

## Our Greatest Fear

Mark 4:35-41

I have a fear of swimming in waters where creatures lurk...that might find me a tasty morsel. It's not as bad as it used to be...since my childhood days of 2000 Leagues under the Sea and Jaws. Oh, but I still need to be inside the boat in dangerous waters. And I won't be quick to volunteer for a tropical swim with alligators and anacondas. I'm no Tarzan.

What is your greatest fear?

I surveyed a few church victims:

- Claustrophobia—tight dark places like being buried alive
- A loved one dying—helpless to do anything about it
- Fear of heights— especially jumping from a plane
- Lost at night in the woods— hearing ominous predators
- Losing control of the car and heading over a cliff

Other: public speaking, sickness, death—especially a horrible one

The ancient Israelites had a fear of the sea too. Drowning and sea monsters. Many believed the sea was where great battles raged between evil and God. People weren't sure where the soul went if the body was lost at sea.

### Bonus: Further Consideration

Jesus said, *But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him. Luke 12:5*

Jesus goes on to say that God is not careless in His judgment. He even keeps track of all sparrows and we are worth more than many sparrows.

Whatever fears we may have. Whatever storms may come. Even if we find ourselves outside the boat in deep waters: the key to deliverance lies in our response to the question in scripture today. That answer is the key that unlocks the whole gospel. It can send us on a kingdom adventure beyond our imagination.

### Pray

We begin this amazing story with a reminder that Jesus had just spent all day teaching about God's kingdom to the crowds (outsiders) and the disciples (insiders) from a boat just off the shore of L. Galilee. He taught in parables to the crowds because they were not ready to understand that Jesus is the Son of God. But He unraveled those mysteries for His disciples...who would some day produce a miracle crop for God.

In this next section...all the way to 6:6, Mark is going to shift the focus from teaching outsiders in a public setting to training the 12...on the job. We go from hearing what God's kingdom is like – to seeing Jesus in action. Mark is out to prove God's nearness is in Jesus. He is the Son of God.

You'll notice 3 themes: Death, Desperation and Fear vs. Faith. The details in this story suggest an eyewitness account...probably Simon Peter.

### **Read 4:35-36**

So straight from preaching to traveling...no stop on shore. Do you think Jesus would need a rest by now? Well, another proof that the Son of God was also fully a man is that He was so tired, He took a nap on a fishing boat. (The other boats along could be other supporting disciples or just other fishermen doing their work.) A typical Galilean fishing boat at that time was 26 ½ feet long, 7 ½ feet wide, in 4 ½ feet high. (wall to edge of piano, pulpit to front row, one foot shorter than me). It could hold 15 people. The front and back sections were often covered with a deck– space for someone to sit or lie down. There was room for two rowers on each side.

Lake Galilee is only a 13 x 6 mile surface...but it acts like a sea. It's

surrounded by steep ranges of hills 1-2000 ft high. Combine that with Mount Heron, which is 9200 ft above sea level only 30 miles to the NE. The cold air from the Mountain hits the hot tropical air of the lake (700 ft below sea level). It can quickly go from calm as glass to white with foam–waves rising into the air in columns of spray. So even experienced fishermen, beware.

### **Read 4:37**

So one of these winds hit the water and waves come crashing over the boat, filling it up. One more big wave broadside could sink it.

They would be desperately trying to steer it into the waves and bail water.

I tried to warn them.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I get tested when I'm tired and just about to rest. And Boom! Let's see how Jesus handles a midnap emergency.

### **Read 4:38**

Guys don't like to lose. Tip for ladies...if your guy is not engaging at home, find something he can win at. When we're given a first time challenge, there are various responses:

1. Research to see how to get it done for the least money and effort.
2. If its something he thinks is cool, he'll get all the gear and info to do it right.
3. Call up a buddy who has been successful or will share the misery if it fails.
4. Hope it will go away – avoid it.

Just know that a normal guy is going to get grumpy when he's losing. We get mad at ourselves, then they blame our ancestry. Then we look for someone else to blame or share our misery.

The disciples are losing big time.

"Who got us into this mess? And now He's sleeping!"

"Teacher! Don't you care we're about to drown?"

"So much for calling us to be fishers of men. We're about to be fish food."

Mark's original hearers would relate to those disciples. They knew the fury of a storm on the water in an ancient craft without lifejackets. But they also knew what it was to live in danger for their lives. Under rulers like Nero, loved ones were thrown to the lions, or hung on posts and burned as torches to light the highway. Do you really care, Lord?

The disciples quickly forgot their lessons. No mention of prayer. They did turn to Jesus...but sarcastically. In another storm at sea described in Scriptures, consider the pagan sailors who took aboard Jonah:

**Read Jonah 1:4-16**

The pagans prayed in their desperation. And when they were confronted with the knowledge that it was Jonah's God who was in control...they worshipped Him. How will the disciples respond?

**Read Mark 4:39**

Jesus used the same kind of command words that he used for casting out demons. As if the storm was driven by an entity. Is this a purposeful attack? Seizing the moment that Jesus is resting to kill the 12?

Jesus does not rise from rest with guilt like Jonah. Jesus rises with confidence in Gods anointing and will. He commands the wind and the sea. "Be still and stay still!" (muzzled).

Who can vanquish the hostile forces of the wind and sea?

**Read Psalm 107:24-31**

The storm serves as a test for the disciples but also as a proof about Jesus.

If there is only one truth you come away with today, I hope it is this:

Jesus does what only God can do.  
Jesus does what only God can do.  
Mark shows how Jesus reveals His identity bit by bit. There seems to be an increase in understanding and faith...2 steps forward. But then the disciples take a step back. Maybe this was 2 steps back. Can you relate?

Jesus, the commander of nature, turns to the disciples and sees the look on their faces. Desperation evaporating into terror and awe.

**Read Mark 4:40**

Jesus rebukes the disciples...not for lack of understanding but lack of faith in God. The soil of their hearts needs to be deeper. Could He also say that of us?

The disciples are better able to handle the possibility of their own death by drowning—than the possibility of God’s presence in Jesus. God’s nearness can be terrifying. Consider Isaiah’s encounter (6:5) or John’s vision of Christ in heaven (Rev 1:17). They fell down in fear.

But Brad, they were obeying Jesus. Let that be a lesson in the adventure of Jesus. A storm may be in the middle of God’s will, not as an act of negligence or mismanagement. When we experience the storm and the

desperation we can also experience the deliverance. But it might not be what we expected. Just like the disciples. It may not be suddenly calm or peaceful. There may be more chapters in the story...more tests and more faith and love to grow.

Jesus will see us through the storm. When we are in desperation, even angered wondering if He cares, Mark invites us to go ahead and ‘wake Jesus up’. But don’t be surprised when He turns to us later and asks, “when are you going to get some real faith?”

The worst trials are the ones we imagine that God is preoccupied, asleep, or absent. We feel alone. Jesus is very acquainted with desperation, loneliness, fear and agony. Three times He prayed if there could be another way...than to be separated from the Father in sin. Sweat pouring from his brow like blood...at the Garden of Gethsemane. And what were the disciples doing? Sleeping.

**Do we resist stepping into the boat with Jesus and going where He asks?**

Is there is an area of our life that we are refusing to surrender to God? (He’ll let us know)

When we resist God, we deny our own growth.

Dietrick Bonhoeffer quote, (The Cost of Discipleship):

“Only those who obey can believe and only those who believe can obey.”

“Faith in God is less apt to proceed from miracles than miracles from faith in God.”

The storm drives us to our savior. We learn to depend on Him even more. And to pray. We should not be surprised when our faith is tested. It is a process that leads us to be mature and complete, says James (1:2-4). Hopefully it does not include the deep water with a fin approaching, completely stuck in a cave, or sliding toward the edge of a cliff.

It seems the disciples failed the test, but they ask the most important question in the Gospel.

**Read Mark 4:41**

Who is our Jesus?

Could our Jesus cause us to shudder at His awesome power?

When we talk about our faith, does it begin with Jesus...or do we hide behind other phrases?

Stay fresh on the trail of Jesus.

It's helpful to glean from great people of the faith. But we have to get into the boat with Jesus

ourselves...to cross that sea and through that storm.

Stay fresh on the trail of Jesus.

He's not our personal Genie. He's not just a necessary event...like a rag to wipe our filth. Think about how you would tell a 7 year old about Jesus.

I think many of us would agree with the confession...

**Our Jesus it's too small.**

We need to admit our Jesus is too small. Then we have a goal.

Jesus does what only God can do.

The gospel according to Mark declares that the Son of God:

- preaches repentance unbelief with God's authority
- commands demons with power
- communes with the Father
- heals all manner of illness
- lives and teaches the true spirit of God's law
- has the authority to forgive sins
- comes to deliver sinners
- claims to be Lord even of the Sabbath
- corrects, confronts and condemns hardhearted leaders
- chooses a new Israel to spread the Gospel and begin the church
- welcomes obedient believers into his family
- teaches God's kingdom to all
- And now, commands the wind and sea

Even in humbled form, Jesus tosses the powers of evil like a rag doll, without lifting a finger. He is the strong man plundering Satan's prison.

Church, what are the storms that threaten our community of faith? What paralyzes us from sowing God's seeds here in Lillooet? Does it look as though the church is losing and Satan is winning? Has our ship been swamped with the wind and waves of sickness and loss? Are we swamped by the waves of decisions that choked our supply of work – and forced many to leave?

Jesus is not asleep when friends are displaced. When jobs are lost, loved ones pass from this life or when friends betray.

Consider the words of one who survived several shipwrecks:

**Read Romans 8:31-39**

Jesus helps us in the storm. Why? Because He loves us.

When we get in the boat with Jesus. Our faith is well placed, for only Jesus can offer a security that never fades (Matt 6) and a peace that passes our limited understanding (Phil 4:6-7). Jesus has already won the war with sin and death. He holds the keys. He intercedes for us now (Rom 8:34) and will return to claim His victory soon (Rev 22:20).

Are we ready for the king? Jesus is not fast asleep – but are we? Wake up, oh church.

How now shall we live?

1. Face what is holding us back from believing Jesus completely.
2. Admit there is much still to know and accept about Jesus. Sometimes we need that rebuke, “where is your faith?”
3. Obey Jesus and face the storms with the Son of God.

#### Bonus: More Jesus Facts

- Jesus holds the keys of death and Hades [Rev 1:18]
- Jesus has the authority to give overcomers the right to eat from the tree of life, in the paradise of God. [Rev 2:7]
- Jesus gives the crown of life [Rev 2:10]
- Jesus will protect those He deems faithful from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. [Rev 3:10]