

Sunday Lesson – June 20, 2021

GOSPEL: Mark 4: 35 - 41

The Wind Ran Out of Breath

Background

“Now we’re in a place where we can see what Jesus’ disciples are made of. So far, Mark has done little to draw our attention to them. They have followed Jesus around and listened to him. He designated twelve of them to have a particular share in his ministry (Mark 3:14-15), but they won’t really try out their new authority until later (Mark 6:7-13). We know little about the rest of them, but clearly an even greater number of female and male disciples composed his entourage (Mark 4:10; 15:40-41). He has been explaining his teachings to this group privately (Mark 4:11, 34). Yet at this point in the narrative we don’t know what they think about him. The lake-crossing scenes in Mark serve as opportunities for Jesus’ followers to reveal what they know or don’t know (see also Mark 6:45-52; 8:13-21). In those episodes we also see what their faith looks like or whether they have it at all.” *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/ordinary-12-2/commentary-on-mark-435-41-4)*

Insight

“Here are two important points that reveal the true humanity of Christ: He needed rest and time away from crowds, and He was so exhausted that even the battering of the boat did not awaken Him (Matthew 8:24). These truths should help us realize that Jesus was genuinely human with the same basic needs we all have. Christ’s humanity is part of what qualifies Him to be our merciful intercessor between us and God the Father (Hebrews 2:17). The apostles’ lack of faith reminds us that even those who lived and walked with Jesus, saw His miracles, and heard His message still found it difficult to be 100 percent faith-filled all the time. In that way, the disciples were a lot like us. However,



their lack of faith was rebuked—and, by extension, so is ours. If Jesus was able to rescue the apostles from the storm, He is also able to rescue us from the storms of everyday life: sickness, job loss, marriage problems, and even the sting of death (1 Corinthians 15:55).

This passage not only reveals Jesus’ true humanity, but also Jesus’ deity because only God can make the “winds and water obey” (Luke 8:25). The apostles marveled at this powerful display of Jesus’ supernatural ability over the elements. This can be immensely comforting to the Christian in a storm. Faith in Christ is never misplaced. If He can calm the storms of the sea with one word, He can calm the storms of life as well.” *(Excerpts from gotquestions.org/calming-the-storm.html)*

Gospel Reading

“Late that day he said to them, “Let’s go across to the other side.” They took him in the boat as he was. Other boats came along. A huge storm came up. Waves poured into the boat, threatening to sink it. And Jesus was in the stern, head on a pillow, sleeping! They roused him, saying, “Teacher, is it nothing to you that we’re going down?” Awake now, he told the wind to pipe down and said to the sea, “Quiet! Settle down!” The wind ran out of breath; the sea became smooth as glass. Jesus reprimanded the disciples: “Why are you such cowards? Don’t you have any faith at all? They were in absolute awe, staggered. “Who is this, anyway?” they asked. “Wind and sea at his beck and call!” The Message

What It Could Mean?

“We start by remembering the context of Mark 4. Until now, Mark’s readers have been working through parable after parable about sowing and seeds. Yet Mark is not giving agricultural lessons; Mark interprets the work of the Word and the seed as a mystery that pertains to the apocalyptic Kingdom of God. Ever since Mark 1:14-15, Jesus has been preaching the gospel of God and the coming of the Kingdom that brings with it

repentance and belief in the good news. The seeds are just Mark's apocalyptic way of describing a divine reign that is sure to be coming and will grow and spread like a mustard seed.

We would be wise, therefore, to keep our apocalyptic glasses on as we read about Jesus' trip on the boat and the stilling of the storm. That means that this is not just another boat ride, but the apocalyptic boat ride from hell. This is not just another miracle either, but an apocalyptic revelation of Jesus' identity.

Discerning readers of Mark know that the disciples are slow learners and that the outsiders are usually the ones to confess faith. Here, just as at the conclusion of Mark's Gospel in Mark 16:8, it is left up to the readers to discern who Jesus is when his own disciples fall short or fail. This Jesus, who was "just as he was" in the boat, was way more than ordinary. He was in his weakness a disclosure, a revelation, an apocalypse of the living God among us. Or as Mark puts it in the first verse of chapter one: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God."

Again, context is everything with Mark. Mark's Gospel is committed to writing about the time of the destruction of the Temple around 70 CE. There are storms and there are storms. But this one is huge. The center of worship is destroyed; the cultural and religious center of the people no longer holds. Identities among Jewish Christians and other Jewish groups are all in play—and at a time when the tide of gentiles is rising. In the midst of all this chaos when the world-as-known is ending, here this Jesus is revealed not as one more therapist or miracle worker but as a revelation of God's extraordinary cosmic purpose in the person of this ordinary Jesus, "just as he was" and even amenable like you and me to a good nap.

As we interpret the revelatory gospel in this apocalyptic moment, we can't just turn to our personal therapeutics of faith. More is at stake and the wound is far deeper than just me, my superego, and my id. This wound reflects a kind of cultural trauma, a displacement that asks deep questions that touch on

our life together and the shared forces that threaten to upend us all. Please note that the disciples were all in a boat, a beautiful symbol of the church that stands to this day. Even in churches being emptied out by COVID-19, many of their ceilings look like the bottom of a boat. Churches often even call their main sections a nave, a reminder of their shared maritime context. It's not just me; we disciples as a group are on the boat ride from hell.

But before we constrict our ecclesiologies too tightly around this text, it is sometimes important to remember that we are not the only ones floating together on the stormy sea. In a passing comment at the end of verse 36, Mark notes that "Other boats were with him." Whatever terrors and revelations that await us in this apocalyptic boat ride and mysterious epiphany of Jesus, it's good to know that other boats are there, too. And perhaps as we consider the intersectional nature of suffering in a cultural traumatic moment, it is good to note that though we are in the same storm, we are not necessarily in the same boat." (*Excerpts from workingpreacher.org by David Schnasa Jacobsen*)

Readings for Further Study

- [Matthew 8: 23-27/Luke 8: 22-25](#) *Other gospel accounts*
- [Proverbs 3:24 & Psalm 4:8](#) *The sleep of the believer will be sweet and peaceful because he knows the Lord is with him.*

Thought for the Day

"Sometimes God calms the storm. But more often He calms His child so His child can find strength to weather the storm."

~ *Unknown*

A Prayer

Dear Lord, in this life there will be storms. Storms that cause our world to rock and shake. Storms that make us feel like we are sinking. Lord, bring peace and calm to the storms. Remind us that you are with us and that you control the waters. In Jesus name, **Amen.**