

introduction

The central wonder of the Christian faith is that Jesus is more than just a moral teacher or a noble example: he is “God with us.” This narrative of Jesus calming the storm does more than reveal the doctrine of the incarnation; it demonstrates how that profound truth offers immense comfort when we face life's trials. Jesus’ miracles are never merely arbitrary displays of power, but are intentional revelations of his character and the nature of his kingdom. Therefore, to read this story rightly, we must ask the same question posed by the disciples in verse 41. What does this tell us about who Jesus is?



When were you frightened or in danger because of a severe weather event? What did that feel like at the time?

read

Mark 4:35-41 (NIV)

³⁵ That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” ³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Take a few moments to reflect on the Scripture. Share some insights, questions, or points that strike you. Then read what follows.

context

The storm the disciples encountered was a direct result of their obedience to Jesus' command. This reminds us that the "storms" of life — our trials and troubles — are not always the result of personal sin or divine chastisement. Furthermore, we see here the very foundation of faith: Jesus had already declared, "Let us go over to the other side." As the disciples were about to learn, his word carries absolute power; they could have rested in the certainty that they would reach the other shore simply because he said they would.

The Sea of Galilee is prone to violent and sudden storms. "The Sea of Galilee sits seven hundred feet below sea level, and just thirty miles to the north is Mount Hermon, 9200 feet high. The cold air from the mountains continually clashes with warm air coming up from the sea of Galilee, and as a result, there are impressive thunderstorms and squalls." (Keller)

"The sea came to symbolize, for [Israelites], the dark power of evil, threatening to destroy God's good creation, God's people, God's purposes. In books like Daniel, the sea is where monsters come from." (Wright) Even for seasoned fishermen, the sea represented a realm of chaos. This explains why, in the book of Revelation, the promise that the sea "will be no more" serves as a definitive sign of eternal peace. However, notice that the disciples' terror actually increased after the storm stopped. They were confronted with a power more overwhelming than the elements, leading them to ask: "Who is this?"

the identity of Jesus

This account is designed to reveal Jesus' divine identity, not just his capability. He acts and speaks with an authority reserved for God alone. In this moment, Jesus is the physical fulfillment of what the Psalms and Isaiah proclaimed God would do for his people: "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble... he stilled the storm to a whisper, the waves of the sea were hushed" ([Psalm 107:28-29](#)). While the disciples eventually learn about their own hearts, they must first come to terms with the full magnitude of who Jesus is.

“That he is able to transform a great storm into a great calm with just a word reveals he has power to do what only the God who created the sea can do.”

— David E. Garland

Verse 39 is the thematic heart of the story: Jesus stands and, by his own inherent authority, pronounces peace over the chaos. The response is instantaneous and total; the sea becomes “completely (*megalē*: ‘mega’) calm.” Throughout the Old Testament, the power to part seas and still storms belongs to God alone.

discuss

- 1. Why was Jesus sleeping? The disciples viewed it as indifference. What do you think Jesus, the master teacher, was teaching them?**
- 2. What does the dramatic event of this passage (v. 39) reveal about Jesus’ power and divine nature?**
- 3. Why would the disciples be more afraid of Jesus than they were of the storm? How would you react if you were in the boat during this event?**

comfort in our storms

If Jesus rules the seas as God alone can, then we can trust him in other difficult situations. Mark’s Gospel was written for church communities facing intense storms of persecution. “Mark intended to lift the community’s eyes from the surging chaos that seems to engulf it and to fix them instead on the vision of the one enthroned in heaven, the monarch omnipotent in every storm... let the enemy forces do their worst, striking eve — as they think — unto the death. The joke will be on them” (Garland).

This passage connects to the story of Jonah (asleep in a boat during a storm, panicked sailors, miraculous intervention). Jonah offers himself to save the boat. Jesus looks ahead to the cross, where he gave his life to save his people from the ultimate storms of evil and death. We must remember that God's deliverance takes many forms: sometimes he saves us *from* trouble, sometimes *in* trouble, and sometimes *through* trouble. "Many who lose their jobs, their health, and their friends may feel that Jesus deliberately ignores their fate and shows no concern for them. Fear leads to despair that God does not care" (Garland). Ultimately, Mark's point is not just that the disciples were saved from one specific night at sea, but that we might glimpse the true identity of the one who was with them in the boat.

"Admitting the weighty problems and staggering disappointments, Christianity affirms that God is able to give us the power to meet them. He is able to give us the inner equilibrium to stand tall amid the trials and burdens of life. He is able to provide inner peace amid outer storms."

— Martin Luther King Jr.

discuss

- 4. Jesus often teaches us more profoundly through his actions than his words. How does Jesus offer himself to calm storms?**
- 5. Though our culture works to minimize or avoid the topic of suffering, take time to share how your faith matured specifically because of God's presence in your difficulties. How has suffering in your own "storms" provided you with a deeper level of trust?**
- 6. In times in your life when God seemed distant, indifferent, or deliberately allowed trouble to persist, were you able to experience God's comfort? What particular comfort can you take from this passage?**

upcoming

- Saturday, February 7 | **Community Salsa Night (18+), 7-9:30 pm**
Sign up on your own or with some friends for an evening of rhythm, music and community. A 90-minute intro to the Chachacha will be provided to help you dance the night away!
redeemerws.com/salsa
- Monday, February 9 | **Sing, Play, Speak, 6-9 pm**
The next gathering for working artists will showcase the works of actors and various writers in our community. Evenings include a meal and time for professional networking followed by performances.
redeemerws.com/singplayspeak
- Sunday, February 15 | **Spiritual Practices Workshop, 1:15-2:30 pm**
Join for lunch and this month's discussion on the spiritual practice of fasting.
redeemerws.com/spiritualpractices