

Light of Mercy in Stormy Seas

Mark 4:35-41 ³⁵ On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." ³⁶ Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. ³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. ³⁸ But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How *is it* that you have no faith?" ⁴¹ And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

The waves were crashing over the boat

The storm was strong. The danger was great. The disciples thought they were drowning.

The first time I ever went rock climbing I was a little nervous. I clung to the cliff face. Every time I would push myself up even a little, I would ask my friends to pull the rope tighter. Any slackness in the rope at all made me feel certain that I was about to plummet to my death. Having the rope tight reassured me that something at least other than my own hands was holding me up. When I finally got to the top I looked back. I was maybe five feet from the ground. At no point had I ever been in danger. Even if I had fallen, I doubt I would have even skinned my knee.

At no point was I in any danger, but it sure felt like it when I was clinging to that rock.

The disciples felt like they were in mortal danger as well. "We're about to die." Was the storm really as bad as the disciples thought? Its true that the waves were cresting over the boat but then again Jesus was asleep on the floor.

But it does not really matter. Whether the storms are little or large, the danger great or small, if Jesus is with us there is nothing to fear.

"Peace, be still." It's not just to the wind and waves that Jesus speaks those words but more importantly to the hearts of his disciples and to us. "Peace be still," he says. "Let not your hearts be troubled."

We get caught in these situations where we are convinced that we are on the edge, that the chasm lies deep beneath us and we are about to fall. Sometimes the danger is real, sometimes it is greatly exaggerated in our minds. Sometimes we are in those situations because of our own sin and sometimes

through no fault of our own. Regardless of the danger or the reason, Jesus is with us there is nothing to fear.

The light of his mercy breaks through the storms of our lives to give light to our hearts.

Jesus was sleeping on the bottom of the boat.

Part of what bothered the disciples so much was the fact that it seemed as though he did not even care. There he was sleeping on the bottom of the boat.

Mark 4:38 "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

Very often when we feel like our life is falling to pieces, we also feel like no one even cares. We think we are all alone. We even often think that Jesus does not care. Why aren't you doing something to help? Why have you abandoned me? Why won't you answer my prayers? These are often the places that our thoughts go.

It can be very comforting to remember that we are not alone in this feeling. The Psalms are filled with prayers of exactly this type. "God, don't you even care that I am dying?"

Psalm 44:23-25 ²³ Awake! Why do You sleep, O Lord? Arise! Do not cast *us* off forever. ²⁴ Why do You hide Your face, *And* forget our affliction and our oppression? ²⁵ For our soul is bowed down to the dust; Our body clings to the ground.

That sounds like exactly like the attitude of the disciples. "Nobody has ever had to suffer the way I do. Why me God?"

Psalm 77 asks the same question:

Psalm 77:7-8 ⁷ Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? ⁸ Has His mercy ceased forever? Has *His* promise failed forevermore? ⁹ Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?

But the Psalmist continues in verse 11.

Psalm 77:11 ¹¹ I will remember the works of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.

Does God really not care? Of course he cares. There is no one who cares more. Do not be so foolish to think that just because it looks to you like Jesus is sleeping that this means he doesn't care.

In Psalm 77 the psalmist takes the time to think about what he is saying. Think back on all that God has done in the past and you will not be so foolish to think that he does not care.

The disciples especially are without excuse. How many times had they seen Jesus' compassion in action? How many times had he stayed up late talking to people, healing people? How many times does the scripture say, "he was moved with compassion?"

It was so foolish of the disciples to think that just because Jesus was asleep this one time that meant he did not care at all. It is so foolish for us to think that just because Jesus doesn't fix our problems immediately that this means he doesn't care.

When we are in the midst of a storm it can be easy to think we are all alone. But Jesus is in the boat with us. The fact of how much he cares is proven beyond any doubt in the truth that while we were yet sinners, he died for us.

How does Jesus respond?

He acknowledges their fear. He deals with the situation, but then he also calls on them to learn to grow a little bit in their faith, to trust him next time.

Jesus knows that the storm is nothing, there is no danger in it, yet for our sakes he rebukes the storms in our lives and in our hearts. "Be still," he says. "Peace," he says. In the storm remember his works and do not doubt compassion.

Perhaps you remember the account of another man who slept in a boat even during a storm, the prophet Jonah. There is no doubt that Jonah had his faults, yet here is a man who had rock solid faith. Here was a man who trusted God, not only trusted God to take care of him but also trusted in God's mercy.

During the storm he slept peacefully in the boat. When the lots fell on him he told the sailors throw him overboard and the storm will stop. He walked into Nineveh telling them what a wicked and terrible people they were. All of this shows the greatness of Jonah's faith.

But probably above everything else Jonah's faith is seen greatest in the very fact that he tried to run away from God. Why did he run away from God? When the people of Nineveh repented and God did not punish them Jonah prayed the following:

Jonah 4:2 So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

The reason Jonah fled was because he knew that if he went and preached the people would repent and God would have mercy. So great was Jonah's faith in the word of God to change the hearts of people and in God's mercy on those who repent that he did not want to go to Nineveh because he wanted them to die.

True Jonah had an attitude problem, but he by no means lacked faith in God or in God's mercy.

Why is your faith so small? Why do you doubt the power of his word and his compassion. AS wicked a city as Ninevah was God's compassion did not fail them and it will not fail you.

When the troubles overwhelm us, when it appears to us like we are drowning, when it seems like Jesus is asleep in the boat and does not care at all what is happening to us.

Remember! Remember Jonah and God's mercy to the people of Ninevah. Remember how it was Jesus who over and over again "was moved with compassion." Remember all the Jesus has already done in your life. Remember how it was he who stretched out his arms and died for you. Remember and do not doubt either his power or his willingness to help.

Peace says Jesus, be still. May the storms of you heart be calm, for the Lord, the mighty God of Jacob, the redeemer of the world is by our side.