

Sermon: “Experiencing Peace in Midst of the Storm”

Text: Mark 4:35-41

Introduction:

The passage that we are exploring today out of the 4th chapter of the Gospel of Mark has been a favorite of mine for many years.

Back in my mid-twenties, I was a seminary student at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California—studying to become a pastor. My degree program (Master of Divinity) required me to take classes in various disciplines such as theology, church history, Biblical languages (Greek & Hebrew), ethics, preaching, and numerous others. As you can imagine, I also had to take some courses that taught specific books of the Bible. One particular semester, I decided to take a course on the Gospel of Mark taught by a visiting professor by the name of Dr. William Lane. I took the course because it only lasted for 2 weeks—the reason being that Dr. Lane’s full-time job was as a professor at Western Kentucky University (I can remember being impressed by the fact that he had a passion to teach the Word of God in a state school setting), and thus had to cram an entire semester into a couple of weeks. I liked the idea of only going to class for 10 days, instead of spreading it out over an entire semester.

I did not take the class because I had any particular interest in the Gospel of Mark (other than the fact that it was a book in the Bible). But I can tell you that my opinion changed drastically over the span of those two weeks. Dr. Lane lit a FIRE in my soul for the Gospel of Mark. He opened my eyes in so many different ways. I came to appreciate who Mark was—as well as the POWER of what he wrote (inspired by the Holy Spirit) and WHY he wrote it.

You see, the Gospel of Mark isn’t merely a historical account of the life of Christ. The overarching purpose of Mark is to encourage struggling Christians under the oppressive persecution of the Roman Empire to HOLD FIRM to their faith in Jesus as the TRUE SON OF GOD and the ONLY ONE who can RESCUE us from sin and the pain of this world. The Gospel of Mark is a lifeline for struggling Christians.

Mark chapter four is an amazing chapter. Jesus begins by telling the parable of the four “soil types” that represent the four types of people that hear the Word of God. Sadly, most people hear but don’t truly receive the Gospel. Jesus goes on in the chapter to describe how the Kingdom of God, like a small little mustard seed, will go on to fill the entire world with Upper Story Truth. Twice in this chapter, in verses 11 and 34, Jesus pulls His disciples aside to explain to them in detail the meaning behind everything that He is teaching.

This last story in chapter 4 is a test, to see if the disciples are really learning what Jesus has been teaching them. The disciples are in a boat when a terrible storm whips up—with Jesus asleep in the back of the boat. Moment of truth—do the disciples have TRUE FAITH that Jesus is the Son of God with the power to overcome a dark and difficult world (represented by the actual storm). As we read the story, we see that the disciples don’t do so well in this particular pop-quiz. They freak out, believing that they will drown—even with Jesus in the boat with them.

- What about you? Do you believe that Jesus is in control, and can calm any storm?

Examination:

- Read **Mark 4:26-34**

- These two simple little stories center on seeds (as do verses 1-20). What do you know about seeds? Take some time to list out every fact you can think of to describe a seed—no observation is too small or insignificant.
- In both of these parables, Jesus begins by stating “the kingdom of God is like” a seed. How so?
- Jesus makes an important observation about the farmer in v. 27. He says that night and day, whether the farmer is asleep or awake, the seed grows. What do you think this means—and why do you think Jesus said it?
- Verses 28-29 describe a process. What is that process, & what does it mean?
- In verses 30-32, Jesus identifies a specific seed. What type of seed and why?
- What point is Jesus making in comparing the kingdom of God to a mustard seed? Is Jesus stating this as a possibility—or is He saying that the kingdom of God WILL ACTUALLY become “the largest of all garden plants” with enormous branches that give shade and provides a perch for the birds?
- Make a case for the fact that Jesus is teaching in these two parables that the kingdom of God will be both inevitable (unable to be stopped—even when we sleep) and global (encompassing the entire world).
- Verses 33-34 give a great deal of insight. Jesus knew that the crowds were only capable of understanding so much. But when Jesus was alone with His disciples—He went into far greater depth. What do you think Jesus explained to them about these two parables?

- Read **Mark 4:35-41**

- Take some time to explore the detail of what Mark tells us in verses 35-37. What day? What time of day? Who’s idea was it to cross the sea? What does it mean for Jesus to be “just as He was”? Does this seem like an eye-witness?
- Do you think there is any connection to Jesus sleeping—and what He had just told them about the farmer in v. 27 (spoken earlier that day)?
- How severe do you believe the storm was if we find seasoned fishermen, who daily fished this exact lake, believing that this storm will cause them to drown?
- This is where things get really interesting. Jesus has JUST been teaching the disciples about the kingdom of God. The real question is—does Jesus BRING the kingdom of God, and do the disciples believe it? If the disciples believe that Jesus will drown—do they really believe that Jesus is the Son of God?
- What two questions does Jesus ask in v. 40—and why?
- What kind of power does Jesus possess? Do you believe this?

Application:

The Gospel of Mark is written to struggling Christians to HOLD FIRM to their faith in Jesus as the TRUE SON OF GOD and the ONLY ONE who can RESCUE us from sin and the pain of this world. He is the ONE who gives us peace in the midst of the storms of life. The application is obvious: Believe it. Believe that Jesus holds the power over everything that is happening in this world. Don’t freak out, and allow worry to consume you. Trust Him. God IS AT WORK.