

Mark - the Sleeping Saviour & the Stormy Sea

by J. Glyn Owen

Jesus' power and authority over nature are demonstrated in the story of the storm on the Sea of Galilee, teaching us about the importance of faith and trust in Him.

Duration: 42:19

Scripture: Mark 4:35

Topics: "Saviour"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Jesus calming the storm as recorded in Mark 4:35-41. The sermon begins by highlighting the tiredness of Jesus, emphasizing that even the Son of God experienced fatigue. The disciples, in the midst of a storm, wake Jesus up and question his concern for their safety. Jesus then rebukes the wind and the sea, demonstrating his sovereign power over nature. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the need for believers to have a clear understanding of Jesus' greatness and glory, and to trust in his sovereignty in the midst of life's storms.

Transcript

Now will you kindly turn with me in your New Testaments to the fourth chapter of Mark's Gospel and to the closing, the concluding paragraph in chapter four. We are going to look at the paragraph that begins with verse thirty-five and proceeds to the end of the chapter. Perhaps we could read at least a part of it again.

On that day when evening had come, he, that is Jesus, said to them, his disciples, Let us go across to the other side, the other side of the lake, of course. And leaving the crowd, they took him with them, just as he was in the boat. And other boats were with him.

And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. And they woke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care if we perish? 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. And he said to them, Why are you afraid? Have you no faith? And they were filled with awe and said to one another, Who then is this that even the wind and sea obey him? May the Lord help us by his spirit now to appreciate something of the far-reaching significance of this episode and of the teaching that is enshrined here. I would like you to notice that there is continuity between what we were considering last Lord's Day and what we have here this morning.

You remember as Mr. Greg Scharf was expounding the two parables preceding here, he stressed the fact that they were parables of the kingdom of God. Parables meant to teach something about the dynamic reign and rule of God in this world, and particularly as that was personified in our Lord Jesus Christ. Now there is a continuation of that theme right on into this particular miracle.

This is a miracle, not a parable. But it enables us to see that in the person of the Lord Jesus, the almighty power of God has become incarnate. The power and the sovereignty of the unseen God is made visible, real, efficient, effective in a given life situation that Jesus undertakes to deal with.

So there is here in the first place a measure of continuity in terms of subject. But there is discontinuity as well. There is a change here.

With the parables closed, we enter a new section. And here in the passage before us today, the Holy Spirit wants us to see our Lord as Lord of nature. This is a new revelation as far as the gospels are concerned.

True, in John's gospel right at the beginning of it, our Lord showed forth his glory in Cana of Galilee by turning water into wine. That is a nature miracle. But as far as the synoptic gospels are concerned, this is entering into a new territory.

It is showing our Lord as sovereign, king, able to cope with any of the exigencies that may emerge within the creation at large. He's master of creation. I don't remember who it was who first said it, but someone has drawn a parallel here with that which took place in the book of Exodus when the children of Israel were taken out of Egypt.

God blew an east wind and a red sea dried up, and he led his people dry shod toward the promised land. Here in the person of his son, the same God blows again, and he provides a passage through the turmoil and the turbulence of this little ocean, little Gennesaret for his new people, for the disciples of Messiah to move ahead into another area of need and of ministry that awaits them in Gennesaret. Now, if you have a good memory, and if you can have a bird's eye view of some of the things we've already considered in Mark's gospel, you will see that the picture is gradually growing.

We have a remarkable portrait of our Lord that is gradually being built. Already Mark has shown him as one who sees the heavens opened, upon whom the spirit comes down to rest, responsive to the spirit's guidance, enjoying angelic ministry, receiving the testimony of God personally to his sonship, though at the same time refusing the testimony of demons to his deity. Christ preaches, we are told, with a new ring of authority.

Something new had entered that ancient scene, as he taught, he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes and the Pharisees. But now there is one thing more. If he is Immanuel, God with us, then he must exhibit what was true of God in the Old Testament, namely that he was the God of all creation.

And if Jesus is the incarnate Lord of glory, it is necessary for us to see him in some such situation as is envisaged in this miracle. And this is exactly what we have. We have our blessed Lord and Savior manifesting forth his sheer sovereignty over the universe and its forces as he stills this boisterous sea to silence.

Now what I want to do this morning, as briefly as I can, is this. I want us to look first of all at the different episodes here. Then I want to gather a few of the very obvious lessons that we can learn from the record.

First of all, I'd like you to look at four scenes here because they have something to tell us, and we need to see them together. The first scene is that of the tired Savior. A tired Jesus.

Do you ever feel tired? Of course you do. Some of us hardly feel other than tired. We must never abandon the biblical portraits of our Lord and Savior as the Son of God, as the holy divine, the incarnate Lord that comes out here too.

But we need with equal clarity to see that our Lord Jesus Christ was not only tempted in all points like as we are, but that he came into our human situation to taste it for what it is. There is something exceedingly precious as we read this story, and we see our Lord Jesus so utterly exhausted physically, mentally, spiritually, having been wrestling with demonic powers, healing physically sick, teaching vast multitudes without any privacy, at last being hurled, as it were, into a boat. And no sooner is he in a boat, and they begin to cross little Gennesaret Sea, then he just slinks into slumber.

And though the storm begins to rage, there he is in the hinder part of the ship, of the little boat, fast asleep. There's something unnatural about this. But whatever the unnatural element it is, it points to this one solitary fact that our Lord Jesus was utterly exhausted.

I don't know whether you've pondered over these words, they took him even as he was, in the ship or in the boat, even as he was. The point is, we have here something like an ambulance rescue operation. The disciples have realized that our Lord Jesus has come to the end of his tether physically.

The crowds are milling around him and he can't get away from them. And so there's no time for a meal, there's no time for a snack, there's no time for anything. They steal him away even as he was in the boat.

Never mind, he can go without food and drink, but he must, he must come apart. And then we find him sleeping. As the rest of the folk in the boat are agitated with turmoil, everything speaks.

Of his sheer tiredness. Now let me repeat, I find this exceedingly important. Especially to those who are wearied at the end of a day or at the end of a week or at the end of a term or whatnot.

It is good to know that our Lord Jesus knows and knew what tiredness was. He has come into this kind of human situation, and when you and I are tired, he knows how to cope with us, and he knows how to speak to us, and he knows what grace to impart to us. A tired Jesus, a raging storm.

Now the Sea of Galilee was a tiny little sea called the Lake in some parts of the New Testament, Lake Gennesaret. Now just tiny, 13 miles at its longest, 8 miles at its widest point. But one of the peculiarities relating to the Sea of Galilee was this.

It was surrounded by hills, and there were funnel-like valleys or passes through which the sometimes rose and whipped the sea to a frenzy almost in a moment. It's happened over and over again in the course of history. There have been more accidents on the Sea of Galilee than on any sea of such a dimension.

And many people have lost their lives there. The frenzied wind just seemed to take hold of everything, and suddenly you had oftentimes no warning at all. It just comes, it just comes and takes you, and you don't know what's happened.

Now this is what has taken place here. Jesus has gone into the boat, so have the disciples. He's fallen asleep, but the storm doesn't wake him up.

What is more, the storm is very, very tempestuous. The little boat is waterlogged, and you notice that the disciples, some of whom were fishermen, most of whom, if not all of whom, had been reared around this little Sea of Galilee. They had watched these storms from the shore many a time, and many of them had been in the midst of a storm such as this.

But will you notice that they were frightened stiff? They really thought the end had come. They could do nothing about it. They were just enveloped within it, and they ultimately woke him up and cried, don't you care that we perish? You see, they thought the end had come.

So we move from the tired Jesus to the raging sea and the startled disciples. Startled for two reasons. The ferocity of the storm was one thing, but there was this something else.

Their master could sleep through it all. Now that did not simply speak of the fact that he was tired, did that. But they were puzzled by the fact that he could be asleep when they were so agitated.

Didn't he care? But then the climax, the fourth scene that I would like you to notice, and this really covers everything else. This really is the one key to it all. Everything else is by way of background.

We have a portrait here of the sovereign Lord. Oh, we need to have some such picture as this in our minds as we set out upon a new week or a new day. Look at this.

Awakened by his frightened followers, Jesus arose and every act of his is significant at this point. You notice what he does. Look at the commands he uttered.

We read, he rebuked the winds. He rebuked the winds. Did you ever try to do such a thing? Have you ever uttered a word of command to the winds? He rebuked the wind.

The wind, of course, was the superficial cause of the trouble. It blew their waterlogged boat, and it was nearly capsizing. Jesus rebuked the wind.

And then he goes on to speak to the sea. He said to the sea, peace, be still. The word he used means be gagged, gagged, be muzzled.

It's a word that is used in the Greek of the Old Testament for muzzling an ox. Muzzling, put the muzzle on, be silent. Now, this word is significant here for many reasons.

One reason is this. Jesus has already used this word in two contexts. He has, first of all, muzzled some of his critics.

That's a word that is used. And then he has told the demons, as they possessed a man that he encountered in the synagogue, be muzzled. So he's faced the critics, the theologians of the day who criticized him, and he's muzzled them.

He's encountered the demon possessed, and he's muzzled the demons. But now, if you please, a man in the flesh, he turns to the very boisterous, heaving, seething sea, and he says, be still. Now, either he is deluded or he is divine.

Either he's a deluded King Canute, or he is the sovereign Lord of all creation, and you can't have it both ways. He deems that he has the power to hush that sea to silence. Someone has put it like this.

Our Lord Jesus Christ deals with a little sea of Galilee, just as a mother deals with a little petulant child who insists on talking, or crying, or making a noise, and mother says, son or daughter, shut up. And Jesus tells the sea, be still. Now, you can't get out of it.

Either he's the most deluded creature that ever walked this earth, or there is a self-consistency here. And out of the awareness of his deity, as well as his dignity, he knows that he has authority here to silence the ocean and to cause the winds to stay their course. The commands he uttered, look at the calm he secured.

Two brief unpolished statements comprise the report. You notice that the gospel writers don't try to embellish here. They just give us the bare facts.

Listen to this. Oh, what men could do with this, if only they used their dramatic powers. And the wind ceased.

I'm told on good authority that the word suggests that the wind grew tired. Now, I know you don't speak like that about natural forces, but the word seems to suggest that when Jesus uttered his word, his word stayed the very storm, and the wind grew tired as it encountered the word of the Savior. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

Now, there is significance to that again. We observe the strange incident that no sooner does the storm cease than the waters, which commonly seethed for a long time afterwards, became suddenly, immediately calm. Here, of course, in these words describing the great calm that emerged, we have the exact contrast of what we read of in verse 37.

There arose a great storm. There followed a great calm. And the thing that transformed the great storm into a great calm is the great Savior, the Lord of nature.

The lake sank back into its shell like an exhausted creature would slink into its den at night, and it went to sleep. The questions he asked, or should I say one question, because the two questions are about the two sides of one question. Why are you so fearful? The suggestion is that it was all unnecessary.

The disciples have been agitated. Why, says Jesus, why are you so fearful? And then he goes on with the second question. How is it that you have no faith? Now you notice he puts his finger on something.

You know, he says, there was no need for all this commotion in your hearts, no need for all this turmoil, even in a storm such as this. If you had simply acted out of confidence in me, you would have had peace. And the consequences produced are described in these words.

They feared exceedingly. They realized that they have done something wrong. Shame and consternation grips them.

And it is the fear of the guilty in the presence of one who was so evidently divine and trustworthy. They have been faceless when he was with them all the time. Now they concede, of course, there was no need for all that agitation.

They see it at the end, you see. And they make a confession. They said one to another, who then is this? That even the wind and the sea obey him.

It was not only a natural shame that overtook them, but something bigger, as we have already indicated, namely a sense of the greatness and the glory of one who could come into such a situation and sleep in it in the first place and then arise out of slumber and exercise such sovereign power over the whole situation. Who is this? You see, as a matter of fact, they did not yet know him in all the glory and splendor of his person. Now there are the four scenes.

What lessons are there for us? What abiding principles relate to us? What can we learn from this? Well, I think we can learn an awful lot. I just want to throw out two or three thoughts this morning, and that fairly briefly. First of all, the fact that our Lord is with us, or that we are with him, even the fact that we are involved in his service and we've gone on board at his command and we're going in the direction of his choice, does not mean that we shall not enter into a storm.

Now, young Christian, I want to say this especially to you this morning. It's a joy to have so many young Christians with us who recently come to Christ. Now listen, Jesus does not promise you that you will walk through life without storms.

He doesn't do it. I want to tell you that there are as many storms on the way to heaven as there are on the way to hell, sometimes more. The prophet Jonah ran into a storm when he was running away from God, refusing to do his will.

Some people get into storms that way. Here the disciples are doing exactly what Jesus commanded them. They ran into a storm too.

In fact, I want to tell you this morning, quite straight from the shoulder, the very fact that you're a Christian means that you will encounter storms that the non-Christian knows nothing at all about. The moment you take your place alongside of the Lord Jesus and you become his disciple and you begin to open your mouth for him and exercise your persuasive powers on his behalf, that very moment you're a marked person. The devil doesn't bother with many of us because we're not of any concern to him and his kingdom.

But the moment you threaten the devil's interest in a man or a home or a society, that moment you'll be hated and you'll run into a storm. Many of us have peace which is a false peace. It means that we have come to terms with sin and with evil and the only reason that we are not bruised and battered in life is we are traitors to our Lord's high calling.

But I want to say to you this morning, when you're in the boat with Jesus at his command and you're going along with him, you're not immune from storms. Let me just quote one passage of scripture. Says the great apostle Paul, and he knew what it meant, we wrestle not, he says, against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, we wrestle.

In other words, there is a battle, there is enmity to be faced, there are storms on our way to heaven. That's the first lesson. So if you're a young Christian this morning, don't, don't for your life's sake, for your soul's sake, don't get the idea that because you're with the Lord Jesus, you're not going to encounter difficulty.

You are. Second thing is this, though our Lord has not promised to save us from trials and from storms, he has clearly promised to save us in them and through them. Now I can only refer to this, but I must refer to this because it's so important.

He hasn't promised to save us from getting into the storms, but he's promised to save us in the storms and through them, in them and through them. We have the divine promise to save us in the very midst of the storms, which God allows. Listen to this passage from Isaiah the prophet.

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee. And through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned.

Now, this is something that we need to lay hold on. Our Lord did not say, if you come with me, then life will be all jam and joy. He didn't say that.

He said, if you come with me, we may still enter into storms, but I'll save you in the storms and I'll be with you myself. And there is a presence of our Lord, which can only be experienced in the face of a storm. Hasn't it ever struck you with meaning and significance that martyrs experience the grace of God in their trials in a way in which others knew little of God? I remember when I tried to read church history in my training, theological training, this was one of the great lessons that came home to me.

There were many others, of course, but I remember in reading the sufferings of God's people throughout the years, this is one thing that came home to me. The people who usually have questions about the providence of God are the people who are just looking on at other people's suffering. Armchair critics who try to assess the Almighty and assess the experience of others from an armchair or a bedside, but the men in the battle, the saints in the flames, they know the presence.

I say to you, there is a presence of God that can only be discovered in a storm with Him, not in the storm into which you enter disobediently, not in the storm that you cause because of some idiosyncrasy in your personality or some oddity or some foolishness, but in the storm which you encounter in process of obeying His will. At other times, the stress of scripture is that our Lord will save us through our trials. Listen to James.

Blessed is the man that endureth trial or temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him. Oh, listen to Paul again. Through much tribulation, we must enter into the kingdom of God.

What James is saying and what Paul is saying is this, that our Lord will ultimately save us through tribulation, through trial, through the storm, He'll bring us out. And what is more, when He brings us out of the trial, out of the storm, out of the tribulation, if we have gone through it as men and women who have confided in Him, we shall discover that the storm has given us something that we could never have had in the sunshine. Come again.

Here's another lesson here. Though our Lord Jesus was exhausted on the boat, as we've already described, He did not begrudge being awakened to help His frightened disciples. I guess there is one thing that really betrays each of us.

How do we take people intruding into our privacy? How do we react to people who come into the hour that we've set apart for ourselves, a time of sleep or a time of study or whatever it is? How do we accept these incursions into our privacy? Now, I find myself, I find myself enraptured with this concept here. Here is our Lord, absolutely weary, worn out. He can even sleep in this storm, which is unnatural.

And they wake Him up and they shout at Him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? He doesn't chide them for waking Him. He chides them on the score of the fact that they had no faith, that all this was

unnecessary. But He comes to their rescue and He offers His mighty power to intervene on their behalf.

He does everything that they need. Now, the way that this speaks to me is this, you see, our Lord is no longer tired. Our Lord is risen and ascended at the right hand of the majesty upon high, crowned with glory and honor.

He's no longer tired. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. He needs no sleep anymore.

In His glorified body, He is Lord of lords and King of kings. But even if He were tired, He would still listen to His people's prayer. Get that, my friend.

Take it with you. Our Lord never begrudged someone intruding into the privacy of His earthly life where there was a genuine need that He alone could meet. Let us be bold, then, in calling upon Him.

He will always hear our prayer. What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear.

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pains we bear, all because we just don't do this.

There's something else here which I find very precious. The presence of Christ with His obedient followers means that they are safe. You cannot be lost if Jesus Christ is with you.

You cannot, because He can't be lost. And if you're in His care, if you're in His boat, if He's in the boat with you, you can't be lost. But if you want the assurance that you can't be lost, you must know Him for the person He is.

Now, these are two things that need to be distinguished. You see, why were these disciples agitated? There was as much of a storm in their breast, in their hearts, in their minds as there was out on the sea. Why? Well, I'll tell you.

Oh, they knew that He was different from everybody else. And they had their confession of faith. They knew so much about Him.

But they just didn't know that He could cope with this kind of storm. Had they only known. Had they only known Him.

Had they only known Him. You see, there would have been no need for this. They could have had peace like a river attending their soul all through the storm.

Had they only known Him. Oh, how important it is that you and I should know Him before we get into the storm. Then we would have peace in the tempest.

We don't need to be sure of our own salvation in order to be saved. If He is with us, and if we've committed ourselves to Him, then we're safe, as safe as He is. But if we want peace, which is more than mere salvation, if we want peace, if we want certainty, then we must know Him.

My dear people, this surely is our main business and task in this present life. It is so to know Him that we may honor Him in the storm as in the sunshine. Now, let me say this as well.

I learned from this passage and from the incident here that some very unworthy prayers bring about blessings more precious than rubies. Now, when we preach about prayer or when we study the question

of prayer, we try to cover all kind of exigencies and say, well, now, if you want to, if you want to experience a life of prayer and all its blessings, well, you should do this and you should be that. Now, I'm not withdrawing from any of that.

But over and above that, I want to say something, and that is this. There are times when the most unworthy prayers bring about benefits which you simply cannot compute. Listen to this.

Here come these disciples and they shake the slumbering Lord, and the first word he hears is a word of doubt. Carest thou not that we perish? It's a libel. You don't care, otherwise you wouldn't be asleep.

And you see, the whole thrust of their praying is this. They're praying out of disbelief, and they have a libel in their soul. They're against him.

But he heard that kind of prayer. You see, ultimately, ultimately, an answer to prayer is a matter of sheer grace. Our Lord was full of grace and compassion as he was here in the flesh, and he is full of grace and compassion this morning.

And I know that there are many prayers of mine that he has heard when the motives were far from being right and true and genuine. And I have no doubt in my own mind that there will be many people here this morning who would agree to that. That doesn't excuse us.

It behoves us to honor our Lord in every respect and to follow his word and to obey it. But the fact of the matter is this. We never deserve the answer to our prayers.

And I must close with this. If the physically weary Savior could rise and exercise such complete mastery of nature in the days of his humiliation, how much more certain it is that he will eventually arise out of his chamber and come back and finish the work that he has begun. Our world is in a storm, all right, and we just don't know what's happening next.

Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth are set against the Lord and against his anointed. This is where we are in history. And you might be tempted to think that our Lord has gone to sleep.

Don't you believe it? Even though he is apparently inactive, in due course he will arise and he will come and the heavens will be rent with the splendor of his glory and every eye shall see him and he will finish what he's begun and he will establish peace and righteousness in the universe. And he will set up his kingdom. Are you in the boat with him? Is there someone here this morning who is walking life's way without being in the Savior's keeping? Make him your own.

Let him put his arms around you. Let him get you into his own ship. Travel with him.

Labor with him. Toil with him. If you're with him, though he appear to slumber, he will serve to the uttermost in due course those that come to God by him.

Let us pray. O Lord, our God and our Father, we thank you that there is so much to learn from this passage in your word. And so many lessons that we ourselves gathered here today need to learn.

Storms are not over. You have permitted most of us to be scared many a time. Forgive us, our Lord, if in the midst of the scare we have just looked inwardly rather than considered the one who sent us on our journey and who is with us, though apparently inactive and silent.

Give us the confidence in yourself, which is required of those who believe your promises and who take the testimony of history to your deity and your sovereignty. And as those who thus trust, may we know in our hearts the peace that passes understanding to your glory through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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