

# Where is Jesus in the Storm?

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you have a Bible with you, please turn back to Mark chapter 4, and we're going to be thinking about this incident with Jesus in a boat in a storm. It's a remarkable question that the disciples ask at the very end of this chapter.

They say, who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him. It's an amazing thing that Jesus does here. Some of you may have heard of King Canute. It's an apocryphal story, but the story goes that to prove he was being worshipped as a god, and to prove that he wasn't a god, he went down to the beach to tell the tide to stop coming in.

That was his way of proving that he was just a mere man, because he couldn't stop the sea from coming in. He couldn't stop the tide. Jesus calms the sea at just a word. And it's maybe particularly relevant to us, having gone through the year that we've gone through.

Little did we know, when the bells rang on New Year's Day this year, just what kind of a crazy year we were going to have. How many of us would have thought that nearly every free church congregation would be online?

You've heard, of course, the famous joke about the minister who went to the church and said, I'm going to bring this church to the 20th century. And they said, it's the 21st century. And he said, I know, but one century at a time. And yet, in the space of a few months, every free church congregation is online.

[ 1 : 21 ] We're all sitting here tonight wearing masks. Who would have thought that? Life has changed very, very quickly. There's obviously the coronavirus. There's been economic upheaval.

And maybe for some of us, we've experienced the storms that life brings. We've experienced uncertainties, ups, downs, challenges. And to be honest, maybe you're feeling unsettled by them. Maybe you're feeling uncertain. Maybe you're scared, overwhelmed, anxious, whatever it might be. Well, there's a reason that the gospel is called the gospel.

Gospel means good news. And the news about Jesus is good. It brings hope to hurting hearts, hope to anxious hearts. And it's hope for real people facing real struggles in real life.

So we're just going to look at this under three headings. We're going to see the storm, the accusation, and the miracle. The storm, the accusation, and the miracle. So first of all, the storm.

[ 2 : 22 ] We didn't read the beginning of Mark chapter 4. But Jesus has had a busy day. We're told that he's been to the synagogue. He's gone out in a boat to teach crowds. He's gone up on the mountainside and called disciples to himself.

He's gone into houses and taught the crowds again. He's been accused of being a servant of the devil. And he's had his own family arrive, thinking he's out of his mind and trying to take him home by force. It's been a pretty incident-packed day for Jesus.

Now the evening comes. And Jesus says to his disciples that they're going to get into this boat. And they're going to go into the Sea of Galilee. And they're going to sail across to the other side.

So Jesus and his disciples begin to head over in their boat, accompanied by other boats. And there's so many little details packed in here. It does tend to give the picture of an eyewitness account.

There's so many details that are kind of incidental to the story. The presence of the other boats. There were other boats also along with them. It doesn't really add anything to the story. It's there as an eyewitness detail.

[ 3 : 24 ] We're told the precise location of Jesus. He was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. Very detailed description of where Jesus was. And we're told the details of the boat filling with water.

Waves breaking over it so it was nearly swamped. This is... It's got all the hallmarks of an eyewitness account of someone who was on that boat. Jesus and the disciples hit a storm.

We're told a furious squall. So basically it's a pretty violent storm they've encountered. As you can tell by my accent, I'm from the Western Isles.

I'm quite used to rough ferry crossings. We're used to rough weather and being on a boat in rough weather. And if you've been in that situation, you'll know it's not very pleasant. Well, this is to various degrees a lot worse than many of us will have experienced on a ferry.

The disciples were seasoned fishermen. They knew this stretch of water. They made their living on this stretch of water. And we're told that... They thought they were going to die.

[ 4 : 28 ] This was such a serious storm. The boat was in such a serious situation. We're told the boat was nearly swamped. It doesn't say they thought it was about to get swamped, but it nearly was swamped. And the disciples say to Jesus, Don't you care that we drown?

They think they're going to die. They think their lives are in danger. So this is not people who are not used to being on the water. These are seasoned seafarers, fishermen, who knew this stretch of water.

And they knew how dangerous it could be. The Sea of Galilee was surrounded by high-sided mountains and that the weather could change very quickly. Storms could whip up very quickly, funnel down the mountainside, down the ravines.

And the sea that was calm one minute could be very stormy the next. Mark is picturing wave after wave crashing over this boat and the boat gradually filling with water. Now, I can't swim, so this is beginning to make me feel a bit queasy.

I don't know about you, but I certainly would not want to be in this boat in this situation. You do not want to have wet feet when you're in a boat. It's a picture of being utterly at the mercy of the elements.

[ 5 : 31 ] And the disciples find themselves in this crisis. They're scared. They're feeling like things are out of control. They feel powerless. They feel the same emotions that you and I would feel in the same situation.

But there's good news for the disciples. And what's the good news? Where was Jesus? Jesus was in the boat with them. Jesus was in the boat with them.

They're not alone. You know, it's an amazing thing to think that God might say to them, it's okay, I'll make sure you get through the storm.

I'll get you to the other end. That would be amazingly good news in itself. But here we see in Jesus that God himself is in the storm. God himself is experiencing the same storm, the same waves, the same crisis.

He is with them in the boat. They are not alone. And you might say, well, that's okay for the disciples to have Jesus there with them. But what about me? What about us? Well, Jesus makes the same very precious promise to all his people.

[ 6 : 38 ] To all who put their trust in Jesus, he says, I am with you always, even to the very end of the age. We are united by the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ when we have our faith in him.

We're united to him. We're joined with him in a way that is intensely personal and real. He says, I will never leave you.

I will never forsake you. And Isaiah 43, we read at the start, when you pass through the water, where will he be? With us in the water. When you pass through the fire, where will he be?

With us in the flames. That's the good news of the gospel that God the Son steps into this world to go through the fires and the waters with us. We are never alone in Jesus.

So if you're a Christian tonight, I hope you can take courage in this. Jesus is in the boat with us. Jesus is with you. You don't need to be afraid.

[ 7 : 41 ] Things might be out of your control, but they're not out of his. You might feel powerless, and you might be, but he's not. We might be thrown around by the storm, but he's the Lord of the storm, and he can stop the storms just like that.

It's an old poem by a man called William Cooper, and it says about Jesus, he plants his footsteps on the sea, and he rides upon the storm. That's who Jesus is, and he is with his people in the boat. We are not alone. But what if you're listening to this tonight, and you're saying, well, that sounds good, but I'm not a Christian. Well, let me say this to you.

All these promises can be yours as well. If you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, these promises are yours. They're offered to you freely. They're offered to you by Jesus himself, and he says, come to me, all you who are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Do not be afraid. Only believe. Put your trust in Jesus, and all these promises are yours as well. He will deal with the sin that separates you from your creator.

[ 8 : 50 ] He will forgive it. He will take it away, and you will come to know God. Will you do that? Have you done that? You know, one thing storms do is they show us how fragile we are.

That's what 2020 has shown us, isn't it? All the things we thought were so certain and sure. Our world has been shaken all of a sudden, and many of the things that we put our confidence in, we've realized they were something we couldn't rely on, that cannot hold us.

Storms show us how fragile we are. Have you ever been out in a proper storm? It's hard to stand up. The wind is blowing. Again, coming from the Western Isles in January or February. It's not a fun place to be at times.

You can't stand up because the wind is so strong and so powerful. This year has been a reminder to us of how fragile we are and how precious life is.

And that's another reason Jesus is good news, because life is precious. And death is an intruder in God's world. And the Bible tells us that Jesus has come to destroy death.

[ 10 : 04 ] And that there's a world coming with no death, no pain, no pandemics, no separation, where every tear will be wiped away forever. The gospel of Jesus can take away even the power of death over us, because all death can do is bring us closer to Jesus.

That's the confidence that can be yours today if you're a Christian. To live as Christ, to die, gain. Do you ever wonder how annoying the apostle Paul must have been for those who hated him?

Put him in jail, he preached the gospel to the guards. We're told about people to annoy him, to get at him, who preached the gospel. He just rejoiced because Jesus was being preached. He said, we're going to kill you.

He says, well, to die is gain. Well, we'll leave you in jail. Well, to live is Christ, and I'll tell everyone who comes near me about Jesus. That's the confidence that we have as Christians. To die is even gain. This world is not all there is.

Notice how Jesus is in the storm. Notice how different he is to the disciples. The disciples are panicked. They're afraid. Where's Jesus? He's fast asleep in the stern.

[ 11 : 15 ] He's fast asleep in the stern. Remember that the disciples are not in the storm because they disobeyed Jesus. Who told them to get in the boat? Jesus did.

They're exactly where Jesus wants them to be, and that's what's led them into the storm. Jesus told them to go in the boat. They were doing what Jesus said, and yet the storm has come. Jesus has a purpose in this. There's a divine appointment here that Jesus is going to be teaching his disciples something important, who he is.

And in many ways, that's our greatest need, and our greatest privilege, is to know Jesus. Jesus doesn't say he'll give us an easy life. He never promises that.

He says in the opposite. He says in this world you will have trouble, but take heart, because I have overcome this world. He gives us himself. When trouble comes as a Christian, Jesus is in the boat with us.

And just one last thing to say on that. Notice what Jesus says to the disciples. He says, in verse 35, let's go over to the other side. Yes, there's a storm in the middle, but where are they going?

[ 12 : 24 ] They're going to get to the other side. And when you get towards the end of the chapter, they get to the other side. Jesus doesn't say to them, come in the boat and let's drown in the middle of the lake. They will get to their destination.

They will get to where they're going because of Jesus. And the same is true for you and for me. We will get to the other side. We will get through the storm. The storm does not last forever.

This too shall pass, and we will get to our final destination because of Jesus. He's guaranteed it. That's the storm. Secondly, the accusation.

You 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? There's Jesus, exhausted after a busy day, fast asleep while everybody around him is losing their heads.

You know, you've heard the expression, I'm sure, that if you can keep your head while all around you are losing theirs, you probably haven't appreciated the seriousness of the situation. But that's not what's happening here because Jesus is in total control.

[ 13 : 31 ] He's not worried. He can lie down and sleep in peace because of his trust in his Father. Notice what the disciples don't say to him. They don't wake him up and say, Lord, make the storm

go away.

They could have. They could have said, Jesus, we're in a storm. We're worried. We think we're about to die. Calm the storm. They don't do that because they don't yet realize who Jesus is. They don't yet realize the full weight of who he is. They finish in verse 41 saying, who is this? They don't ask him to calm the storm for one good reason.

Just like King Canute, they know only one person can control the seas, God. They know only God can calm the seas. Only God could calm the storm. And they haven't fully realized that Jesus is God yet.

Instead, what the disciples say is something that's so very human. And I'm sure this is a thought that's perhaps come through our minds as well when we go through hard times. Jesus, if you really cared about me, why this?

[14:32] If you really cared, this wouldn't be happening. That's essentially what they say. Teacher, don't you care if we drown? Basically, you've led us here. We're drowning. And you don't care because you're asleep.

They don't ask about his power. But they question his compassion. They don't ask for a miracle. They question Jesus' care for them.

Maybe that's crossed through our minds as well sometimes. And it's natural, isn't it? We go through difficult things and we think, well, if Jesus was really good and really cared, why would he let this into my life?

And sometimes there's great unanswerable questions about that. Look at Job in the Old Testament, all the terrible things that he experienced. And Job never found out why. We know more than Job did because we have the opening chapters that tell us something of what went on in the courts of heaven and Job never saw that.

So where do we start when we think about this question? Don't you care if we drown? It's a great question. Does Jesus care if we drown, if they drown?

[15:42] Well, let's start by reminding ourselves, where is Jesus when they ask him the question? He's in the boat with them. It's not like he's on dry land with his feet up. He is in the same storm with them.

Jesus does not sleep in our storms. He is not indifferent to our sufferings. He cares enough to be in the storm with you. He gives us his word and he gives us himself.

He's in the storm with them. What evidence do we have that Jesus cares? Well, two pieces of evidence. One, as we've said, he's in the boat with them.

Who is this Jesus who's sleeping on a cushion in the stern? The Bible gives the amazing answer that he is God the sun. He is the God who created the universe, who called the stars into being, who put the planets in their orbits, the one who holds the whole cosmos together.

The one who's been buffeted by the waves is the one who created the oceans in the first place. Here in the boat with them, they have God in the flesh.

[16:46] God loved his world so much that he became a part of it, that he wrote himself into his own story, you could see, and he came down into this world to be with us. This is Emmanuel, God with us.

And in coming into this world, Jesus is tempted in every way like we are. He suffers in every way like we do, but yet without sin. He's willing to leave his comfort and the privileges of heaven behind to suffer with his people.

The fact that Jesus is in the boat in the first place is amazing, because there in the boat is God. God the sun becoming flesh and stepping into this world to be with us.

That's incredible. Some of you may be here so often, play at Christmastime, the story of the incarnation, that we begin to take it for granted, but it's an amazing thing. Secondly, the other piece of evidence that Jesus cares, if you carry on the book of Mark to the very end, you'll find that piece of evidence.

It's called the cross. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever should believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

[17:54] The cross is the ultimate demonstration of God's love for you. That God himself would be willing to experience hell. Everything that hell is.

Separation from the fatherhood of God, the punishment for sin. God the sun was willing to experience that for us. The book of Acts puts it in a really provocative way.

He says the church of God, which was bought with his blood, the blood of God. It's an incredible thing. The cross stands as the testimony that we are loved, that God does care, and there's no greater length that he could have gone to to show it.

You know, there's a fascinating analogy between Jesus and Jonah here. In the Old Testament, the story of Jonah, they're both in boats.

In the boat. And they both have to have these conversations with the other sailors on the boat with them. And in the book of Jonah, if you know the story, how does the storm get calmed?

[ 19 : 11 ] They have to throw Jonah overboard. And only then does the storm go. Jesus isn't thrown overboard here. But in a sense, it's pointing us ahead to the cross.

That on the cross, our storms are brought to an end because Jesus is willing to experience the ultimate storm. The storm of God's anger on sin. The storm of God's, of punishment and judgment upon the sin of the world.

Jesus throws himself into that storm so that we can have peace and that we can have heaven.

Does Jesus care if we drown? Oh yes, he cares.

Do the disciples drown? Absolutely not. They're safe with Jesus and so are we. And finally, and very briefly, the miracle. Jesus gets up, verse 39, rebukes the wind and said to the waves, quiet, be still.

Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. That's supernatural. After a storm, even the following days, even if the weather's fine, there's still a swell running, there's still waves.

[ 20 : 20 ] It takes the sea some time to settle down again. Here we're told Jesus just spoke and it's completely calm. This is an absolute miracle that's happened. This is Psalm 107.

The storm he sees, he calms at his command and will and so he brings them to the haven they so desire to see. Jesus rebukes the wind and the waves. He always tells them off like misbehaving children.

He rebukes them and they obey him. When Jesus speaks, the storm disappears. Jesus calms the storm. That is the power of Jesus because he is God in the flesh.

You know, there are times in our life where Jesus will leave us in a storm. Later on in Mark, he tells another story of the disciples being in a boat on a storm and Jesus is on the land this time and he sees them and he doesn't say, storm be still.

Instead, what he does is he walks out in the storm to them. He comes walking on the waves and he says, don't be afraid, it is I. But he leaves them in the storm for that period. But Jesus will bring us through the other end and Jesus will ultimately calm all storms for his people when he brings us to the other side, when he brings us to be with him forever.

[ 21 : 35 ] And Jesus says to his disciples in verse 40, why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? They were terrified, it says, and they asked each other, who is this?

Even the wind and the waves obey him. The antidote to fear is twofold. Their fear of the storm is pushed out by greater fear. Who is this man who has this power?

The fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the storm is pushed out by faith. And we fight fear with godly fear and faith in the Son of God who loves us.

Where is Jesus in the storm? Where is Jesus in your struggles? He's right there with you. He couldn't be any closer. This morning we're looking at Psalm 23 and if you look at that Psalm it begins by talking about a he.

It's he leads me, he guides me and then suddenly he comes to the valley of the shadow of death and the language changes. He says, you are with me. It's almost as if he just turned around and there on his shoulder is the Lord.

[ 22 : 38 ] I will not be afraid though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death because you are with me. And the same is true for you. If your trust is in Jesus, he is in the boat, he is with you.

Amen.