

Peace, Be Still

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 July 2025

Preacher: Mr Colin Nicolson

[0 : 00] Okay, if you turn with me to God's word, I'm just going to take a wee reading from Mark's gospel. So, the gospel according to Mark, and we're going to read in chapter number four.

Chapter number four, Mark's gospel, and we're going to pick up a reading at verse 35, just to the end of the chapter here. On that day when evening had come, he said to them, Let us go across to the other side.

And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.

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?

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. He said to them, Why are you so afraid?

[1 : 15] Have you still no faith? And they were filled with a great fear. And he said, and said to one another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Amen. Amen. And may God bless to us that portion of his own word. So what we've got here in this gospel and in the other gospel we read was that what we're seeing is this is Jesus calming the storm.

And there are three different things I want to kind of focus with you this morning. I want to focus, first of all, on the calm before the storm.

And secondly, I want to focus on the calm during the storm. And thirdly, I want to focus on the calm after the storm.

So these three things, the calm before the storm, the calm during the storm, and the calm after the storm. Now we notice here in Mark's account of this particular event, where he opens in verse 35, On that day when evening had come.

[2 : 39] That is how Mark introduces us to this particular event. And what this opening sentence in Mark's gospel illustrates for us is the suddenness of this particular storm.

On that day when evening came. How suddenly, how quickly, that the evening and the day are practically meshed together.

They are mentioned in the same whisper. Mark doesn't even draw a breath. The evening and the day are united. They are only separated here in this account by a single word, by a single verb.

And how through this picture of suddenness represents our own lives. That day, evening came.

It came so quickly. The dark is replacing the light. The cold is now replacing the warmth. And friends, how quickly our day can turn.

[3 : 59] From day into night. So the time to develop resources, to face the sudden storms that will inevitably come and strike us, is before they actually hit us.

And if you don't spend time with the Lord in the calm of life, you won't know how to trust him when the storms inevitably come. Friends, spend time with him in the day before the evening comes.

Spend time with him in the light before the darkness descends upon you. In your day, nurture fellowship with him before the evening comes.

So this, friend, is a great night scene of scripture. It's a night scene with a great, great storm.

But it's also a night scene with a great, great saviour. And how well this scene reminds us of the words of the psalmist.

[5 : 11] They that go down the sea in ships, that do business in great waters. These are the ones that see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep.

Now, I don't think that if the disciples had known about this impending storm, I have no doubt that they would not have put the ship to sea.

And Jesus did not tell them of the storm because he was going to prove them and he was going to test them and he was going to teach them something about who they were and something about who he is.

He was going to teach them lessons about their faith and teach them a lesson about the manner of man that their teacher and their master truly was. So this storm took place after a long day of teaching and preaching.

It is now evening and the master is physically and he is mentally exhausted. He was so exhausted that he couldn't navigate himself to the shore.

[6 : 23] You look at verse 36. They took him as he was. They took him. The disciples literally carried him to the boat where he fell fast asleep.

But note also the command that Jesus gave his disciples. A command that was also a promise. It wasn't let you go.

It wasn't you go alone. But it was rather let us go. You are not going through this storm alone.

I am with you. We are in this ship together echoing the words of Isaiah the prophet when we pass through the water I will be with you. And today friends on this great storms of life we are never alone.

We have a companion. We have an associate. We have a comrade with us on the wave. One who has promised never to leave us or never to forsake us.

[7 : 30] And I am sure today that is a promise you have heard a thousand times. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Do you know friend that in scripture? That is the only promise that was ever made.

That you can read it back in reverse. And it makes perfect sense. I will never leave you nor forsake you. You leave nor you forsake.

Never will I. It's as if it's a double promise. I will never leave you nor forsake you. So let us Jesus says to them in verse 35 and he says let us pass over to the other side.

A better rendering here would be let us pass through. Let us pass through to the other side. this is the command that suggests we are going to make it.

This is the command that suggests we are in this together. This is the command that suggests that though weeping may endure for a night there will be joy arising in the morning.

[8 : 39] And the disciples were obedient to the command. And obedience leads to a reward. Always friend. Obedience will always lead to a reward.

it will always lead to the other side. But reward can only ever be experienced in the act of faithful obedience.

And obedience can never ever be achieved if we act alone. If he is not in our ship. So secondly we see then that there is not only a calm before the storm there is a calm during the storm.

You see Jesus was in the stern of the ship and he was sleeping on a cushion. So they board the ship and very quickly they find themselves in a storm.

Now Mark here in verse 37 describes the storm. These storms were common on the Sea of Galilee. Mark here in verse 37 says a furious squall came up.

[9 : 48] But Matthew says he describes it as a furious storm that came up on the lake. Matthew remembered well the relentless tempest that battered the boat and he chooses the words wisely.

Not just any noun is going to do here. You can almost see him putting his Greek thesaurus on his shelf picking it off the shelf and he's hunting down his dictionary for the right word.

He bypasses common terms like cloudburst it's stormy it's a downpour. These nouns didn't quite capture what he felt and he saw that night. He recalled more on the winds and the rain and the white capped waves.

His finger is now going down the list of his thesaurus and his list is going all the way down until he lands on a word. Ah there's the word right there. There it is. It's seismos.

It's a quake. A trembling eruption of the sea a trembling eruption of the sky a great seismos arose on the lake a seismos that shook them to the core.

[10 : 56] And you know friends Matthew only used this word on another two occasions. Once at Jesus' death when Calvary shook and again at Jesus' resurrection when there was a tremor in the graveyard.

So this storm shares equal bullying in the trilogy of Jesus' great shakeups defeating sin on the cross the resurrection and here silencing the sea in a storm on Galilee.

So Matthew and Mark are describing the storm as coming up out of the sea. But you notice Luke describes it a little bit differently. He describes the storm as coming down.

So the storm is coming up and the storm is coming down. It came from every direction, every way they turned, every way they looked, to the left a storm, to the right a storm, from the heights a storm, from the depths a storm.

All around them there was a storm. Have you ever felt like that my friend? Have you ever been encased in a storm, in a circumstance that so encased you that you didn't even know what direction the storm was coming from?

[12 : 14] There's something else just to note in the passing here. Matthew and Mark, like I said, the storm is up. Luke, the storm is coming down. The disciples may have wondered in their hearts, as I am sure we have often done ourselves, is this storm that is coming into my life, is this storm that is coming my way, is this storm from heaven itself, or is this storm that is now affecting my life and my witness, is it coming from the very pit of hell?

Was this attack from the devil, or was a storm from the Lord? But either way, they experienced the extreme severity of the storm.

And you might ask yourself the question, how do you know the difference between them? How can you tell whether the storm is an up storm, or it's a down storm?

Well, let me simply say this, a storm from the devil is intended to drive you away from Christ. A storm from the hand of your God is desired to drive you closer to that Christ.

So Matthew then tells us the storm came suddenly, the disciples were taken by surprise. They were taken by such a surprise, not so much by the storm itself.

[13 : 46] Do you know what really surprised him, my friend? It wasn't a white capped wave. It wasn't the tossing and the turning of the ship.

What surprised each and every disciple in the midst of that storm was that Jesus was with them in the vessel.

Not the storm itself, the fact that he was in the vessel with them. This is what surprised them. Could his very presence with them in the ship have prevented the storm?

No. And we should learn from this, friends. You see, as we sail the high seas of life, we thank God today that Christ is in our boat. But let us not be surprised that even though we have him in our vessel, that even though he charts the course, that even though he is the chief navigator, that we find ourselves in the midst of a storm.

Let us not be afraid. Let us not be asking, why is this happening to me? Friend, it's happening not because Christ is not with you in the ship. The storm is happening.

[15 : 02] It's precisely happening because he is with you in the ship. It's happening because you're part of his crew. It's happening because he is the captain of your salvation.

It's happening because God is shaping you into the image of his son. And it's happening because the angels today, they're looking down upon you at this very moment as you are being tossed and turned on the oceans of life.

And the angels in heaven this morning are looking at each other and they're talking to each other and they're looking at you and they're saying, look at him, look at her. Isn't he or she looking more like Jesus every day?

So back on the ship, the storm is now raging, the disciples are becoming afraid. They look for Jesus, but where is he? He's not bailing out the water, he's not shifting the mast, his hands aren't on the oars, he's not tying down anything that could be a danger to them.

Where is he? They're looking at each other and I'm complete amazed. Where is he? And they find him asleep.

[16 : 19] And there are two things about the sleep I just want to mention briefly. First of all, his sleep was his chosen place. He was at the back of the ship.

He could have gone anywhere on the ship, but he chose the back of the ship. Now Matthew tells us in chapter 8, 23, then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him.

That's what it says. he went into the boat and his disciples followed him. So here we have the disciples and they are about to face a mighty storm and we find as they go to face the storm that the Lord has gone before them.

They are behind him. He entered the ship and the disciples followed him. He led them into the storm.

But note this. But when they got into the ship, Jesus was no longer in front of them. But rather he was behind them in the back of the ship.

[17 : 30] There they are facing the storms and having Christ before them. And now here they are facing the same storm and having Christ behind them.

And this reminds us friends of Exodus 14. when Israel had come out of Egypt, then the angel of God who had been traveling in front of Israel's army withdrew and went behind them.

The pillar of cloud which moved in front and stood behind them coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side.

So neither went near the other all night long. See, the angel of the Lord went before them and when in danger there was a cloudy pillar behind them.

When facing friends storms in life you couldn't have anything better than the saviour going before you and the very same saviour coming behind you.

[18 : 33] And dear friend this morning when you face the storms of life remember this. As the Lord did when the Israelites and the disciples that night on the sea of Galilee Christ will go before you Christ will surround you with his presence for he has said that underneath and all around us are the everlasting arms.

But secondly it wasn't just his chosen place this was his chosen seat. He went to the back of the ship and he fell asleep on a pillow. I wonder why the spirit of the Lord used that detail.

See the narrative and the story it would have just made same it would still have made perfect sense. Nothing would have been taken away from the story if it had just said he went to the ship and fell asleep.

But we're told specifically that he fell asleep on a pillow. Now the pillow had a specific function in the ship. It was in the ship for the sole purpose of the captain.

Whoever captained, whoever navigated and was in charge had the right and privilege to sit on his pillow. Nobody else. He went onto the ship and he chose the captain's place.

[19 : 57] The disciples were in a storm and he was at the helm. He was charting the kush. The kush had already been plotted. The tides had already been determined. He was overseeing the crew.

He was in charge of the cargo. And friend, you couldn't wish for a better captain. You couldn't wish for a better navigator to guide you through the storm than the Lord Jesus Christ, the captain of your salvation.

His sleeping in the storm is an example to each of us as we ought to be able to do the same thing ourselves. He rested in his humanity.

It was his humanity that rested. He rested in the knowledge of his father's love. You see, Jesus' human nature, it was covenant rested.

And we ask ourselves, are we covenant rested this morning? Is your heart resting on the Lord and waiting patiently for him? Do the covenant promises of God give you an inner peace and assurance that no matter what storms rage about you, his covenant will bind you for all eternity?

[21 : 18] Friends, the disciples weren't. They were just promised moments before that they were going to pass through to the other side. They were reluctant to hold onto this.

Instead, they were alarmed. alarmed not so much at the storm, but alarmed that on this pillow Jesus was asleep.

Did they think there would be any safer with an awakened Christ or a sleeping Christ? Would it make any difference? It should have made no difference.

Why? Because of the promise. The other side. Even who's asleep, they should have held onto this word.

And how alike we are when the billows come and the storms appear. We, like them, are afraid. Not so much of the storm, but of the seeming sleepy response from the Savior whom we claim to trust.

[22 : 27] we see no sign of deliverance. We see no end of trouble, but instead of being covenant rested, we cry, carest you not that we perish.

Instead of falling at his feet and finding his strength in our weakness, instead of finding courage and assurance in providence's past, instead of being comforted by the unyielding love he has for us, we cry, care you not that we perish.

It would have been great if the disciples could have taken the things that the Lord did for others and applied it to their own lives. If they could have said, we know Jesus can heal a leper, we know that Jesus can cure and can cast out devils, we know that he can heal the man with palsy and forgive sins, then I am sure he can take care of the storm too.

But they seemed unable to process this information. And apply it to their lives. So there is a storm, the disciples are afraid, and their master is asleep on a cushion at the rear of the boat.

We've got, friend, a sinking ship and a sleeping saviour. So then we come to the calm after the storm.

[23 : 52] You see, friend, the real problem was not the storm or a sinking ship. As I said, it was a sleeping saviour. In fact, it probably wasn't even the fact that the saviour was asleep.

Their greatest problem would have been the fear in their hearts that he was asleep. That was the biggest problem. So you notice that in each account that it is they and not a particular person that wakes Jesus.

It wasn't one of them that went to wake Jesus up. They went to speak with Jesus. There is panic. There is pandemonium.

They are yelling over the loud wind and the crashing water. Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Luke says that they said, Master. Matthew says that they cried, Lord. So he is Master. He is Teacher.

He is Lord. In their panic and in their fear, they used every word that they could to describe who he was. You see, there was no organised speech. There was no organised pattern.

[24 : 53] There was no organised structure. They don't ask about his strength. Jesus, can you still the storm? They don't ask about his knowledge. Jesus, are you aware of the storm? They don't ask about his ability.

Jesus, do you have any experience with storms? But rather, what do they do? Friends, they raise doubts about the character of Jesus. Do you not care that we perish?

You see, friend, fear does this. It corrodes our confidence in the goodness of God. This is a cry of a terrified people.

And when the sleeping saviour awakes out of his slumber, it is this very fear that startles them. Yes, there are monstrous waves. Yes, there is wind. And yes, it is blowing and the ship is creaking.

Yes, the boat is filled with water. But it's their fear and lack of faith which troubles them. You see, friend, faith, and fear cannot live in the same heart.

[25 : 54] They're mutually exclusive. Fear at its very centre is a perceived loss of control. Friends, you don't have to be afraid of a storm when a storm is in the hands of one who loves you, the one who rules over the land and sea, the one who has the power to calm the storms that arise in your life.

Friend, this is not any mere abstract theology or academic doctrine. This is the very fibre upon which we build our lives. The fatherly sovereignty of God himself. Because you see, friend, he has dealt with storms before. He's dealt with the greatest storm of all. The storms that were caused by our sins. The storms that were caused initially by Adam's revolt. A storm whose first ominous rumblings were heard over the Garden of Eden and came to its fearful climax in that horrendous, horrific event in Calvary's cross.

Friend, at Calvary, the mighty Son of God was lifted up from earth and stilled the storm. And in the midst of that storm, with his arms outstretched towards a world in abject need, he spoke the all-prevailing words of peace. And you know, he calmed the storm and the wrath of God *ted testerei*. It is finished. So when we think of this storm on the Sea of Galilee and the storms that so often are raging in our lives, we ought to reflect about the infinitely greater storm. We ought to look at him there with the crown on his head and the nails in his hands and the nails in the feet.

the terror and the anguish that is on his face as the blood pours down his cheeks and he cries to *testerei*. It is finished. So friend, on this boat there arose a great storm. But now we look and we watch arising a greater Savior. There he is rising, the nautical journey of the two natures of the one person who is the Son of God. Yes, sleeping in his humanity, slumbering in his humility. He now, my friend, awakens in the power of his divinity and in the glory of his majesty, which is now going to be demonstrated magnificently and unforgettably. And as he arises from the pillow and rebukes the wind and says to the waves, peace, be still. Now this alone is interesting. You see, Jesus speaks a word of rebuke to the wind. And what is interesting about Mark's use of the verb rebuke is that it is the same kind of verb that is often used when Jesus attacks and casts out demons and other dark forces.

same verb rebuke. Now remember where Jesus was going. Jesus was crossing the Sea of Galilee with his disciples on the way to cast out a legion of demons out of the demoniac of Gadara. This demon possessed man was an important weapon in Satan's usher. Through the actions of this demonic of Gadara, the devil had held this complete countryside hostage for a very long time. The demoniac was so legendary that people right around this coast knew about who he was. You see, Jesus knew there was a storm to come.

[29 : 56] But more importantly than that, Jesus knew that in Gadara there was a soul to save. This was his primary mission in life, to seek and to save. And his greatest miracle that night was not on Galilee, but in Gadara. His greatest miracle that night was not a calming of a storm, but the saving of a soul.

The devil knew that if Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee that night and reached the other side, he would cast the demons out of the man. When that happened, Satan would lose the weapon he had long used to terrorize this countryside. So the storm is rebuked and suddenly there is a calm.

And this is immediately followed by a rebuke to the disciples themselves. He deals with the source directly. And now he turns to them and asks in verse 40, Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?

Jesus' question is rhetorical because he knows the answer to it. You are afraid because you have no faith. The word no is an absolute negative. He said no faith indicates that the disciples' faith was totally diminished as a result of the storm that they had just encountered.

And the faith that Jesus is addressing here is not initial faith, but applied faith. A faith that functions in the midst of pressure. They're gone.

[31 : 26] A faith that has a depth of understanding and can be drawn upon in difficult times. A faith that should have revealed that if the storm was not disturbing their master, it shouldn't have been disturbing them either.

I am with you. My humanity might be asleep, but my divinity is awake. The Lord, I never slumber nor sleep. Through your greatest trials, I will be with you. Through your greatest burdens, I am there for you.

Why then so fearful? The greatest danger to these men was not the wind or the waves. Their greatest danger was their lack of faith. Friend, there is always more peril to you and to me from our own unbelief than from the most adverse storms and circumstances that come into our lives.

Our greatest danger in life is never from without. No matter how horrendous the storms are, the greatest dangers to us, friends, come from within. It was easier for Christ to deal with the storm than it was to deal with the unbelief in their hearts.

And the message of the gospel from beginning to end is a message of assurance and a message of certainty. Whatever is uncertain in this world, of this we can be certain, that all things work together for good.

[32 : 41] And that our greatest afflictions work for us a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Why then are you so fearful? When he sits on the throne and all things are subject to him, why then are you so fearful?

When he rules and he governs all by the word of his power, when he loves you with an everlasting love, why then are you so fearful? This is a benevolent question.

He's not condemning them. He is rebuking them mildly. Why, oh, why won't you trust me? Don't you know everything that I've done for you? Don't you know how much I love you? Why then, my dearest, dearest friends, are you so afraid?

Dear Christian friend, if you ever do get fearful, go back to Calvary, and always go back to Calvary, and see the ultimate goodness of God on that stone-clad hill outside the city world.

Friends, do not descend from that hill unmoved. There you see him, and it's your death, he's dying. And Lord, we pray that we would understand how important that is.

[33 : 45] Why then so fearful? So, so far then we have seen there was a calm before the storm. There was a calm during the storm. There was a calm after the storm, and I was going to close in a minute with this.

There was now something completely different. There was now a storm after the calm. They were terrified. And they asked each other, who is this?

Even the winds and the waves obey him. He was so much that he slept. And he was asleep on this particular boat.

And a great calm has now come over the sea. Order is now established. The awful terror of the storm is driven away. Creation and the order of creation is now restored.

And they were filled with great awe. Mark's Greek literally says that they feared a great fear. The terror of the storm has become, you know, it's been done.

[34 : 50] It's been done away with. But a fear of a very different sort has now taken place. There is a storm after the calm. And this fear, this reverend awe is what Wood of Otto famously called the *mysterium tremendum*.

The grand mystery that is simultaneously fearful and fascinating at the same time. And it leads the disciples to ask, who is this?

That even the wind and the seas obey him. Do you, this morning, have this mysterious or *mysterium tremendum*?

Are you in awe of the God who loves you? Are you overwhelmed by his majesty and astonished by his grace? Even after all the disciples had been through up to this point.

Even after all the parables he had taught. Even after all the innocent people he had freed from oppression. The disciples still didn't know who stood in their mists.

[35 : 56] Rebuking the raging sea and saving those in the boat. Forges a theological connection between Jesus and the mighty acts of Yahweh. When God tamed the waters in Genesis.

Remember when he brought that swirling, chaotic, primeval water under control. And the first day of creation. This who's in their midst.

The chaos tamer is with them. And here he is in a stormy lake. The union of two natures identifying with human struggles and pain.

On the crest of a wave. He is our spiritual high priest. And Amy Carmichael, the great missionary, wrote a poem based on this story.

Amen. Thou art the Lord who slept upon the pillow. Thou art the Lord who soothed the sea. What matter beating wind and tossing billow.

[36 : 56] If only we are in the boat with thee. Amen. And may God bless to us. These meditations. On his own word. Let us bow our heads and pray.

Dear God, we thank you today that you are the master and the commander of our ship. You are the sustainer and the keeper of our providences.

And Lord, impress upon us who you really are. Impress upon our minds that you are indeed the chaos tamer. The one who can calm the storms in our hearts.

Let us not lose sight of who you are. Of what you have done. And of what you have yet promised to do. We pray that you will bless these meditations upon us.

In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.