

## **FLY AWAY, FEAR!**

### **Mark 4:35-41**

I have a friend who has a fishing tale I doubt that few of you fishermen can match. A number of years ago he and two of his buddies took an old converted ski boat out on the gulf deep sea fishing. They had planned to go out only about five miles, but youthful exuberance mixed in with a little foolishness extended their venture to about ten miles, about twice as far as they had ever been before and out of sight of land. Well, they were having a good time fishing and then one of them noticed a dark cloud off on the horizon. They probably didn't think much at first, but the cloud began to get a little closer, and they decided that they better start heading back to shore.

But it was too little, too late. Before they got very far at all the cloud caught up with them, and to their great dismay they realized they were in a heap of trouble. They scrambled around and found their life jackets and strapped them on. The boat started taking in water at a frightening pace, and there was no pump on board to pump it out. The wave swells were so high that every time they came down their motor was out of the water. Their GPS told them that at the speed they were going it would take them six hours to get back to shore, and it was 3:00 in the afternoon. My friend said, "We went from talking and having a good time to almost absolute silence. We were scared. We thought there was a good chance the boat would sink. We were just hoping that we could make it to the sight of land. If we could just see land it would give us hopes that we could swim in if we had to."

Well, by the grace of God after about an hour of bailing and I'm sure praying, the storm blew over and they made it back to

shore in about two hours. And my friend told me yesterday, “Never again will I do such a stupid thing”.

You may have never been fearful for your life out on a lake or in the ocean, but there are other fearful situations that could blindsides people every day. The doctor walks in their room and tells them that the tests were positive, and with radiation and chemo they could hope for maybe two years to live. Or they walk in the door one evening after work and find a note on the table that says their wife and kids have left and they’re not coming back. Or they get the call that there has been a terrible accident involving a car their child was riding in, and two people have been killed. And they have a rush of fear that sweeps over them from the crown of their head to the tip of their toes. And beloved, don’t think, “That could never happen to me”. Nobody ever thinks it will happen to them. But it does.

Well, if you’ve never experienced any of these things or anything similar you are blessed indeed. But many people live in a world of quiet, unsettling fear all the time. The nice name we give them is “worrier”. They worry about what the doctor might say, or what might happen to the kids, or what might happen at work that would cause them to lose their job, or that their parents might get a divorce, or that they might not find a decent Christian guy or girl to marry. We all know someone who worries, and you may be one of them. But if you are a worrier, you might as well call a spade a spade. Worry is fear and fear is sin. Because fear cripples you, it dominates you, it robs you of the joy that Jesus wants you to have in life, it robs others of the joys the you could bring into their lives, and most of all it robs God of the glory He wants to receive from your service to Him. Because the bottom line of fear is, “God is not going to take care of me”, and instead of glory that brings shame to His holy name.

But if your life is ruled by fear today, I have good news. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace! And over and over in the Scriptures Jesus says “Fear not!” And today we are going to learn just why we have no reason to fear no matter what kind of storm may be raging in our lives.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Mark 4:35-41. It had been a long day for Jesus. He began by teaching a great multitude by the Sea of Galilee, then giving the disciples a private follow up session. It continued with a time with the multitude again of healing and casting out demons. And by nightfall Jesus was ready for a break, so He said to His disciples, “Let’s get in the boat and go to the other side of the lake”. And Jesus was so exhausted from ministering all day that as soon as they launched out he went into the stern and took a nap. And the next thing the disciples know that they are in a raging storm that is threatening to sink the ship.

Now, let’s stop here and learn the first of several lessons from this story. Matthew’s account tells us that the disciples followed Jesus into the boat (Matt. 8:23). And beloved, **when you follow Jesus, He often calls you into a storm.** Not a literal storm, but a storm of life that could just as surely cause you great trouble, and yet Jesus will call you into it anyway. But let me ask you something. Do you think that the storm on the Sea of Galilee that evening caught Jesus by surprise? Of course not! He knew that storm was coming before the foundation of the world. And if Peter and Andrew and James and John and known it, as professional fishermen they wouldn’t have dared to venture out on the water with such a storm blowing up. If my friend had known ahead of time about the storm he would encounter and one of his buddies suggested they go out anyway, he would have said, “You are out of your mind!” But our Lord has never been one to operate inside

the box, and He led His disciples right into a terrible tempest that no dare devil mariner in the world would challenge.

So just why did Jesus lead them into such a storm? And why does Jesus lead us into raging storms in our lives? Oftentimes Jesus leads us into a storm to grow our faith, for beloved, there is no way for your faith to grow until you need your faith, until you come to a place where God **must** supernaturally come to your rescue because there is no other answer. Romans 5 tells us that **tribulation** produces patience, and patience produces character, and character produces hope. And when you see God do something **supernatural** to deliver you from a trial in your life, then you learn firsthand what a big God that you serve. But He put you in that trial in the first place to grow your faith.

But there is another reason that following Jesus sometimes leads you into a storm. And that is because the storm is caused by the devil, for the devil is always, always opposing the work of Jesus. We cannot be dogmatic, but it could very well be that Satan caused of the storm on the Sea of Galilee that day. He certainly wanted to kill Jesus before He could die on the cross, and He tried to do it numerous other times without success. But it is also possible that Satan wanted to thwart Jesus' trip to the other side of the lake because of what he knew would happen there. For the very first thing that happened when Jesus stepped out of the boat was that He met a demoniac who desperately needed deliverance, and of course Jesus delivered him. And that former demoniac became a witness for Christ to all of the region surrounding his home. And Satan hated that when it happened.

But the point is, beloved, true followers of Jesus Christ will encounter storms in this world. Either by the hand of Jesus to grow your faith, or by the hand of Satan to ground your faith. And sometimes our storms simply come from living in a body of flesh that is decaying day by day. But that's why Jesus said, "...in this

world you will have tribulation”. But thank God He also said, “Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

But there is another truth that God would have us to learn from our story today. Not only will Jesus **call** you into the storm, but **Jesus cares for you in the storm**. When the storm began to beat against the little boat that Jesus and the disciples were in, as the disciples began to fight for survival Jesus was nowhere around, but He was down in the stern asleep. And we don't know how long He would have been there had the disciples not gone and woken Him up.

Let me ask you, when you are going through a storm in your life, does it ever seem to you that you are in the storm alone, because you can't sense the presence of Jesus anywhere around? You know that you are saved but you wonder, “Why doesn't He speak or why doesn't He just do something? Does He even know what I'm going through? Does He even care?” I was talking with one of our dear saints just a few weeks ago and that was their situation. They've had all kinds of physical things going on and they had gotten discouraged and just couldn't sense the presence of God in their storm and wondered why He had remained silent. And that's what the disciples thought. Literally they said to Him, “Lord, we are perishing. Don't you care? Save us!”

Well, beloved, let me say to you this morning, “Yes, Jesus cares!” Jesus cares for you more than you will ever know! Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:7, “Casting all of your care upon Him, for He cares to you”. Luke writes that Jesus wept over the lostness of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), and He wept because He cared for Jerusalem. John writes that Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, Jn. 11:35), not for Lazarus, but for those who were so broken hearted over the death of their brother and friend. And Jesus wept because He cared for Mary and Martha and Lazarus' friends.

Matthew writes that when Jesus saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion for them (Matt. 9:36). And the word there is the strongest word for pity in the Greek language. It is a word that indicates compassion at the very deepest level of one's being, and in the gospels it used only of Jesus (Barclay).

Have you ever been at the point of groaning compassion, where you are so broken with grief that you just moan and groan? Some of you have. Would you have more compassion than the Son of God? That's the kind of compassion that Jesus had for hurting people. Think how much you care for your children when they are hurting. Think about how much you want to sooth their grief and pain. Well, beloved, if you will magnify your feelings of empathy about 1000 times you will know when in your times of hurting how much Jesus cares for you.

But I want us to see a third truth that God would have us learn about storms in our lives. Not only that Jesus actually **calls us into the storm**, and that Jesus **cares for us in the storm**, but beloved, praise God, Jesus also **comes to us in the storm**. When the disciples awakened Jesus the Bible says that He immediately rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace, be still". And the Griffin paraphrase is, "Hold still, storm! I'm going to put a muzzle you and you'll never take it off!" And the instant Jesus spoke the wind and waves were totally shut down.

Now, don't miss the picture of what happened. One moment you had perhaps a ten foot sea and the next split second you had a sea of glass. If Jesus had shut down the wind alone it would have been hours and hours before the waves would have died down. But when Jesus delivered His disciples that day it was total deliverance. Mark writes that when Jesus spoke there was a great calm, and it happened in the bat of an eye. What an incredible display of His power! But beloved, that's the difference of crying out to Jesus and crying out to anyone else in the midst of

your storm. Jesus is the **only one** Whom you know who can come to you and give you peace in the midst of your storm, whatever the storm or wherever you may be.

Years ago I remember hearing a man tell a heartbreaking story of something that happened to him. Glen Pittard was a pharmacist at the Clay County Hospital, the county where I grew up. It just so happened that he was working one day when an ambulance brought in an acquaintance of mine, a college student who had had a car accident on the way home from Auburn one weekend. Glen knew the student and had played volleyball with him many times at the Methodist church in Lineville. And when they brought in Sidney Seymour Glen went in his holding room to check on him. Sidney was in bad shape and he knew it. But he was still conscious, and when he saw Glen he looked at him anxiously and said, "Glen, am I going to die? Am I going to die?" And Glen replied, "You're going to be OK, Sidney, you're going to be OK". But Sidney didn't get OK. Sidney died. And I remember Glen Pittard saying how helpless he felt watching his young friend slip out into eternity and nobody could help him.

Beloved, you may not have gotten there yet, but I promise you, there will come a day in your life when no one, no matter how much they love you, when no human being can come to you and be with you and comfort you in the storm that is raging in the depths of your soul. You may be fishing on the backwater when an unexpected squall roars in, just like the one that hit my friend on the Gulf Coast. You may be lying on a gurney waiting to go into surgery, you may be accosted at a convenience store by a carjacker who's driving you to who knows where and planning to do who knows what to you, you may be pinned inside your car at the scene of an accident, badly injured, just like Sidney Seymour. You might be lying under a mountain of rubble in the aftermath of a killer tornado. But you will be cut off from all human comfort.

But it is at those times that Jesus comes to His own and says, “Peace, be still!” And you know that all is well, because the Creator and Ruler of the universe is on the scene, completely in charge. I’ve had it happen to me and some of you have had it happen to you. And even though you wouldn’t want to go through the storm again, you wouldn’t trade the moment Jesus’ peace descended upon you for anything in the world.

Now, before we close I want you to quickly notice two things about the disciples on the day of their deliverance. First of all let’s look at their **faith**. Or more correctly, their lack of faith. After Jesus and calmed the angry sea He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? Where is your faith?” That was a good question. For you see, the disciples had already been witness to Jesus miracles no less than ten times. They saw Him turn water into wine, they saw him cure the lepers, raise the lame, heal the sick, cast out demons. They even saw Him raise someone from the dead! And yet they were still ignorant to who Jesus really was and the extent of His power.

Beloved, let me say that not one of us can live off yesterday’s manna. Not one of us is strong enough to be faithful to Christ without daily going back to the well and drawing out a fresh bucket of living water, the water that only Jesus can give. Jesus told the woman at the well, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (Jn. 4:14). But where is the well where we can find the living water? Right here (Bible) and right here (mind). God says in Rom. 2:17, “For faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”. Beloved, it is true! When you pour yourself into the reading, memorization, and meditation on God’s Word, the Holy Spirit spawns faith in the great and mighty God that has consumed your thinking. Try it and see!

But the Word of God is not the only thing that builds your faith, but also the remembrance of the works of God in your own life will build your faith. When the children of Israel finally made it into Canaan Land, the first thing that Joshua had the people do was to set up a pile of twelve memorial stones which they took out of the Jordan River. And he told them the reason why. He said that they would be a reminder to their children what God had done to deliver them from bondage, and that they might fear the Lord forever (Joshua 4:19-24). And beloved, when you pause to look back from time to time at how God so faithfully delivered you from storms in the past, it builds your faith to trust Him in the next storm that blows your way.

But now for just a moment I want you to notice the disciples' **fear**. And I'm not talking about their fear of the storm. I'm talking about their fear of the One who calmed the storm. When they saw the number that Jesus had just done on the storm, Mark writes that they feared exceedingly. They had a holy, awesome respect for the power of Jesus, and came just a little closer to understanding that this Man was actually God in human flesh.

Beloved, do you know how to conquer the fears that dominate your life today? I'll tell you. Fear the Lord!! Give your life totally to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust Him as your Savior and Lord. Let Him rule in your life every single day. Delight yourself in His Word every day, and every day rejoice in His deliverances of the past. And your fears will fly away!