

## **The Lord of Creation**

**Mark 4:35-41**

**Covenant Waterfall, 28 July 2020**

Read

Pray

### **Introduction**

Thinking back to January, who could have possibly dreamed how this year would unfold? Corona virus, lockdown, economic damage, loss of income, government overreach in our lives, restrictions in how and where we can socialise, uncertainty about the future, many livelihoods severely compromised or even destroyed, that churches would have even be forced to close and even have these current restrictions? All of us have been affected in some way or another. And we'll most probably be feeling these effects for some time to come.

The reality is that we are in the midst of a storm, to one degree or another. There are a lot of things out of our control, and we're very much at the mercy of the elements right now.

But as those of who believe in Jesus Christ, we know that we are not alone in the storm. This week's passage from Mark's Gospel, is one with which many of us are familiar. Jesus and his disciples find themselves in the middle of a massive storm on the Sea of Galilee. And Jesus calms the storm with a word. What we are going to see here is that because Jesus is the sovereign Lord of creation, we don't need to be afraid in the storms. Three truths here:

- Jesus leads us into storms, vv.35-36
- Jesus sleeps through the storm, vv.37-38
- Jesus calms the storm, vv.39-41

### **A. Jesus leads us into storms, vv.35-36**

**<sup>35</sup> On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” <sup>36</sup> And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him.**

Remember from the past two weeks, what has Jesus been doing up to this point? He’s been teaching parables to the crowds on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, by Capernaum. Now he’s finished teaching and he wants to cross over the lake, to Gentile territory on the other side, along with his disciples. It’s important to note here that it is Jesus himself who initiates this boat trip. Being God himself, he is omniscient – he is all-knowing. Therefore, he knew full-well what he was leading his disciples into – a great, life-threatening storm.

Does God really lead us into trouble? Does he plan the suffering in our lives? It’s clear from this episode, that there are times when God does indeed lead us into storms and trials. This really goes against the grain of much teaching that’s very common in the church today – that it’s always God’s will to bless us, give us a comfortable life filled with health, happiness and wealth. That if we do ever experience any hardships, pain, sickness – that it is not God’s will – that’s the enemy who comes to rob, steal and destroy.

Unfortunately, this view of God leaves us on very shaky ground. For when troubles to hit, and they surely will, we will think that God has abandoned us, or that we are no longer in his will, or we are living some kind of a sub-standard Christian life.

The reality is that the Christian life is never all plain sailing. God actually promises that we will experience afflictions, trials and suffering. Some of these are as a result of our own sin, stupidity and poor choices, others are due to the reality that we live in a sin-cursed world. And there are times where God leads us into hard times. Whatever its source, the truth is that God is sovereign over all – he ordains whatever comes to pass (WCF 3) – and he permits it in our lives.

Why? Is he some kind of a sadist? No! Look at James 1:2-4 for the reason:

**<sup>2</sup> Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. <sup>4</sup> And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**

The Lord leads us into hard time and uses them for our sanctification. It's in times of trial that we realise our need for God in a big way, we need to be reliant on him and his grace. We will see that this is indeed the case with Jesus' disciples in the boat. Suffering in this life, weans us off the world and it's pleasures and helps place our trust increasingly in Christ and to ultimately strengthen our faith and trust in him.

#### **B. Jesus sleeps through the storm, vv.37-38**

**And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. <sup>38</sup> 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?"**

The storm hits the boat, in which Jesus is with his disciples. The Sea of Galilee is known for its freak storms still today. This particular storm was so bad that waves were crashing into the boat and the boat was filling up with water. It's clearly a dangerous situation that is potentially life-threatening.

What was Jesus doing while all this was going on? We see in verse 38 that he is sleeping. In the middle of pouring rain, lightening, thunder, waves crashing into the boat – chaos – Jesus is fast asleep. How is this possible?

On one level it shows that he was incredibly exhausted. Remember, he's just been teaching the crowds – can be tiring work. This reveals something of his humanity – that like us, after lots of work, he too gets tired. He is truly man in every sense, except for sin.

Yet on another level, what we can also see here is that Jesus is able to sleep in the midst of storms because he knows God's peace. He trusts in the sovereign God of heaven and earth to deliver him through the storm. Does this sound familiar at all? In the previous months, we've looked at Psalms 3 and 4. In both these psalms we see that though King David is surrounded by many enemies who seek to kill him, he is able to sleep in peace. How come? David knows that God is sovereign and will defeat his enemies. He's therefore at peace, and he's able to sleep like a baby even with this threat around him.

Another incident in Scripture which this reminds us of is another man who was in a boat in the midst of a great storm – Jonah, the prophet. While the storm was raging, he too was fast asleep.

These connections to these two Old Testament figures are no co-incidence. The whole OT anticipates the coming of a promised Messiah from God, who would deal with sin and restore God's people to himself. Jesus is revealed here as the greater David, the true king of Israel, and the greater Jonah, the true prophet of God. That's why Matthew writes in his gospel, chapter 12:41 that, **"behold, something greater than Jonah is here."** Jesus is that promised OT Messiah who has indeed come to save his people from their sins!

In verse 38 the attention now turns to Jesus' disciples. They wake him up and in their fear they say, does he not care for them? He is busy sleeping while all this chaos is unfolding. Has he left them to drown at the mercy of the elements? Does he not love them?

This is often our cry too in the storms we face – God, do you not care? Do you not care about the tragedy unfolding in my life? Death of a loved one? Terminal illness, marriage problems, financial hardships? Are you asleep God? Where are you? We can easily doubt God's love and faithfulness in the midst of the storms in our lives.

### **C. Jesus calms the storm, vv.39-41**

**And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. <sup>40</sup> He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" <sup>41</sup> And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"**

Jesus wakes up and rebukes the storm with a word – and the storm ceased! Imagine – one minute – raging storm, then in an instant – absolute calm. And all brought about by a word. Jesus then responds to his disciples, who have accused him of not caring for them. He says to them in verse 40, 'why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?'

After all, the disciples have seen Jesus so many amazing wonders so far: the exorcisms (Mk 1:21-28), many healings (1:29-32), specifically – healing of the leper (1:40-45), the paralytic (2:1-12), the man with the withered hand (3:1-6) and forgiving people of sins. They've also

heard him claim many things too: that he's the Lord of the Sabbath, that he has given to them the secrets of the kingdom of God. Even after all these things, it seems that they have not really grasped who he is. This is why Jesus gives his disciples a rebuke here – "Have you no faith?" It's like he's saying, "After all you've seen and heard, why do you still doubt who I really am?"

Their doubt in who he is, is the root cause of why they are fearful in the storm, of why they think he doesn't care for them. If they really knew who he was, there would be no need for them to be afraid.

But now Jesus' identity is clear before their eyes. They are now overcome with a different kind of fear and in verse 41, they exclaim, **"Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"**

It's a rhetorical question, but they surely now know the answer. Psalm 107:23-31 would have immediately come to mind:

**"Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; they saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!"**

Who then made the storm still and the wind and the waves calm? Only the sovereign Lord himself! He who is omnipotent – all powerful over his creation. The One who spoke his authoritative word and all creation came into being. Only he has the power to speak a word and his creation must submit to his will.

Jesus is therefore this sovereign Lord of creation. He is himself YHWH, the Creator, the eternal Lord and God of all. He commands demons to flee and be quiet, and they do. He

commands winds and waves and storms to cease, and they do. The heavens and the earth are really under his sovereign Lordship – and therefore must obey his word.

Contrary to some novel teachings in the church, Jesus never laid aside his divine attributes when he came to earth as man. No, the incarnate Christ was and is both fully man and fully God. Here he reveals in no uncertain terms, his divine omnipotence – that uniquely as God, he has power over his creation to do as he pleases.

This is why his disciples are overcome with a “great fear”. They now realise that they are in the presence of the Lord of Hosts himself, the Holy One of Israel – YHWH, the Lord of creation.

## **Conclusion**

Like Jesus’ disciples, we too can panic in the midst of the storms of life, and wonder where God is in all of this, where is Jesus. Our problem is that we too easily lose sight of who Jesus is. We see here and are reminded here, that he is indeed the sovereign Lord over all of creation. In his hands, we are not alone. We have not been abandoned to the mercy of the waves and winds. No, as Lord of creation, as Lord over the storms, Jesus has promised to be with us right in the midst of the storms. He gives us this promise in Isaiah 43:1-3:

**“But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.”**

Storms we will no doubt go through, yet God’s promise to us that he will be with us through them and they will not overwhelm us. Why? He is the Lord who has redeemed us, called us by name and is our Saviour!

What has Christ redeemed and saved us from? Though we deserved death and God’s wrath - though we deserved to be abandoned by God, because of our sins, Jesus faced all that on our behalf on the cross. Because Jesus was abandoned by God on the cross, if we trust in him, this means that God will never abandon us. In Christ our sins are forgiven, we are

restored in relationship to our Father, sealed with his Spirit. Nothing - neither the storms of life, nor anything else in all of creation - can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Receive Christ, the Lord of creation himself. Receive forgiveness of sins and perfect peace in the midst of storms that is found in his name alone.

Amen