Why Are You So Afraid?

Mark 4:35-41
Key Verse: Mark 4:40
He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

In 1933, work began on one of the wonders of the modern world, the Golden Gate Bridge. Upon its completion in 1937, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world and considered a golden gate to a bright American future. But did you know, that as a rule of thumb, the construction company, expected one death per every million dollars spent. Do you know how much the bridge cost? Thirty-five million dollars. Do you know how many people fell? Even though safety lines and hard hats were mandated, and workers who refused to use them were threaten to be fired, still, during construction of the bridge 30 workers fell, but 19 of them were saved because of a safety net that the lead engineer insisted on installing. (They actually set a record because only 1 man died up-till one month before it opened, then on February 17, ten more men lost their lives when a section of scaffold carrying twelve men fell through the safety net) Was the net worth the over $130K cost, and the time it took to install? I guess it depends on who you ask. The 19 men who were saved by it would probably say yes, but it's worth goes beyond that because not only did it save their lives, the work actually finished ahead of schedule and $1.3M under budget because they didn't live in fear of falling. Yet as Christians, sometimes we too live our life in fear, instead living by faith. In our text this morning, Jesus asks the question, "Why are you so afraid?" so let's take this opportunity and think about what drives our fear and what can we do about it through today's passage.

Previously, Jesus had been teaching his disciples and the crowds about the kingdom of God and what it was like. The crowds were in awe of Jesus' teach because he taught differently than the religious leaders. Jesus' teaching had power and people were naturally drawn to him, but the day was over and night had come and Jesus wanted to get away and spend some quiet time with his disciples. Take a look at verses 35-36, "**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." The body of water here has many names, most commonly it's recognized as "the Sea of Galilee" but it's also called the "Sea of Kinnereth" (Nu 34:11; Josh. 12:3), the "Lake of Gennesaret" (Lk 5:1), the "Sea of Tiberias" (John 6:1; 21:1), and sometimes simply "the lake" (John 6:16). The Sea of Galilee was only 5 miles at it widest (east to west) and 7 miles long from north to south. Jesus and his disciples hopped into a boat and headed east leaving the western shore in their wake. As the noise of the crowd slowly disappears behind them, Mark records other boats going along with them. (we don't know how big their boat was, big enough to hold at least 13 people)

The distance they traveled that night might have been roughly equivalent of going from Navy Pier to Montrose Beach, roughly 5 miles by water. Close your eyes and imagine the scene with me, it was pitch black, except for the light of the moon that reflected off of the lake. After a long day, no one was talking because everyone's tired. Jesus was already asleep in the back on an old cushion

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he found lying in the boat. It was tranquil evening, so peaceful, with the only sound they heard coming from their oars, if they rowed it or even quieter if they were sailing (we're not sure which). When all of a sudden out of nowhere "A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped." (v37) You see, the sea's location makes it prone to sudden and violent storms as the cool wind air comes over the eastern mountains and drops suddenly over the warm air that covers the sea. A squall is defined as a sudden, violent gust of wind, often accompanied by rain, snow or sleet. Weather.com says that sometimes brief tornadoes form quickly along the leading edge of a squall line so these are nothing to take lightly. This one was so violent that waves were consuming the boat and it was filling with water to the point it was nearly full.

Take a look at verse 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?"" Now remember that at least four of the disciples were seasoned fishermen and not newbies when it comes to sailing. They had been through a few storms in their day but this storm, with such big waves battering their small boat, even these experienced sailors were worried. We don't know how long this was going on, but the situation became critical. Being experienced fisherman, I would expect the disciples tried everything they could to keep the boat afloat. Whether it was to grab to the closest bucket and start bailing the water out, or to row as fast as they could to get to the other side, or whatever other action they could take, I would think their basic sailing instincts would have kicked in to high gear, but everything they did couldn't keep up and the storm was winning. When they realized that, they were terrified, scared to death. Have you ever been in a situation, where you've tried everything you could think of and nothing is working and all you can see is impending disaster? You're at your wits end, you've hit a wall, and there is absolutely nothing you can do, except to brace for impact. That is a scary position to be in because you are helpless. (Like when the Italian cruise ship Costa Concordia ran aground in 2012. Captain Francesco Schettino was so terrified, he jumped ship) This is the situation the disciples were in.

I believe that the Bible is making a point in this story. That this wasn't an ordinary storm and it wasn't an ordinary situation. I believe that it was a test to see where the disciple's faith was at. Back in Jesus' day, and probably in our own as well but, there was this idea that if something bad happened to you, it was because you had done something wrong and you were being punished for your sin. That's why when Jesus and his disciples came across a man that had been born blind, they asked Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (Jn 9:2) So when something bad happened, people would say, "huh oh, what did you do to deserve this?" However, when this storm came, it wasn't because of anyone's sin. It wasn't because they were out of the will of God. In fact, it was quite the opposite, they were acting in obedience to God because it was Jesus who told them to go out there in the first place.

It is interesting to compare similar experiences in the Bible. Like comparing this storm to the one that Paul or Jonah experienced. We know that when Jonah ran into his storm, he wasn't doing what God wanted, he was acting outside of the will of God. And when Paul ran into his storm, he

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was following God's will. But at this moment, the disciples were acting in the will of God. So, we should take note and see that storms may or may not directly connected to our actions, we don't know. If we have something to repent of, we should repent (it's always a good idea to be humble and repent), but if not, we should try and see what's God's purpose for us through the storm.

We should understand that God can do whatever he wants. Just because we act in obedience to God doesn't mean that storms won't come. If God wants the storm to come, it's coming and if not, then smooth sailing. In the book of Acts, God didn't calm the storm for Paul even though he was a man of great faith. (Acts 27) And we know at this point, the disciples didn't have much faith, so the calming, or not, of a storm doesn't seem to depend on faith. It all depend upon God's will. So, sometimes God saves us FROM trouble and other times he saves us IN THE MIDST OF trouble. Sometimes he saves us from death; and sometimes he uses our death to glorify his name. Consider those who have been martyred, or suffered, for their faith (even in the world today), the fact is, storms are often part of God's plan. But whichever the case God strengthens and matures us through it.

How could Jesus sleep in a little boat while bouncing on the waves in the midst of a great storm? Remember, Jesus was fully human, he had been putting some pretty long hours and he was exhausted. Also remember, we are talking about faith here. Jesus, as a man, yet divine, knows full well were His faith lies. Jesus asleep in the storm is a sign of a complete trust in God. The Psalmist illustrates this: "I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. 6 I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side." (Ps 3:5-6) "In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety." (Ps 4:8) Those who trust fully in God, can sleep well at night. "When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. 25 Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, 26 for the Lord will be at your side and will keep your foot from being snared." (Proverbs 3:24-26) The Disciples lacked this kind of trust. I believe that God wanted to show his disciples what complete trust in Jesus looked like. The disciples needed to learn two aspects of faith: first, they needed to learn to trust LIKE Jesus and second, they needed to learn to trust IN Jesus.

To this point, I think the disciples still regarded Jesus as simply a godly man, a prophet, and even though he could perform miracles, he was still just a man. Don't get me wrong, I don't want to minimize Jesus. Indeed, they've seen Jesus do some amazing things. Just from Mark's gospel alone to this point they've seen Jesus drive out evil spirits, heal Peter's mother in law, heal a man with leprosy, heal a paralytic, but maybe it was kind of like a magic show to them. And to be point blank, miracles were nothing new, many had been performed in the past, Elijah did many miracles and healings and Moses parted the Red Sea among other things etc. Since it's early on in Jesus' ministry, the disciples don't fully understand who exactly Jesus is. They know he is very special but they're about to learn a whole lot more.

Take a look at verse 39, it tells us, "He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm." We need to understand this picture

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given to us by Mark. These words are from Peter an eye-witness. There was a great, they were terrified, and then immediately, everything was calm. Then Jesus asked the fateful questions: “He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”” (v40) Jesus had been teaching them about faith and the storm was a pop-quiz and they failed miserably. Why? Because they didn’t know Jesus. They may have been WITH Jesus, but they did not KNOW Him. Verse 41 is evidence of this it says, “They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!””

Remember the OT understanding is that only God can command the winds and the waves. Here, Jesus just did that. The implications of that one act boggled their minds. They are only beginning to see and understand just who Jesus is. Psalm 89:8-9 “Who is like you, Lord God Almighty? You, Lord, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you. 9 You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them.” Psalm 104:5-9 “He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved. 6 You covered it with the watery depths as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. 7 But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; 8 they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them. 9 You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth.” Only God can command the wind and the waves and here is Jesus. These disciple still do not understand who Jesus is. They were fearful because while they were WITH Jesus, yet they do not KNOW Jesus.

It’s not that our faith can calm the storm, but about putting our faith in Jesus, the Son of God, and trust in him no matter what the situation is. We must trust that we are not alone, that we are not going to fall and be lost forever having to fend for ourselves. We have to learn to have faith and trust in God. This doesn’t come naturally to us. We like to put our trust in ourselves and our abilities, that’s why it’s so scary for us when we are confronted by an uncontrollable situation.

Often, we find people that are one of two sides of the same coin, either we don’t think that God exists and it’s all up to us to get it done, or we believe in God but don’t fully trust him with our problems. So, we have to ask ourselves what, or who, do we put our faith in? What is the root of our fear?

There will be storms. That is a fact. But is Jesus in your boat with you? There were other boats on the lake night, I’m not sure what happened to them, but only one of them had Jesus in it. One take-a-way from this passage is the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus. When the storm raged, the disciples did everything they knew to steady the boat, when nothing worked they were overcome with fear, in their desperation they remembered they were not alone. Jesus was in the boat. All they needed to do was take their problem to Jesus. We might not have storms very often in our life, but when they come, it’s good to go to Jesus.

Sometimes it may feel as if God is asleep when our life is in chaos. Have you ever thought that God didn’t know or really care about what you are going through? We need to know that we are

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not alone. Jesus is all powerful He got up commanded the winds to be still and in a flash the storm was Calm. It's true, when storms of life rage we have a savior, who is able to calm the storm. We just need to remember to call on Jesus in the storm.

Another thing we can take-a-way is to replace our fear with faith. **Fear is false evidence that looks real to us**. Fear is the opposite of faith. Fear lies to you trying to make you believe that you are going fail and end in destruction. Fear paralyzes us and keeps us from praying. It is time we replace our fear with faith. When fear says, "You're done/finished/kapoot", faith says "it's not over, you will have the victory." "faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." (Heb 11:1) Like the hymn we sang this morning, faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

In conclusion, I'd like to ask you a question, if God be for us, who can be against us? If God Is for us, then why do we fear the world? Fear has the power to paralyses us if we let it. Romans 8:31 says, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" We can read these words and understand them, and still not have them in our hearts. But really, if God is for us, who can be against us? Maybe we live our Christian lives in secret or we're afraid of what people will say if we speak out in the name of Jesus. The world is unafraid to speak out against Jesus and the things of God. So why are we?

It is much the same way today. Many people attend church and read the Bible. They have been all around Jesus, but in their hearts, they fail to see and understand who Jesus is, just as the disciples failed to see in this story. We fear the world, we fear what the world can take from us, we fear what the world can demand from us, but we have no fear of God. Jesus said: Luke 12:4–5 ""I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him." We must have an eternal mindset. This world is not all there is. We will all answer before Jesus all that we have done and left undone. When we begin to live knowing not only in our minds, but in our hearts, that Jesus is in control, that there is nothing man or nature can do to us to separate us from His love and will, then we can truly live victorious lives. Do you remember our key verse for the year from Romans 8:37 "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." How do we live this victorious life? How do we live fearlessly for Jesus? The secret is to be with Jesus day and night. To be with Him through thick and thin. To actively learn to rely on Him in the good times, not just turn to Him the bad times. We must see that all the different situations we find ourselves in, that we must conduct ourselves in such a way to bring Him glory. God allows or even brings difficulties to grow us and to glorify Himself. We must be without fear because God has all things under control.

Do you remember when Peter and John faced the Sanhedrin, what happened? Acts 4:13 tells us, "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus." Have you spent some quality time with Jesus lately? Or do you only know ABOUT Jesus versus knowing Him

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PERSONALLY. Actively relying on Jesus for all things takes all fear of the world away and we can live victorious for Him. Are you relying on Him and allowing Jesus shape you in what He wants you to be?

In this passage, we can see the AWESOME power of Jesus. From this we can have confidence knowing that God is in control of EVERYTHING. There is NOTHING that is not under God's control. Jesus is the king of the kingdom of God and he has POWER.

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