a connection. A certain level of fear is normal and can or must be overcome in life.

EX: a healthy fear of driving for the first time; the fear of letting your kids drive the first time; the first day of school, a job interview, a public presentation, etc. all sorts of things.

BUT a constant fear or a posture of fear can be paralyzing in our lives.

God's word gives us an assurance of His presence so that we won't be held captive to fear, not even the fear of death.

The mega fear of the disciples was odd because it came AFTER the storm was over. Their question, "Who is

this?" gives a clue about their fear, i.e. phobia
v. 41 fear -phobia Mega fear " they feared a mega fear"

In this passage we see that the one who calms the storm is more frightening than the storm.
During the storm they were afraid. After Jesus calmed the storm, they were MEGA AFRAID.

They were seeing something they'd never encountered before, EXCEPT, they had seen Jesus do miracles. They were experiencing a common fear – XENOPHOBIA – a fear of strangers, aliens, people who are different from us. At the extreme end of this fear people react with violence ...EX: Jim Elliot and the missionaries killed by the fearful natives. 2018 Missionary killed on N.Sentinal Island – a stranger threat
This sense of fear is exploited by Hollywood to make movies and TV shows
EX: TV series "STRANGER THINGS" "FEAR FACTOR"; "THE TWILIGHT ZONE", etc.

Jesus calmed the storm, then they asked the crucial question

"what / who is this?"

EX: Wizard of Oz when the Lion see the wicked witch the first time...."Who's her, who's her?"

They were afraid of the one who was so different. We see this play out as well in Luke 5...

Fear of the Holy Luke 5

Jesus brings in a great catch of fish for Peter and Peter says, "Depart from me".

That's a strange response. He should have signed Jesus to a fishing contract, but instead he was astonished and fell at the feet of Jesus saying, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man."

Jesus responded to him by saying, "Fear not." Jesus knew that Peter was afraid. BUT WHY?

Peter was in the presence of something or someone he didn't understand. He had spiritual Xenophobia just like the event of Mark 4. Peter was experiencing a 'stranger thing' – the holy power of the God man who could speak and the wind and waves would obey him.

EX: in scripture people would encounter the presence of God or an angel and respond in fear.

The disciples experienced the power of the holy one and it was a fearful thing; it was an unusual thing. I'm afraid that 2000 years of Christian history has taken away much of the awe and holy fear of God. The American experience has sought to 'democratize' God and put us on His level.

I appreciate the song, I Can Only Imagine because he taps into the wonder and awe of being in the presence of Christ.

EX: **Bart Millard – Mercy Me**

Surrounded by Your glory What will my heart feel?

Will I dance for You, Jesus Or in awe of You, be still?

Will I stand in Your presence Or to my knees, will I fall?

Will I sing hallelujah? Will I be able to speak at all?

I can only imagine I can only imagine

Surrounded by His glory in that boat on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples were struck with a holy fear and they resorted to saying, "Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

The wind and the waves had no ears to hear yet they obeyed.

We do have ears, but do we hear?

*** We might read this narrative and think, "Yea for them. Jesus calmed their storm. That doesn't help me any. I've cried out to God in the same way and nothing happened."

Mark didn't write this just to tell an interesting story. It is written to encourage the Christians of his day to hold fast in the faith. These early believers were facing the opposition of the Jews and of ROME. This

narrative shows that Jesus is greater than any power of man or of nature.

THE OT characters display the fear and distress that we see in the disciples. The Psalms are filled with the cries of the soul. EX: Ps 42:6 “O my God, my soul is in despair within me; therefore, I remember you. V 7 “All your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me.”

The Psalmist compares the despair of his soul to waves rolling over him, and in his despair, he calls out to God.

11 Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.

The Psalm and the Mark 4 narrative show the same thing – it is easy to forget our theology when the storms hit. We are prone to spiritual amnesia. We so easily forget the truths we’ve read, sung, and taught to others. Sometimes we need to get a grip on our own souls like the Psalmist. Other times we need someone else to help us get refocused.

*** The middle of the storm is not the best place to work out your theology. It is best to work it out when times are calm so that it can be recalled when the storms come.

EX: Steve Jones and Laurie Dix faced their end of life days with grace because they had worked out their theology ahead of time.

We don’t know when our storms will come, and they will, so let’s be diligent to give heed to the Word of God while we can.

How do we respond when Jesus DOESN’T CALM OUR STORM??

There are a couple of perspectives that can help us so that we don’t waste our storms:

Storms are an occasion to refine our faith – “Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” James 1:2-4

Storms clarify our joy – James 1 Good circumstances will bring us happiness and a certain measure of JOY, but storms can be opportunities to find a deeper joy if we find the maturity and wholeness that comes with endurance.

Storms sharpen our hope – Storms threaten our joy and our HOPE. They can be opportunities to remind us that our ultimate Hope is not in this life, but in the Living Hope that is ours in Christ.

Scripture helps us there as well as it reminds us that Jesus suffered for us and that we are called to suffer for and with Christ. That suffering will purify our faith so that we might gain perseverance. THAT IS THE MOVEMENT OF FAITH.

All of the disciples who were spared that night in the boat died at some point. Many of them had very difficult and painful deaths.

I am reminded of a portion of the prayer “Christian Calling” in the VOV. It is a prayer that I hesitate to pray...

Grant that I may be salted with suffering, with every exactment tempered to my soul,
every rod excellently fitted to my back, to chastise, humble, break me.
Let me not overlook the hand that holds the rod,
as thou didst not let me forget the rod that fell
on Christ, and drew me to him.

Jesus faced the storm of the cross for us. For the joy set before him he endured the cross despising its shame. Smitten by God, he was raised on the third day and given the name above all names.

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