

“The Wind Whisperer”

Mark 4:35-41

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” ³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ 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?” ³⁹ 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. ⁴⁰ He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (ESV)

We’ve been looking at the Gospel of Mark. When you read the Gospel of Mark it’s sort of like the theological version of playing bumper cars. You drive and get going for a while and then you hit something and bump and you’re in a completely different direction. Yet, it’s part of one big whole. Today we change direction again. Remember for the past few weeks we’ve been talking about parables. Today Mark is going to change directions again.

This past Friday night, I don’t know what happened, but all of a sudden there were no kids in the house. Judy was reading and I was waiting to go pick the girls up from a basketball game or something. I was trying to kill some time, so I was flipping through the channels. I watched two shows back-to-back. They were the same topic, but the way they handled the topic was utterly different. It was genuinely amazing to me. The first show that I watched was “The Dog Whisperer.” You know the dog whisperer, Cesar Millan. I’m not going to tell you the name of the second show. I’m just going to call it, “The Dog Coddler.” You have “The Dog Whisperer” and “The Dog Coddler.” What both shows have in common is that they take dogs that are completely without hope, if you will, dogs that other people are about to give up on. They reform them. What’s different is the methodology that they use. Cesar, “The Dog Whisperer,” walks into a room with any dog. Maybe there’re dogs off-screen that have been vicious and attacked him and he’s lost to, but on every show when he walks into a room, no matter what the dog is like, here’s what Caesar does to fix the situation: “Fsssst.” The dog comes at him – “Fsssst.” The dog growls – “Fsssst.” Dog – “Fsssst.” And within a minute the dog is sitting there going, “What do you want me to do?” The other show, “The Dog Coddler” opened with a crate with a dog running around in it. As soon as the lady walked into the crate the dog attacked her. The dog is gnawing on her arm and she’s saying, “Oh, this is going to be a really hard case.” The dog is pulling her over. “It’s probably going to take six months of de-psychologizing this dog. He’s probably been abused.” She went through this whole thing. Six months! Let me ask you this question, “If someone throws you into a cage with a vicious, rapid Rottweiler, do you want someone who comes and says, “Nah. It’s going to be about six months to take care of this thing.” Or do you want someone who goes and says, “Fsssst” and it’s over? You see, the difference in the two methods, as I could discern it, is that one had to do with being a buddy to the dog and the other had to do with authority. Cesar has the philosophy that I guess I always had: I’m the pack leader and that’s a dog. It’s as simple as that. I’m the one with authority; the dog doesn’t have authority. So the one with authority simply needs to assert his authority. When you look at the Gospel of Mark where Mark changes gears today, he spends an awful lot of time showing us the authority of Jesus. In other words, Jesus isn’t “The Wind Coddler” as we’re going to see today. He doesn’t coddle the storm. He’s “The Wind Whisperer.” He’s “The Storm Whisperer.” Over the next few weeks we’re going to look at Mark’s description of Jesus’ authority in four different areas. One is His authority over nature. Another is His authority over the demonic world. Another is His authority over disease, and finally His authority even over death. Do you want to trust yourself to someone who can talk you through something or do you want to trust your life to someone who has actual authority and is able to do something about the problems? That’s a question we’re going to ask for the next four weeks.

We’re going to look at two things this morning in the text I read to you. The first thing we’re going to look at is the authority of Jesus. The second thing we’re going to look at is the discombobulation of the disciples. I just used that word because I like saying it. You can put “confusion” there or you can put “perplexity.” They’re undone, they don’t know what to do after the events that take place here. First let’s look at the authority of Jesus.

³⁵ *On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.”* ³⁶ *And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. (ESV)*

The first two verses are really giving us some context. It says, “On that day.” He said, “Let us go to the other side of the lake.” Remember, Jesus had been teaching in Capernaum and Mark wants us to believe, I guess in this particular passage, that all of the parable teaching that has happened the day before has been during the course of the day. Now it’s the end of the day and Jesus said, “Let us go to the other side of the lake.” If you also remember, the way that Jesus was teaching this huge crowd, was by standing in a boat just off shore. The water would have carried His voice; more people could have heard Him. But, He was in the boat, and that’s also what’s indicated here when Mark said, “Leaving the crowd they took Him with them in the boat, just as He was.” In other words, they didn’t go to the shore and get on another boat. He was in the boat and Jesus says, “Let’s pull away from the shore, and let’s go to the other side of the lake.” So that’s the context. In verse 37 it says,

³⁷ *And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.* ³⁸ *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?”* (ESV)

A great windstorm arose. On one hand, windstorms in the Ancient Near East and in the Sea of Galilee were apparently pretty common. The reason that they were so common is because it’s basically surrounded on the north and the east and the west with mountains, particularly on the northeast. Mount Hermon is up there. Cold air comes down from the mountains into this bowl and then the Jordan valley is at the south end and warm air blows up through the Jordan valley. When the cold air and the warm air meet it causes a lot of wind, apparently. This storm must have been even worse than that. They’ve actually found boats on the bottom of the Sea of Galilee, and that were about 26 ½ feet long by 7 ½ feet wide by about 4 ½ feet deep, and they seated about 15 people. They had a little area that was covered in the stern and in the bow of these boats, and they had two places to row on each side. What’s interesting about this text is, that you know it’s the worse storm that ever happened on the Sea of Galilee for one reason – because the disciples are so afraid. Why is that important? If you remember, at least four, maybe as many as six, but about half of the disciples are experienced sailors and fishermen. They would have been on the lake every single day of their lives. They would have seen every storm that could have possibly been seen, and yet for some reason this storm had them afraid. This storm had them fearing for their lives. It says that the waves were coming over the boat so much so that the waves were filling the boat with water. So that’s the situation. Here they are, the greatest storm, the most furious squall they’ve ever experienced, and where do you find Jesus? He’s asleep. I’ve always told you the most important word in the Bible is, “But.” And that’s the word used there. Everything is just going crazy all around them,

³⁸ *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?”* (ESV)

So you have to ask this question, “Why was Jesus sleeping in the stern in the midst of the greatest storm possibly in the history of the Sea of Galilee?” The easy answer could have been that He’s just bone-tired. He’d been teaching all day. I’m pretty tired after preaching a couple sermons on Sunday. Jesus had been teaching all day from a boat, no amplification. He was bone-tired. Why is Jesus sleeping in the midst of this huge storm? The answer, I think, is that Jesus is leading by example. What do I mean by that? Here they are in the worst storm of their lives and Jesus is leading by example, by doing what? Sleeping. How is he leading? Well, among other things, Jesus knows that nothing can harm Him until He has accomplished the mission for which God has sent Him. We know that. Jesus had more of an inside track than we do, but Jesus knew what His mission was. His mission ultimately would be to give His life for the sins of humanity on the cross. Since this was not that time, since He was not on the cross, He could be perfectly calm knowing that God was going to see them through this, so He could sleep. Is that how you are? Whenever anything happens in your life, whenever any kind of

trouble comes that would harm you, do you just say, “You know what? This is just another opportunity to get some shut-eye.” No matter what’s happening in my family, no matter what happens with my job, no matter what happens with the economy, no matter what happens at the State of the Union address. No matter what happens with any of these things I’m sleeping soundly. Why? Because I know that God has everything securely in his hands. There’s nothing that escapes His sovereign purpose, and as far as my own personal safety and my own personal harm, He is not going to take me until I have accomplished that for which He has set me to do. Do you have that kind of faith? Jesus did.

What’s interesting is the disciples’ question of Him. They’re really not asking him a question. It’s more like a rebuke. In other words, the disciples are asking Him, but do they ask Him a question because they think he can do something about it? Were they asking Him a question in order to make a point? Let me look at that quickly.

³⁸ . . . *And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (ESV)*

There are a couple things I noticed as I was studying this week. The first is, Jesus reminded me of a mother with a newborn child. Mothers with newborn babies are often justifiably, incredibly tired, and they could sleep through anything until they hear their baby cry. That’s one of those weird mysteries of life. Here Jesus can sleep through the most terrible, horrendous, crazy storm in the world and yet He wakes up at the nervous touch of one of His disciples. His care is still there. They say to Him, “Teacher do you not care that we are perishing?” There are two ways to read this. Either they’re saying, “Teacher, do You not care that we all are perishing, including You. Do You not care that we are going down?” A second way to look at this is, “Teacher, do You not care that we, that is we disciples, are perishing?” They don’t say, “Jesus, can You do something?” They’re basically making an accusation that a) You don’t care about us, or b) You don’t care about any of this, or You can’t do anything about it. Why are they going to Jesus? Are they going to Jesus because they think He can help them or are they going to Jesus simply to complain? Are they going to Jesus because either Jesus can’t do anything in their minds or He doesn’t care? Neither of those two things is true they’re going to find out in a minute. The storm might have been something they thought they had never seen anything like. Well, that was the beginning of the end for them – the beginning of great things for them to see. What does Jesus do? Jesus doesn’t answer them. I think that’s important to notice, too. Jesus doesn’t get up sort of all groggy. “What? What’s going on?” Then Peter fills him in, “The boat’s filling up and we’re about to die here and Andrew’s down there. He’s been with the bucket for two hours. Is there anything we can do?” Actually they wake him up and say, “Don’t you care that we’re perishing?” And it says, “He awoke.”

³⁹ *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. (ESV)*

He woke up and rebuked the wind and the sea. He didn’t ask them what was wrong; He knew what was going on. What Jesus does here to the wind and the waves is basically pulls a Yosemite Sam on them. You guys know I love Yosemite Sam. There’s always a spot in one of the episodes where he’s riding a dragon or a camel or a horse and he says, “Whoa. Whoa.” And at some point he gets off the horse and runs around it and clubs it on the head and says, “When I say whoa, I mean whoa!” That’s what the Greek here says. I’m not kidding! Jesus says, “Be still and stay still. When I say whoa, I mean whoa.” And all of a sudden there was great calm. The language Jesus uses here, by the way, is a bit odd because it’s the same language He uses when He rebukes and casts out demons.

What’s Mark’s point here? Jesus is doing something here that only God Himself can do. Jesus is doing something here that only God Himself could do in the Book of Exodus – command the wind and the waves and push the Red Sea apart when Israel crossed the Jordan or when Jonah was at sea. Jesus is doing something here that only God can do. What’s the response to that? Verse 40, as we move on to the discombobulation of the disciples.

⁴⁰ *He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (ESV)*

What does Jesus do? He wakes up, rebukes the wind and the waves, and then turns to the disciples and starts asking questions of them. “Why are you so afraid? Have you no faith?” By the way, the remedy to the first question is found in the second question. The remedy to fear is found in faith. What’s interesting here, though, is the verb tense that Jesus uses. You would think, “Okay, they’re going crazy. Their hearts are pumping Kool Aid in the midst of the storm. They don’t know if they’re going to live. Jesus wakes up and says, “Peace! Be still!” And it’s still, and you’d think they’re not afraid anymore. But they’re more afraid after Jesus calms the wind and the waves than they are before. Jesus says, “Why are you afraid.” He doesn’t say, “Why were you afraid?” He doesn’t say, “Why were you afraid? You knew I would have handled it.” He says, “Why are you afraid, now? Have you no faith?” The language there says, “And they feared with exceedingly great fear and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the waves obey him?’” There are a lot of questions there at the end, but the answers are found in the questions themselves. He says, “What are you afraid of? Have you still no faith?” Ask yourself that question, “What are you afraid of? Are you afraid of what people think about you? If you’re human, you are at some level. Are you afraid of what’s going to happen at your job? Are you afraid how your kids are going to turn out? Are you afraid of what’s going on in the economy? Are you afraid that somehow God has forsaken the United States because of all of our sins? What are the things you’re afraid of? Are you afraid?” The question you have to ask yourself is, “Have you any faith?” The answer to fear is faith because when you’re afraid you’re saying, “God, I don’t really believe that you either care about what’s going on or that you know what’s going on” This is the same thing that the disciples thought.” So think of any problem in your life. Is it finances? Do you ask God, “God, is it that You don’t care about me or is it that You don’t know about me?” The answer from God is, “I both know about you and care about you. Have you no faith? Will you trust me?” If you’re like me the answer most of the time is, “No.”

I don’t sleep a lot of times, and if I’m honest with myself it’s because I’m thinking about things that probably I should turn over to God and say, “God, it’s Yours.” Sometimes I turn it over to Him and He doesn’t take it right away and I’m still awake, but either way . . .” Do you preach the Gospel to yourself? You say, “Have faith in what?” The answer is in the last question. It’s a rhetorical question, I think. The original audience for this book was probably Christians who were being persecuted in Rome. When you’re being persecuted and you’re going through all sorts of trouble you have to wonder, “Is God indifferent to my suffering?” Here Jesus has just calmed the wind and the waves. He has shown His authority over nature, and what’s the last question in that passage? “Who then is this, that even the wind and the waves obey him?” He’s the One in Whom we are to have faith. He’s the One Who can calm the storm. He’s the One Who if He doesn’t calm the storm, He is in the storm with us. That may be the big question you need to ask yourself, “Can you smile at the adversity that is in your life? Can you smile at all the ups and downs? Can you smile at all the hardships, knowing that Jesus is in the boat with you?” One thing that’s easy to miss in this text because Mark is the only one who records it is at the very beginning. It says,

³⁶ *And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. (ESV)*

Now, think about it. There are all these boats out on the Sea of Galilee. This furious storm comes, the likes of which no one has ever seen. One of the boats has Jesus in it. All the rest of the boats do not have Jesus in them. You’re going through a storm, you’re going to go through storms. Which one of those boats do you want to be in if you had a choice? Knowing that you’re going to be on the sea and knowing that there is going to be a great and furious storm, do you want to be in the boat with Jesus or do you want to be in the boat by yourself? Are you going to be with the One Who has authority over the storm or are you going to cast your lot in by yourself? Don’t be deceived. I think this is the way my ADD brain works. Imagine how funny it would be (or not really funny) if people on other boats are praying to little wooden gods at the same time the disciples say, “What are You going to do?” And Jesus wakes up and says, “Peace! Be still!” No one hears it because it’s so loud, and they’re looking at their little wooden god and all of a sudden it becomes still. And they say, “See? I told you.” That’s not true, though. It might look as if that was true, but in the reality at the end of the day the One with authority is Jesus. Who then is this?

You know, that last line sort of reminds me of what my brain goes through when I get an odd Facebook request. I know most of you are probably not on Facebook because if you were you would have friended me. However, if you're familiar with Facebook, it's basically this social networking system, and people will send a request, "Can I be your friend" because they have to be a friend in order to see your information. Every now and then I get a bizarre friend request, or at least someone I never heard of. "Who then is this?" How do you figure it out? Well, the first thing I do is click on "Who are the friends we have in common." If you're here and you're trying to figure out Who Jesus is, it's a good place to start. Who knows Jesus that knows you? What are they like? Who are they? What friends do you have in common? The other thing you do if you're curious is you send them a message. "Who are you? Tell me something about yourself." If you're here and you're not a Christian and you're wondering, "I don't know about this stuff. Who is this guy?" Send Jesus a message. Pray to him; ask him, "Jesus if you are real, show yourself to me." My prayer for you is that you would Friend Him, that you will accept His request because He is constantly sending that request, "Please accept me. Embrace me." For those that do, trust Jesus. How often do you chat with Him? How often do you sort of remind yourself and comfort yourself with the fact that He is either in the boat with you or He has authority over the storm, because that's the fact? Think about that.