**August 29, 2021 Mark 4:35-41**

 ***Signs and Wonders***

**Scripture:** Mark 4:35-41 NRSV

*(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 behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. (37)A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. (38)But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (39)He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. (40)He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" (41)And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"*

**Notes:**

1. What ***scares*** you?
	1. ***Fear*** is an issue in today’s passage;
	2. The ***disciples*** really don’t get the whole picture.
	3. Somehow Jesus manages to remain ***asleep***.
		1. *“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? (Mark 4:38)”*
2. “How can ***God*** let such terrible things happen in the world?”
	1. Satan wants for you to ***doubt*** God.
	2. Their faith fails; a ***gap*** is created between them and Jesus;
	3. Jesus was ***always*** right there.
3. Are the disciples wrong to be fearful? ***NO***!
	1. Their fear is ***normal*** and it’s to be ***expected***.
	2. What ***separated*** them from Jesus was their lack of understanding of who Jesus is.
	3. they accuse ***Jesus*** of not caring.
4. These miracles are “***signs***” pointing to Jesus as ***the*** ***Messiah***.
	1. Jesus calms the storm. “***Peace****.* ***Be******still****!*”
	2. *…and* ***know*** *that I AM God!*”
	3. At his ***command***, the winds calm; the waves settle; the storm passes.
		1. “*They were greatly afraid, and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'*” (Mark 4:41)
5. Is it any wonder that Jesus is ***frustrated*** with the disciples?
	* 1. “*Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?*”
	1. ***We*** ***ARE*** those same disciples in the boat.
	2. God’s right there in the boat with ***us***, ALL the time.
	3. Be at ***peace***. Be ***silent***; and ***know*** that I AM God.”

**Script:**

I remember when I was a kid, every year on the fourth of July we would get together for what seemed like a family picnic at Lakemont Park. Then after the picnic we would hit the rides in the park. Some of the rides were thrilling as a youngster, I always enjoyed the rocket ships, the little boats, and the airplanes. As I got older these rides lost their thrill and I moved to bigger rides like the roller coaster, the tilt a whirl, and the scrambler. But there were certain rides that I did not enjoy because they scared me; rides like the Octopus, the Ferris Wheel, and then there was the Monster’s Den. The Monster’s Den was a ride where you traveled through what appeared to be a haunted house, encountering ghosts, monsters, and maybe even a few vampires. I remember the first time I rode this I was scared to death, but each time I rode it I was less and less affected by the scary scenes. Now days, I am scared by different types of situations and encounters.

We all have things that scare us, and how these things affect us is really based upon our own doubts and insecurities. What scares you, I am not talking about things that startle you, but the things that make you agonize and worry. What keeps you awake at night while you worry about what is going to happen? What makes you sick to the stomach when you think about it? What makes tears of fear come to your eyes?

Well today we look at a passage in Mark, where the disciples are so scared that they accuse Jesus of not caring whether they live or die. Turn with me to Mark 4:35-41 and join me in the reading of our gospel passage for today?

*(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 behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. (37)A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. (38)But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (39)He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. (40)He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" (41)And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Mark 4:35-41 NRSV*

So I asked before, but I am asking again; what scares you? Seriously what really, really frightens you? Can you remember a time in your life, some moment, when you were more frightened than you’ve ever been at any other time in your life? What was it that caused that fear? How did you feel? More importantly; how did you respond?

Fear is an issue in today’s passage; but it is not the most important issue. Mark has a theme that runs through it from beginning to end, a theme called the “Messianic Secret” which points to Jesus as the Messiah of the Jewish faith. Mark presents his Gospel in an interesting way; we, the readers, know what’s going on; we know the end of the story; we know who Jesus is; but the disciples may have an indication as to who Jesus is, but they are not completely certain. They have moments of partial understanding, but really just don’t get the whole picture. They keep missing the point throughout the Gospels. And Jesus continually expresses his frustration with them; frustration because they just don’t get it. Many times, they don’t recognize what’s going on around them.

Mark tells us that Jesus has the disciples take him in their boat and set out for the other side of the Sea of Galilee; and then this storm comes up. Now, we all know that the Sea of Galilee is actually a lake, but it’s not a small lake; nor is it the size of one of our Great Lakes; but it’s still a fairly large lake. What makes storms on this lake so dangerous is the terrain surrounding the lake. The surrounding mountains serve as a funnel for storms. Winds rushing down the sides of the mountains hit the cooler waters of the lake and pick up tremendous energy. It’s not unusual for storms with 30-foot waves to be generated on the Sea of Galilee. So, imagine being in a small boat out on the lake, when one of those storms hits suddenly.

Mark says that the waves are beating into the boat and the boat was in danger of being swamped. And yet, somehow Jesus manages to remain asleep throughout this pounding storm. This fact alone can lead us down an interesting path. Here are Jesus’ disciples; they’re doing exactly what Jesus has asked them to do, and now they’re in mortal danger. And what’s Jesus doing? He’s SLEEPING! Doesn’t he care?! Just when they need him the most, Jesus is basically not around! You can hear the accusations in their voices, *“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? (Mark 4:38)”* in other words, Jesus don’t you care that we are in danger of dying here? We’ve heard similar accusation in the voices of others. How many times have you heard someone say, “I’ve always been a good Christian, why is God letting this happen to me?”; or “Where’s God when I need Him?” Maybe you’ve heard someone say, “How can God let such terrible things happen in the world?” Let’s be honest, haven’t we all thought these things at least once in our life?

But as I said last week, that is exactly what Satan wants, Satan wants for you to doubt the sovereignty of God, the love of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit. These words reflect just how far the disciples really are from understanding who Jesus is. In a moment of crisis, their faith fails; a gap is created between them and Jesus; and Satan steps in to fill the gap with doubt and accusations. The reality is that this situation is a mirror into which we can look and see ourselves reflected. We are those same disciples in the boat out on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus did not create that storm, nor did Jesus leave the disciples alone. Jesus was always right there; He was there all the time.

Are the disciples wrong to be fearful? NO! Absolutely not!!! Their fear is normal and it’s to be expected. Just consider this for a moment. At least four of these disciples are experienced fishermen. They understand the lake. They understand its perils. They surely had experienced storms before, and they had come through them successfully. So, if they’re frightened with what’s happening, it must’ve been one incredible storm. So, we need to be understanding of their fear, and we need to understand that it was not their fear that was separating them from Jesus. What separated them from Jesus was their lack of understanding of who Jesus is. In addition to this, the separation is compounded by the way they approach Jesus in fear.

The Disciples didn’t go to Jesus, wake him, and say, “Teacher we need help here; we know you can calm the storm; we know you can save us.” Nope! What they did do, was accuse Jesus of not caring. Just the same as we accuse God of not caring when we ask, “Why is God letting this happen to me?” or “Why does God let such awful disasters, or wars, or famines why does God let them occur? Doesn’t God care?”

This makes me ask, “Is it even possible that Jesus does not care?” How could Jesus possibly NOT care?! He’s in the same boat with them; the same boat as us; the same boat being swamped! BUT, you might say, he’s the Son of God; he doesn’t have to care; he doesn’t have to worry. Oh, yeah wait a minute; there is that matter of a cross looming in the future. So, maybe he does have to worry. But, he is the Son of God, isn’t he? Yes, and that’s exactly the point. You see, in order to get past their fear; in order for them to overcome their fear, the disciples have to first recognize that Jesus is not some ordinary human being who just happens to have these unusual abilities to preach and to heal; they have to understand and acknowledge that Jesus IS the Son of God.

Mark is sharing an incredible turning point here in Jesus’ ministry. Up until now in Mark’s Gospel, Jesus has certainly been “performing miracles”; at least that’s what the disciples see it as, “performing miracles.” But these miracles are “signs.” All those healings and those exorcisms, they’re signs; They’re signs pointing to Jesus as the Messiah; Signs pointing to Jesus as the Son of God.

So, here we have Mark witnessing to an incredibly powerful sign. Had the disciples made the request of Jesus, “Teacher, save us as we know you can,” it would have been an acknowledgment of their understanding of who Jesus is. But the lack of a request is just as powerful in meaning. It raises the question of doubt.

The disciples aren’t sure; they don’t believe with certainty that Jesus can save them. So, what happens? Does Jesus rebuke them? No, Jesus calms the storm. “*Peace. Be still*!” that is all it takes, he says. “*Peace. Be still*!” But there are six more words that are implied but not spoken here, “*Peace. Be still. . . and know that I AM God!*” Jesus doesn’t have to speak those six extra words, because what happens is no mere miracle, no mere exorcism, no mere healing, no mere magic trick; what happens is a sign. At his command, the winds calm; the waves settle; the storm passes. The calming of the storm is a sign pointing right back to Jesus. “*Know that I AM God*.” He doesn’t have to say the words; the silence of the calming storm screams these words, “*Know that I AM God*.”

But then again, we know the ending of the story; the disciples do not. We know without a doubt that Jesus is the Son of God. The disciples do not have the knowledge that we do. You’d think that after a sign like this, there would be no room for doubt. But listen again to the end of this lesson: “*They were greatly afraid, and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'*” (Mark 4:41).

Is it any wonder that Jesus is frustrated with the disciples? After all that, they still say to one another, “*Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?*” Don’t you just want to tap on their foreheads with your knuckles and say, “*Helloooo, is anybody in there; anybody home?*”

Well, if we did that, we’d be missing perhaps the most important lesson. not only this lesson in Mark, but also of the whole Gospel of Mark. As I said previously, Mark’s Gospel is a mirror into which we may look. And what we see looking back is ourselves. So, if we point a finger of condemnation or even of criticism at the disciples for their lack of understanding; we’re pointing right back at ourselves. We ARE those same disciples in the boat. We ARE those disciples when we demand, “Where is God when awful things happen in our lives.” WHERE IS GOD? God’s right there in the boat with us; right there in the midst of all the suffering. He is crying right alongside with you.

There’s a story that I heard many times in the past; well actually it’s a joke. It is about a man named Fred who tried to ride out a flood in his home. As the water climbed higher, Fred climbed the steps to the second floor. Looking out his window, he saw his neighbor paddle up in a canoe. The neighbor shouted, “C’mon Fred, climb in and I’ll get you to dry land.” Fred waved his neighbor off and said, “How could God let this happen, why doesn’t he save me?” The water continued to rise, and Fred climbed to the roof of his house. Pretty soon, a helicopter flew up to his house and the pilot offered to pull Fred in. Fred waved the helicopter off, and muttered, “How could God let this happen, why doesn’t he save me?” The water continued to rise and Fred drowned. When he got to heaven, he said to God, “How could you let this happen; why didn’t you save me?” And you know what God said? God looked at Fred and said, “I sent a canoe, and I sent a helicopter. Why didn’t you trust me enough to get in?”

All we have to do to accept God and Jesus into our lives, is nothing. God has saved us. God is right here with us. God is right by our side not just when things are good or when things are bad, God is right by our side ALL the time. God walks by our side. God rides in the boat with us. Don’t wonder why God isn’t doing something about the bad things that happen. Don’t accuse God of not caring. Just ask, and then listen. God says, “Be at peace. Be silent; and know that I AM God.”