

Authority over Nature-Mark 4:35-41

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions, please get in touch with Pastor Derek at dberry@calvarybaptistsc.church.]

Take your copy of God's Word and meet me in Mark 4:35-41...

In this life, one's vantage point and context can be everything. Say you're walking by a gym that has open windows. You see a man struggling on the bench press, and his spotter has his phone out and is failing to aid the man. You'd assume he doesn't care, or perhaps even worse, that he's rooting for his destruction. But if only you were to walk into the gym, you'd discover that the man is recording the event and providing him with encouraging words to push the weight off himself. Or maybe you see two people in a car, and the individual in the passenger seat violently grabs the wheel. You think that they're trying to put the driver in some kind of harm. When really, the person in the driver seat is learning to drive, the passenger grabbed the wheel to save their lives by keeping the car straight. You see, it's easy for us to look at a situation without context and think the worse about a person. So it is to look at our circumstances without a heavenly context and assume that the Lord God is indifferent to our plight. However, when we consider the glory of the Lord Jesus, this should help correct our misconception. The disciples in this text didn't have the correct perspective; therefore, they lacked faith. However, Jesus revealed his glory to them, and I believe he'll do the same for us this morning through the Word of God.

We find three questions in this text, which'll be our three points for this morning.

- I. Jesus Questioned by the Disciples (4:35-38)
- II. Jesus Questions the Disciples (4:39-40)
- III. The Disciples Question Each Other (4:41)

This must have been a long and exhausting day for our Lord Jesus. He had been accused of witchcraft by the Scribes, his family sought to manipulate him, and he spent most of the day teaching and preaching. For those who may not know, preaching can be highly exhausting, particularly if you're doing so passionately. And there's no one

more passionate than the Lord Jesus Christ. So, he and his disciples leave the crowd on a boat off into the sea. Verse 37 mentions a violent storm that was breaking into the boat. And the disciples were terrified. Remember, these are career fishermen, some of them anyway. So, they were accustomed to dealing with storms. These hurricane-like winds must have been uniquely terrifying. This entire story is reminiscent of Jonah. I'm not saying that Mark had Jonah in mind necessarily as he was penning this story by the account of the Apostle Peter; however, it's tough not to see the parallels. In Jonah, we find another group of seasoned sailors afraid for their life due to a uniquely powerful storm.

⁴ But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. ⁶ So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish." -Jonah 1:4-6

Two quick points about this text before we move to verse 38a. Firstly, if these grown men are this terrified by what God can do with his creation, imagine the terror of falling into the hands of an angry God! This is what Jonathan Edwards so eloquently illustrated in one of his sermons. We should pause and praise Jesus for the fact that we'll never see that side of God the Father! Only because Jesus experienced far greater than a hurricane on the cross; he experienced the full wrath of God.

Secondly, the nature of this storm is meant to show us that God is orchestrating this event for a particular purpose, just as He hurled the great wind upon the sea in Jonah's day. We'll consider his reasoning later. For now, let's read verse 38a.

This entire pericope highlights both the humanity of Jesus and the divinity of Jesus. This text highlights his humanity. Years ago, a well-known prosperity preacher down in Atlanta attempted to make a theological assertion by connecting this passage with Psalm 121.

Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. -Psalm 121:4

He read the Psalm and this passage in Mark to make the point that Jesus can't be God because we find him here sleeping. However, this is a gross misunderstanding of the incarnation. When God the Son took on flesh, he became fully human! The entire

composition of a human being was found in Jesus. And Paul explains this in Philippians 2.

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.
-Philippians 2:5-7

What does it mean that he emptied himself? He veiled his glory. This is a type of subtraction by addition. Imagine going to a car dealership to test-drive a brand-new car. Your eye lands on an exceptionally bright and shiny car. The salesman allows you the opportunity to test drive this vehicle. As you drive, you go down muddy back roads, and the car is dripping with mud. When you return to the salesman, he is furious because this shiny, beautiful car is not covered with mud. But you exclaim that you haven't done anything to the car; you've only added to it. And the point is correct. The beautiful shine of the car is still there. Its luster and beauty haven't been removed. But what has happened is that something else has been added to the car that prevents these qualities from shining through. The car's beauty has not been destroyed or diminished, but that beauty has been covered by mud. One might even say this: the car's glory is every bit as present as it was previously, but this glory cannot be seen for what it is because of the covering mud. Taking on the mud, then, has added something that results in its appearing less, while, in fact, it is only more. This illustration should show you how on the one hand, Christ could retain full deity while taking on humanity, yet on the other hand, why it was that his deity, while fully possessed, could not be fully expressed due to his having taken on human nature.^[1]

Wow! This should blow your mind. The humility of the Lord Jesus! He didn't come as a pseudo-human; he came and submitted to the rules of humanity he created! When he was hungry, he was genuinely hungry. It wasn't a different type of hunger because he's Jesus, No! After the 40-day fast, he was starving! The God who created sustenance finds himself hungry! He cried! The one whom Paul calls the God of all comfort found himself needing comfort! Real tears rolled down his eyes! The God who sat outside time zones that never slept or slumbered became human and was knocked out! Imagine how hard you'd have to sleep not to be woken up by the storm. This speaks to the exhaustion that he felt.

Why would the eternal God subject himself to such limitations? Love. Love for his Father, and love for his people. Ultimately, we see his humanity in the fact that he died. His heart stopped beating. He became the substitute for the sins of his people. Therefore he bowed his head on the cross and gave up his spirit. And after his

resurrection, he remained human! He didn't slide off his humanity once the atonement was complete. He has a robe of humility that'll be on display for all of eternity for his people to marvel at. Church, how marvelous is he? His disciples knew how marvelous he was and still is. However, this storm introduced some dissonance in trust. Let's read our first question in verse 38b.

So, here's the scene. There's a level-five hurricane attacking the boat that Jesus and the disciples are on. The twelve are doing all they can to stay afloat and literally not die. And they find their teacher and master asleep on a cushion. So they ask an accusatory question to the Lord Jesus, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" Now let's give the disciples credit. I think if you asked them if their teacher cares about them on any other day of the week, they'd provide a resounding yes!

However, there's a deadly storm, and Jesus seems indifferent. Perhaps they're wondering how they can put these two facts together. "Lord, we've left everything known and love to follow you because we trust you; you're the Messiah, the one with the words of eternal life; however, your inaction right now doesn't seem to match up." Could it be that the disciples thought that following Jesus exempted them from danger? They argued about who was greater; they requested to sit on his right and left side for eternity and bailed when the Roman soldiers apprehended him. Perhaps they had a great theology of glory but a weak theology of suffering.

It's almost as if this question has been echoed throughout human history by the people of God. Job cries, "Lord, do you not care that I'm perishing?" David, while suffering at the hands of many, "Lord, do you not care that I'm perishing?" Israel cries, "Lord, do you not care that we're perishing?" Perhaps you, too, have cried out, "Lord, do you not care that I'm perishing?" Perhaps you, too, have felt as if God is asleep amid your turmoil. Maybe you feel that way this morning. Perhaps you see yourself in the disciples and their reactions. Far too often, we find ourselves in the vice of trouble and question whether God cares. And if he does, why is he allowing such destruction? The disciples soon discover that following Jesus does not promise a life of ease free from any suffering. As a matter of fact, it often adds complications to one's life. What the disciples learn and what we must know this morning is that following Jesus doesn't mean that there won't be deadly storms on the boat; it just means that Jesus is in the boat with us. It means he's not indifferent toward those suffering. Although we don't always know why God is orchestrating certain events in our lives, we can rest assured that he cares.

I like the illustration Tim Keller gives. If you look into a pup tent and I ask you to spot Dalmatians, and you don't see any, it's safe to say there aren't any there. However, let's say I ask you to find No-see-ums in a pup tent, and you don't see them. That doesn't

mean they aren't there; you just can't see them. When you say because I can't think of any good reason why God is allowing this suffering in my life to happen, therefore there can't be one, you're assuming that whatever reasons there would be are more like Dalmatians than No-see-ums, but why should there be? Just because we don't know the answer to why doesn't mean there isn't one. Just because my daughters can't explain the process of rain, it doesn't mean there's no answer at all.

However, we do know confidently that God is not indifferent toward our pain. The incarnation and the cross prove that to be so. So whatever reason there is, it's not indifference. I like what Charles Spurgeon said, "God is too wise to err, too good to be unkind; leave off doubting Him, and begin to trust Him, for in so doing, you will put a crown on his head."

And the author of Hebrews says it even better.

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. -Hebrews 4:15-16

Well, Jesus responds to both nature and his disciples with a question of his own. That leads us to our second point this morning. Let's start by rereading verse 39. We find Jesus exerting his power over authority. We'll consider this verse in more detail coupled with verse 41, but for now, stand in shock that God spoke to the wind as a father speaks to an unruly child, and it obeyed! Let's consider Jesus' question to his disciples in verse 40.

"Have you still no faith?" Fear is a result of a lack of faith. Here's one of my favorite psalms.

For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. -Psalm 112:7

Why is the righteous not afraid of bad news? Because he trusts in the Lord. A lack of trust causes all types of anxieties and fears, including the fear that God is absent or unaware of what is happening in our lives. Faith is remembering the fourth person in the furnace.

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us

out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” -Daniel 3:16-18

Contrast the words of these three Hebrew men with that of the disciples. These men’s faith is on full display because they recognize that even if they are to perish, they won’t indeed perish. After all, God will resurrect them unto glory!

So Jesus’ question to the disciples has behind it this thought: your premise is wrong. I allow people to go through storms, using them to strengthen their faith. So although we’re not always given the precise why of our suffering, we know, based on this and other texts, that God is ordaining these storms to build faith. He ordains this storm in the life of the disciples to build them up. Consider the well-known passage in Romans 8.

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

So the good in this passage is defined by “being conformed to the image of his Son.” So he ordains because he does love us and not the opposite. You must ask yourself what you appraise as glorious, a lack of suffering or conformity to his image. If it’s the latter, you’re able to follow the command of James:

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. -James 1:2-4

We see an example of this in the life of Lazarus.

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. -John 11:1-6

So Jesus chose to let Lazarus die, as his intention wasn’t to spare the family’s grief but to raise Lazarus from the dead. Verse 4 says he was motivated by God’s glory. Verse 5, letting him die and magnifying his name, were both expressions of love for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Now many would read this story and view Jesus as harsh and

unloving for allowing Lazarus to die. But this shows that people's view of God's love is measured by our pain-free life or happiness. But we can learn from Jesus what true love actually looks like. I like what John Piper says, "Love is doing whatever you need to do, even to the point of dying on the cross to help people see and savor the glory of God forever and ever." Therefore God's goodness is on display even amid storms!

The disciples forgot who was in the boat with them! How could you possibly perish when the Lord God, who came down to the earth to accomplish his mission of purchasing his people, had not completed his task yet? Believer, don't forget who's in this life with you! If you need a reminder of how glorious the Lord Jesus is, follow me to our third and final point in verse 41.

The disciples are filled with reverential awe as they consider that they're in the presence of God! Consider man's response in the presence of angels.

⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, ⁹ but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." -Revelation 22:8-9

The sight of the angel was so glorious that John, an Apostle of Jesus, fell down and worshipped. Now imagine the feeling of knowing you're in the presence of one greater than the angels. Although his full glory was veiled, this taste of his power was more than enough to have the disciples stunned!

If you remember the beginning of this series, we considered the theme of authority that Mark lays out. In chapter one, we find Jesus' authority over people, unclean spirits, and sickness. In chapter two, we discover that Jesus has the authority to forgive sin, give fasting a new meaning, and make sabbatical declarations. All of this pointed to the deity of Jesus. Only God has the authority to do any of this. And once more, we find Jesus' authority over nature. An attribute that only God possesses. Consider Psalm 107.

²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. ²⁹ He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. ³⁰ Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. -Psalm 107:28-30

In this psalm, we find God doing what only God can do! He stills the storm and hushes the waves of the sea. Jesus is the God of Psalm 107! And that's because he's the

creator! Saints, I'm just reminding you of who you have with you in the boat of life. The Lord Jesus! He's able to calm the seas because it's his creation!

¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
-Colossians 1:16-17

And there's coming a day when he'll command the seas never to rage again. Until then, let us bask in his glory and live by faith in the Son of God.

Let's pray.

[1] Bruce Ware