

The Storm

by W.F. Anderson

The sermon explores the story of Jesus calming the storm in Mark 4:35-41 and its significance in revealing Jesus' character and power.

Duration: 42:27

Scripture: Proverbs 15:1, Matthew 6:33, Mark 1:13, Mark 4:35, Mark 4:39, Philippians 4:6, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Divine Power", "Miracles Of Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on a miracle performed by Jesus in Mark chapter 4. The speaker emphasizes the evidential value of miracles in revealing who Jesus is. The miracle in question involves Jesus calming a storm while he and his disciples are in a boat. The disciples are terrified and struggling to keep the boat afloat, while Jesus is peacefully asleep. The speaker highlights the contrast between the disciples' fear and Jesus' power over nature, demonstrating his divinity.

Transcript

He meets. We get outside the Gospel of Mark on that occasion. And I'm going a little further in the Gospel of Mark this year.

On Sunday morning, we looked at John Mark himself, the servant of God who failed, writing the story of the perfect servant of God. And then we looked at something of our Lord's teaching ministry in the parables in chapter 4, and now I want to pick up one of the miracles he performed at the close of chapter 4. So, Mark's Gospel, chapter 4, verse 35. And the same day when the evening was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the boat. And there were also with him other little boats. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was now full.

And he was in the stern of the boat, asleep on a pillow. And they awaked him, and said unto him, Master, tear us down, that we perish. And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still.

And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? In good weather every ship has a good captain. In good

circumstances every Christian can be a good Christian.

The real test of whether or not a man is a good captain of a ship comes in the storm. And I don't want to say it dogmatically. I would want to throw all kinds of qualifications around it.

But the kind of Christians we are comes out in the storms of life. Sometimes our hold on theology, the truth of God, is very feeble. Do you find that in your life? I find myself not in the same doctrine, not in the same way, but similar to King Herod who beheaded John the Baptist.

Herod, theologically, was a Sadducee. A Sadducee did not believe in resurrection. He did not believe in spirits.

He did not believe in angels. But when Herod heard about the ministry of our Jesus Christ, his battered conscience made him say, It is John the Baptist come back from the dead. And under the pressure of his own guilty conscience, his theology deserted him.

I find myself sometimes like that under the pressure of circumstances. The things that I can speak about so glibly from the platform desert me. Not that they have deserted me.

I discover that my hold on them is not as firm as it seems to be when I'm preaching about it. In a meeting like this tonight, with all you fine people here, it's very easy to talk about the peace of God and the love of God, because it's going on right here and now, isn't it? But when you get into the real difficulties of life, your words come back to mock you, and all the peace you bubbled about from the platform has vanished. Oh, you know the same verses.

You know what Peter said about casting all your care upon him for he cares for you. You know what Paul wrote to the Philippians. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, you know all of them.

And you repeat them to yourselves. At least I do. And I still have no peace.

I'm a dispensationalist. I thought I would impress you by using that term. It'll be more impressive if some of you here don't even know what it means.

That'll show how educated I am. But a dispensationalist sees different stages in God's revelation, and that God does different things at different times in his self-revelation to people. And holding that, I believe that the age of miracles, for instance, the direct act of God, is past.

And I'm not saying God can't or God won't do it again, but just looking at what I understand from scripture, that the age of miracles is past. I suppose most of you here tonight believe that same thing, don't you? Did you ever get into a very, very, very difficult situation and get mad at God because he didn't perform a miracle? Now, your theology told you, no, he doesn't do that now. He's working in other ways.

But your practical needs drove you to abandon your theology. And my hold on the truth of God is not quite as firm as I think it is or as I preach that it is. And it's the storms of life that very often show what I really am and where I really am as a Christian.

And I still think sometimes God ought to perform a miracle for me. Oh, I know we talk about miracles, but I think we have really debased the term. We talk about things that happen to us as miracles, but that is not the way the Bible uses the term.

And I understand what we're saying. We talk about a person being saved and that's a miracle, and I understand what we're saying, but that's not how the Scripture uses the term. And so we've changed the coinage.

But in the biblical sense of the miracle, I sometimes think God ought to go ahead and perform a miracle for me. But he doesn't do it. And I have to do some thinking about the miracles in the Scripture, and I want to say a couple of things about them before we come to this miracle that our Lord performed for the disciples at the close of Mark 4. Miracles, I think most of us would be willing to say, are primarily evidential.

They show who Jesus Christ is, and they authenticate his message and his messengers. One of the ways that we know that the apostles were the authentic representatives of Jesus Christ is they were given the power to perform miracles. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, talks about the signs of an apostle, and he's talking about the miracles that he performed among the Corinthians.

They are primarily evidential. That is not to say that they are not also compassionate works meeting the needs of people. But that isn't all they are.

If that is all they are, or even primarily what they are, then I would have to say God is spasmodically compassionate. I would have to say that God plays favorites in his compassion, because there are only certain periods in the biblical revelation when God was performing miracles. Does that mean that he was not compassionate during the years people were suffering and were not relieved by a miracle? No, I cannot say that primarily they were given his works of compassion.

They are that, but primarily they are works of evidence. They are demonstrating something, and you'll find that specifically in the book of Acts. To authenticate the message of the apostles, God gave them the power to perform miracles.

And so, I have to say about miracles, they are first evidential. They show who Jesus is. They authenticate his messengers, the apostles.

And no one stands in the place of an apostle today. The apostle was our Lord's authorized representative on earth. They spoke with the authority of Jesus Christ, and what they said, God said.

So that when I read the writings of the apostles, I am reading God's word. The second thing I would have to say about miracles, is that they were secondary to the preaching ministry of our Lord Jesus. To me that comes out very clearly in Mark's gospel chapter 1. He went out very early in the morning, before daybreak, before anybody was up, because the crowds were pressing him so much.

When anybody knew he was stirring, a crowd gathered, and he had no privacy. So very early in the morning, before anybody was up, he went out into an uninhabited place to pray. And Peter and the others hunted for him and found him.

And then Peter said to the Lord, everybody's living for you. Early in the morning, the crowds were already starting to gather, knowing the house where he was staying, there they were, where is he? And Peter, feeling some necessity to placate the crowd, went out to find Jesus. And then Jesus said words something like these, let us go into the next towns that I may preach there.

This is why I came forth. Faced with crowds who were drawn by his miracles, his response was, let's move on to other towns. To do what? To perform miracles? No.

To preach. And in our Lord's scale of values, in his priority, proclaiming the Word of God took precedence over the performing of miracles. That was his own choice.

That, to me, is the explanation why he bade people to be quiet, not tell anybody when he had performed a miracle. As in the healing of the leper, for instance. Very strong language of, of, of, very deep anger is the word that's used by Mark of our Lord.

Our Lord, with very deep anger, told that leper, don't tell anybody, go show yourself to the people. The leper went out and told everybody. And what happened? Crowds became so great that our Lord couldn't preach in the city.

He had to go out into the countryside. Why were people coming to him? For miracles! What did he want to give them? The Word of God. So I come to this miracle that our Lord performed in chapter 4, and you'll see some other things about it.

But as Mark develops the evidence, as we looked at it on Sunday night, as to who Jesus Christ is in this book, you discover that he uses these miracles of what our Lord did to lead us to discover who he is. Again, the idea of the evidential values of miracles. And when you look at what our Lord did, then you have to come up with some sort of an explanation for this man.

If he really did these things, what kind of a man is he? And Mark wants to bring us to the conclusion that this man, Jesus, is the Christ, the Son of God. He has a whole series of miracles in chapter 1, and now he starts another series of miracles at the close of chapter 4 and going on into chapter 5. And you'll notice the similarity and yet the contrast between the two sets of miracles. You find our Lord in his temptations in chapter 1, and Mark is the only one who notes it, that he was with the wild beasts.

He was out in a wilderness area tempted by Satan. Now, if he were with the wild beasts, that tells us immediately civilization has not pressed that far. As people move into an area, the wild animals move out.

If our Lord was with the wild beasts, there weren't any people around. And I think one of the things Mark is telling us is that he was isolated from all human contact in his temptation. By the way, I'm sure I have talked about that before, but that's when temptation is the strongest.

When you're alone. If you've got your brothers and sisters in the Lord gathered around you to support and help you, temptation loses a great deal of its power. By the way, one of the needs for our Christian fellowship with each other, and for building small groups of very strong Christian friends who, in our moments of temptation, and we have the kind of friends to whom we are not ashamed to reveal that we are tempted, and that we are weak, and that we are liable to fall, in that moment they can be our deliverance.

Our Lord had no such support, and I think Mark deliberately notes that. He faced that temptation alone, without the support of his disciples, who to some degree understood him, and could be a help to him. Be careful that Satan doesn't get you in that position.

You're not the Lord. Be careful Satan doesn't get you in the position where you're alone when he hits you. But I think Mark is telling us something else.

Wild beasts. Man and wild beasts are incompatible. When man moves in, wild beasts move out.

God, in one of his judgmental decrees against the people of Israel, said he would afflict them with wild beasts. The animal world, after the fall, responded in fear to man. And now here is the last Adam, the second man, the Lord from heaven, and he is with the wild beasts.

He is no enemy to creation, nor is creation an enemy to him. He is its creator. And even wild beasts are under his control.

When he performs his miracles in chapter 1, you find a whole series of them, the first of which is the demon-possessed man in a synagogue. And our Lord casts out that demon. He goes into the house of Simon Peter, and Peter's mother-in-law is ill with a fever.

And he takes her by the hand and raises her up, and she ministers to them. Now it's one thing for the fever to disappear, isn't it? It's another thing for strength to return. You've been ill with a high fever? Even when that fever is gone, you're as weak as dishwater.

But when our Lord rebuked that illness and the fever disappeared, he not only cleaned out the illness and brought down the fever, he gave her immediately her strength back. And she got up and ministered to them. A leprous man came to our Lord, and he touched him and healed him.

In all kinds of areas our Lord's authority and power are shunned. He has authority in the whole realm of nature, in the area of disease, in the area of demons. The whole of the created universe is under his control.

Fallen or unfallen, makes no difference. He is Lord. And Mark is giving us that series to show us who Jesus is.

Absolute Master. And now when you come to chapter 4 and on into chapter 5, you have a similar series. You find his power over nature instilling this storm at the close of chapter 4. You find his power in the demon world at the beginning of chapter 5, when that demoniac lusher down from the tombs across the sands of the lake.

And our Lord casts those demons out of you. You find his power in the area of disease when he heals a woman who had that hemorrhage for 12 years. And you find him finally raising that little girl, Jairus's daughter, from the dead.

I'm assuming that she was dead, but that's a debated point. Raising her from the dead. The series is similar.

That leper was in a living death in chapter 1. This little girl was in physical death in chapter 5. But you know the contrast. In that second series of miracles in chapters 4 and 5, the need is greater than it was in chapter 1. For example, the man in the synagogue in chapter 1 had one demon. The man in chapter 5 had a legion of demons.

A Roman legion at full strength was 6,000. This man was inhabited by a legion of demons. The man in chapter 1 by one demon.

Wild beasts in chapter 1, when our Lord was tempted. You have a wild storm in chapter 4, the like of which these disciples had never faced. And added to all that is death.

In every one of those areas, regardless of the opposing force, regardless of the amount of need, he stands as Lord. Absoluteness. The disciples one day could try to cast a demon out of a boy and find themselves powerless.

Not our Lord. He had never faced a need and been powerless. The only time he was powerless was voluntary.

And that's when he died in weakness on the cross, as Paul tells the Corinthians. He was crucified through weakness, but that was voluntary. But now I want to look at this miracle for a few moments, anyhow.

I think what we need to do sometimes is, I've said this before, I know, I'm sure I've said it here, is to read our Bibles with imagination. Now I really didn't read that story with imagination tonight. I'm a little bit afraid to.

But we need to read it with imagination. We read it so humdrum. Oh yes, this happened.

Have you ever been in a storm at sea? Yeah. Uh-huh. Was that humdrum? No.

Was it peaceful? Was everything nice and quiet? Everything crashing around you sounded like this ship was going to come apart. Tables and chairs flying. And you were praying like mad, if you're like me, right? Sure.

This was a storm. They were just talking to each other. Wind howling, waves beating into the boat, as Mark describes it, so the boat was already filling.

What do you do in an open boat when the waves are beating into the boat that's filling? Any of you been out in an open boat at sea or in a lake when the storm came up and it's filling? What do you do? If it's not south bailing, what do you do? Or you start bailing like mad. And of course they were doing that. And they were holding polite conversation with each other.

You know how noisy a storm is at sea? You have to yell to be heard. The wind grabs your words and blows them away. And someone can be standing right next to you.

You have to yell into his ear to be heard. And that's what was going on all these two miles. And experienced sailors frightened to death.

They'd sailed this Sea of Galilee many times. They were fishermen. Well, they were frightened to death.

They were sure they were going down to the bottom. Then what's back there at the stern of the boat? There's the one that got them into all this. He's the one that told them, let's get into the boat and go across.

He did it. And what's he doing about it? He's sound asleep. Now, knowing yourself, how would you feel about them? About him sleeping back there while you're fighting for your life? What's he doing? Nothing.

He's just sleeping back there. Did you pick up what they said to him? Master, carest thou not? You ever said that to him? When it seemed like he was asleep? Don't you care? Sure. And then in all that majesty and simplicity, he rises and reduces the wind and says to the sea, peace be still.

You have to do both, of course, because the sea will keep pitching and tossing long after the wind has died down. You have to do both. You have to talk to the wind.

You have to talk to the sea. And he did both. The wind stopped, and the sea was calm.

Those of us who have been at sea, if we had ever seen anything like that, we would have been just like those disciples. They feared exceeding. Anybody who stood up in a tossing boat and did something like that in the middle of a storm that I was sure was going to take us to the bottom of the sea, yes, I would fear exceeding.

And that's what they did. What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey you? Don't you care? Now, I get several lessons out of that. What Mark is really doing is showing us who Jesus is.

Every one of these situations at the close of chapter 4 and on into chapter 5 were impossible situations from the human point of view. Experienced sailors could not handle that boat in that storm. I don't know who had said it, but it's a rather humorous thing that experienced seamen go back and wake up a carpenter to help them get out of this storm.

What does a carpenter know about handling a boat? But here were men experienced in sailing the sea, and it was beyond them. The demon-possessed man of chapter 5, bound by chains, tried to restrain him beyond any human help. A woman with that hemorrhage for 12 years, spent everything she had on many doctors, and didn't get any better, got worse.

It's interesting to read Luke's account of it. He's much easier on the medical profession than Mark is. Spent everything she had on doctors, only got worse.

Beyond any medical help. And a little girl who was beyond the power and care of a father's love. In every case, it was beyond any human help.

And then Jesus came, and there was nothing beyond his help. But I don't want to leave you there, because sometimes he doesn't do what we think is the necessary miracle. And I have to face that.

So I want to come back to this story and share with you some of the lessons that I get out of it, just from my own life. Mark is also the only one who notes here that they took him into the boat just as he was, when he said, let us pass over unto the other side. In verse 36, they took him even as he was in the boat.

I'm not sure what Mark means by that. Our Lord had been very, very busy. And now, at the end of this tremendous day of teaching, miracles, he gets into the boat, plops down on that pillow on the stern and goes fast asleep.

They took him just as he was. I like the expression. By the way, for any of you who may not be Christians, or you have not committed yourself to Jesus Christ, that's the way you have to take him.

You have to take him as he is, not as you want him to be. You have to take him as he is. What he is.

You can't take him just as a prophet, nor as a good teacher, nor as a religious leader. You can't take him that way, because that isn't what he is. You have to take him as he is.

And what he is, is the eternal son of God. And you have to take him that way. We don't take him at all.

You just have to take him as he is. But that tells me something else. That's the way we took him, isn't it? And that's the way he took us.

Isn't that right? Didn't he take us just as I am without one flea, but that thy blood was shed for me? Isn't that the way he took us, just as we were? That's the way we have to take each other, just as we are. I have refused to perform wedding ceremonies because I felt that the couple were not taking each other just as they were. I've had situations where I was absolutely certain, I knew beyond question, that they were taking each other in the expectation they would change the other person.

And I have refused to be party to it. You take that person as he or she is, or you don't take them at all. Period.

And if we are going to help each other, we must accept each other as we are. Not as we would like the other person to be, but as they are. If we begin to set up conditions under which we will accept a fellow Christian as a fellow Christian, we are on dangerous ground.

We accept each other as we are. That's the only hope we have. Children growing up in a home where acceptance by their parents is conditional, turn into neurotics if not psychotic, and fill our prisons.

Where children feel that to please their father they must be an outstanding sports figure when they have no natural ability for sport, whatever the demands put upon the child so that he feels he must perform in order to be accepted, we destroy the child. And we destroy each other as Christians when we do the same thing. What changes us as Christians? The realization of the unconditional acceptance we have in Jesus Christ.

That he takes us as we are. Our overflowing gratitude, our sense of security, makes change possible. But where we are insecure in our relationship, change is impossible.

Only as we become genuine friends to each other are we going to enable each other to change as God wants us to change. They took him as he was because that's the way he took them, just as they were. And the changing process the Spirit of God works in us is possible only because we have been accepted as we are.

Second lesson I get out of this, don't act on your emotions. In our King James Bible the word luck is used very often when nowadays, in our 20th century, the word emotion would be much better, because our word luck now has an evil connotation. But it is translating a word that simply means emotion.

We are warned by the apostles in the New Testament not to live according, in the King James translation, not to live according to our lusts as the Gentiles did. And we imagine that what we are being warned against is living according to evil desires. No.

What the apostles are telling us is not to live by our emotions at all, good, bad, or indifferent. Now, he's not saying don't have emotions. If you have ever read C.S. Lewis's *Pilgrim's Regress*, you remember the pale men of the north, bloodless individuals with no emotions.

Who in the world wants to be like them? No, he didn't say don't have emotions. He is saying don't live by them, don't act on the emotions. What am I supposed to act on? An intelligent appraisal of the situation in light of a standard of values derived from the Scripture.

What I should do in any given situation is based upon the standard of values derived from the Word of God and my intelligent evaluation of that given situation. Don't live according to your emotions. Now, what did the disciples... Now, that's easy for me to preach right here, you understand that.

That's one of those things that deserts me, or that I desert in a stressful situation. Just ask my kids. But what did these disciples do when they went back to Jesus and said, don't you care? That's what they were feeling.

They knew better, but that's what they were feeling, and they acted on their emotions. Now, I'm not saying I wouldn't have done the same thing, but they were wrong in doing it. And Jesus rebuked two things, the storm and the disciples.

His response to them once he had calmed the storm was, why were you afraid? Now, what do you mean why were we afraid? Why were you afraid? Don't you have any faith? They had acted on their emotions, and we do that in all kinds of situations. We do that in personal quarrels, don't we? We make emotional responses, and the fire builds, and there's a blazing inferno going, simply because we responded emotionally. Instead of using our heads and thinking, what do I know from the book of Proverbs? A soft answer, turneth away wrath.

I know that. What do I do in personal conflict? Do I obey Proverbs 15? Well, no. No, I respond to my emotions.

I am not responding to the Word of God. I am responding to my emotions. Let me suggest to you the disciples were not responding to the Word of God, either.

They were responding to their emotions. Oh, sure, they had the Word of God. Do you remember as we looked at one of the parables of our Lord Sunday night? Be sure to listen when you hear, or they heard, but they hadn't listened.

They jumped in the boat and took off, because he had said something. What did he say? What had he said that they heard but didn't listen to? He had said to them, let us go over to the other side. They heard it, but they didn't listen to it, because they got out in the middle of the lake, and they thought he had said, let us go to the bottom.

But that isn't what he had said. He had said, let us go to the other side, and that's what they should have acted on. Lose their feelings on what he'd said.

So, in a personal conflict, I should act on Proverbs 15, 1, the soft answer turns away your ass. That's what I should act on, not on my personal feelings. Don't live by your emotions.

That's what the writer says in this passage. The final lesson, and all the other lessons that I've got to quit this thing, either the tape runs out or you do. A miracle may come from lack of faith.

And this is one of those instances. Our Lord performed an unnecessary miracle. And I shouldn't put those two terms together, because one of the things I say over and over again is, God never performs an unnecessary miracle.

In one sense of the word, this was unnecessary. He should never have been put in the position that he was here in this storm. And the miracle he performed was an answer to their lack of faith, not an answer to their faith.

We talk about having great faith and having miracles. Well, they had one of the greatest miracles in the history of the Word of God, and it was the result of no faith. That's what he said to them.

How is it that you have no faith? Now how do you explain that? They got a miracle with no faith. Because they really didn't need it. What had he said to them? Let's go to the other side.

That's all they needed to know. You mean they could have sailed that boat through the storm? Yes, of course. That's what he said.

Let's go to the other side. And there wasn't any reason, except their own fears, there wasn't any reason to wake him up. He wasn't worried about it.

He was sound asleep. Maybe he thought, why should I worry when they're worrying? I don't know, but he was sound asleep. And it was to meet their lack of faith that he performed this.

It would have been better for them, trusting what he had said, to battle out the storm. That would have been better than the miracle. So if God is not performing those miracles of deliverance for you, perhaps he is allowing you a better way.

Perhaps he is allowing you to trust him without the deliverance. Maybe it boils down to this. Do I trust him and his care for me, or do I trust him to do something? And there's a difference.

Do you trust him to do something, or do you trust him? And if we learn to trust him in the storm, when he does not perform the miracle, when he does not deliver, we may discover that we are far better disciples than we would have been if he had delivered us. Oh yes. For one reason or another, God seems to feel that endurance is a very important virtue to build into our lives.

And you don't develop endurance by getting deliverance. You develop endurance by remaining under, and that's the meaning of the term. And he will give you everything you need to remain under any storm that he does not lift.

And we trust him. Let's pray. Our Father, as we look at the cross, we have to say, how can I not trust him who has forever demonstrated the depth of his love and compassion for us? And in our moments of weakness in the midst of a storm, bring us back to the cross.

Remind us again of how much you really care and help us to trust the one whom no miracle delivers from the agony of the cross. We pray in his name. Amen.

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