

...truly God and truly man

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Preacher: David MacPherson

[0 : 00] Jesus liked asking questions, and he still poses searching questions.

Perhaps the most searching question Jesus posed and continues to pose is the one he directed to his disciples, recorded for us in the same gospel of Mark in chapter 8, Who do you say I am? We know Peter's answer to that question. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Peter's answer was correct, but his answer, indeed any answer to that question, will always be partial. No one answer will or can be exhausted.

At the very heart of the Christian faith is the person of Jesus and our convictions concerning his identity, who he is.

The answer to Jesus' question, who do you say I am? The answer to the question of the disciples there in the boat as the storm was calmed, who is this?

[1 : 34] One central plank of Orthodox Christology. What we believe about Jesus Christ is our belief that he is God and that he is man.

He is God and man. One person, two natures. Now this truth that is central to who we believe Jesus to be is not stated in a neat proof text or formula in the Bible.

But it is a truth that the church, guided by the Holy Spirit, was able to recognize in the teaching of the Bible. It is a truth that the church, guided by the Bible, was a Christian, and the Bible, was a Christian.

It was a Christian, and the Bible, was a Christian, and the Bible, was a Christian. And as it was recognized, it was systematized in the ancient creeds and confessions. With regard to this truth, perhaps the most significant of the early councils was the Council of Chalcedon.

Chalcedon, to locate it geographically, is on the Asian side of the Bosphorus in what is modern-day Turkey, city of Istanbul particularly.

[2 : 52] And there in 451, the church fathers met and gave expression to this doctrine with these words, and I choose some of the words that they employ.

We teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man.

Those final words, perhaps the most memorable, and memorable, hopefully, that we can indeed remember them, truly God and truly man.

Then, over a thousand years later, some 1,200 years later, we find the words penned by the Westminster divines that we find in our own Westminster Confession of Faith concerning this matter.

And again, I select some of what is said in this regard. Which person is very God and very man?

[4 : 11] And again, maybe the final words, memorable in their expression.

Very God and very man, yet one Christ. So, Jesus Christ, eternally God.

And yet, in time, He took upon Himself human nature, and He did so in a manner that the union of the two natures was and is inseparable. So, today, as we gather here this morning, today, Jesus Christ remains truly God and truly man.

And He will ever be truly God and truly man. Now, the passage that we've read, having very briefly reminded ourselves or made reference to doctrinal statements with regard to this truth, we now turn to our passage where, in the passage, we're presented with Jesus in a very real-life situation, but presented in such a way that we can witness how this doctrine is a fair and reasonable reflection of the reality.

You see, in this passage, we see Jesus as the one who is truly God and truly man. And we'll do so by focusing on two statements made by Mark in the passage, made by Mark or recorded by Mark.

[5 : 52] The first one is the one that we were thinking about with the children just a moment ago. We read there that Jesus, verse 38, Jesus was in the stern sleeping on a cushion.

Jesus sleeping on a cushion. But then we have another statement that we'll spend some time reflecting on just a little bit further in the passage.

The disciples wake Him up in the midst of the storm, and we read in verse 39 that He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, Quiet, be still.

Jesus sleeping on a cushion. Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and the waves. Quiet, be still.

In these two statements, one that reveals His humanity and the other His divinity, we will find for ourselves encouragement and challenge.

[6 : 57] So we want to consider them. We want to think about the two statements, what they reveal about Jesus, and then draw from them both encouragement and challenge. Let's begin with the humanity of Jesus, particularly as we find that evidenced in what is said concerning Jesus sleeping on a cushion.

Why was Jesus sleeping? Now again, we've already asked this question just a few moments ago with the children. But before turning to maybe the most obvious answer, and the one that we want to dwell on for a moment, I think it is interesting.

And these are things that really only become apparent when we go through a book in a systematic way, and you maybe pick up on things that otherwise you might miss.

But I do think it's interesting, and I can't put it in stronger language than that, that this account that Mark records of Jesus sleeping is found immediately after Mark recording the parable of the growing seed, where the farmer is presented as one who sows the seed and sleeps.

And the farmer's sleep really is a reflection of the farmer's troubles. He sleeps. He sleeps. Why?

Because he trusts that God will do what needs to be done. And I wonder, and I do know more than that, I wonder if when we come now to this record of Jesus sleeping in the midst of the storm is also a declaration, evidence of his trust in his Father God.

[8 : 37] That in the midst of all the chaos, in the midst of all the wind and the waves, Jesus sleeping on a cushion. Maybe that is part of the answer to the question, why was Jesus sleeping?

But there is, of course, another reason, the one that we want to focus on, and it's an inescapable reason. It's, you might say, a blindingly obvious reason, answer to the question, why was Jesus sleeping?

And he was sleeping because he was tired. In Matthew's gospel, we have this same incident recorded by Matthew.

And in Matthew, we are given words that Jesus directs to a teacher of the law before he and his disciples began this journey across the lake.

And the storm blew up. And the words that we have that Jesus directed to this teacher of the law in the context, just before the storm breaks out, are these words.

[9 : 39] We find them in Matthew chapter 8 and verse 20. Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

And they're familiar words, yet I wonder if we've ever listened to them in the context or with this conception of how tired Jesus was, of how exhausted he was.

They carry greater feeling when we listen to the words with that understanding that he speaks these words when he was exhausted.

The very reason that Jesus finds himself in this boat is because of the incessant and draining demands of the crowds, wanting a piece of him, something that he can give them, healing, some word that would intrigue them and satisfy their curiosity in so many ways, demanding of him.

And Jesus is tired. Jesus is exhausted. Jesus is shattered. He's physically exhausted. He's emotionally drained in the face of all the problems and the pain and the trials that he is confronted with.

[11 : 09] He's spiritually worn down. The work that he does, the ministry that he performs is spiritually draining. Jesus is a man.

He's a real man experiencing what real and fragile, vulnerable men experience. Truly man.

And this reality, this truth concerning Jesus, concerning his identity, that he is a man, that he took upon himself a true human nature, evidenced on this occasion in this one small way, that he is sleeping on a cushion, tired, drained, exhausted.

It does serve as both an encouragement to us and as a challenge. First of all, if we just think of how it serves as an encouragement.

Well, as a man, and he remains a man, the two natures inseparably join together. As a man, he understands.

[12:23] It's true that at the right hand of the Father, he does not experience all the experiences that we find him experiencing while he was on earth. His circumstances mean that he doesn't experience all of these things in the same way.

But, as a man, he has experienced, he can remember all that he experienced of being hungry and thirsty and tired and shattered and we could go on.

He understands. And so, when you are tired, when you are drained, when you are exhausted, when you are worn out, when you feel at the end of your tether and there is no strength left, for whatever reason that might be, you can be sure that in Jesus you have one who understands.

In the words of the writer to the Hebrews, in chapter 4 and verse 15, where Jesus is presented to us as our great high priest, we read concerning him that he is able to sympathize with our weaknesses.

Why is it that he can sympathize with our weaknesses? Because he has experienced our weaknesses. So, it is an encouragement for us.

[13:52] It is also a challenge. Jesus, the man, a real man. He taught and he healed, he served and he loved and he did so to the point of exhaustion.

And yes, he did sleep. That in itself is a reminder to us of the need for us to do so also. He slept, but he slept to recover the strength lost in rigorous service.

service. And that is the call that he makes to us as disciples. We are called by Jesus to rigorous service. He calls you to work hard.

And he does so as one who knows what it is to work hard, to serve hard, to love hard. So, Jesus is sleeping as we move on in the account.

In the reference to the cushion that we were talking about a little bit a moment ago, this reference to Jesus sleeping on a cushion, it's a lovely touch.

[15:03] It's only found in Mark. It rings true as a detail that perhaps only an eyewitness would have recorded, one who had a visual image of the occasion and as they recount it, they simply describe what they see in their mind's eye of the occasion.

Yes, he was sleeping and he was sleeping on a cushion. It rings true as what really happened.

Generally, a consensus that Mark's gospel is based in great measure on the eyewitness account of Peter.

Peter was Mark's principal source. You can imagine Peter telling Mark about this occasion and as an eyewitness giving these details, some of which seem almost unimportant.

There were other boats there also. They took him along just as he was in the boat and we could go on. These seemingly insignificant details, perhaps not just seemingly insignificant, perhaps insignificant and yet a description of what happened.

And among them this lovely touch, Jesus sleeping on a cushion. But as Jesus sleeps on a cushion, a storm begins to rage.

[16:29] The storm is described by Mark as a furious storm. We read that in verse 37, a furious squall came up and the waves broke over the boat so that it was nearly swamped.

A furious storm. The Greek word translated furious then in verse 37 is a word you'll recognize. It's the word mega.

We know that word mega. So really what Mark is saying, though furious captures the idea, what he's saying is that it was a great storm.

Or we could even just use the Greek word, it was a mega storm. There's something about that. A mega storm. Matthew uses similar language, he uses the same word, mega, but then he follows it with a different word, not the word for storm, but a word that you'll also recognize, seismos, from seismic, earthquake.

Matthew describes it as a mega earthquake, a mega storm. It would be difficult to find language that is more intense.

[17:45] This is nature at its fiercest, the danger of death. For Jesus and the disciples is real and imminent. They are this close to a shipwreck and oblivion.

And all of this brings us to our second statement that reveals to us, that opens a window for us to the divinity of Jesus, that he is truly God.

Because in the midst of this mega storm, in the midst of this mega seismos, or mega earthquake, the disciples wake Jesus up and he gets up.

And what does he do? He rebuked the wind and said to the waves, quiet, be still. Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

try and imagine the scene. Try and imagine being in the midst of this mega storm and the wind is blowing and the waves are coming into the boat and the boat is about to sink.

[18 : 51] The terror that that would instill in you. What to do? To whom can you turn? This great storm is raging.

But then Jesus speaks these words. Quiet, be still, and that is calm. And Mark uses that word mega again.

He has spoken of a mega storm and now he speaks of a mega calm. It's translated in our version of the Bible with the word completely. Then in verse 39 it was completely calm.

It was mega calm. What a contrast from the mega storm to the mega calm. Of course, that was outside the boat.

In the boat, it was far from calm. Because the disciples were still terrified, indeed, more terrified than they'd been before in a different way. What is on display in this calming of the storm?

[19 : 56] Jesus is doing what only God can do. He is demonstrating both divine power and divine authority.

Of course, these things are very intertwined, but we can, I think, helpfully distinguish them. Divine power and divine authority. There is, of course, divine power over nature.

He only needs to say the word and it is done. Quiet, be still. No need for some complicated, involved incantation.

No ritual required. No prayer required. He doesn't need to pray to the Father. No, He simply needs to say the word.

Quiet, be still. And as we witness Jesus by pronouncing these words, securing the result intended, we hear echoes of the divine power displayed at the very creation of the universe.

[21 : 13] What is the language that recurs throughout the creation account? God said and it was so. God said and it was so.

Well, this is what we find here. Jesus saves. Jesus declares. Jesus rebukes. Jesus issues the word and it is done.

There's an intriguing, maybe curious detail concerning this power exercised by Jesus over the wind and the waves. If we think of this, how this would work, there's a storm and the wind obeys the command to be still.

No more wind. But in those circumstances, imagine if you were in a boat in a storm, but the wind calms down.

Do you find that the waves also immediately calm down? Well, of course not. The waves continue. There's this time lapse between the wind calming and the waves calming because the waves coming over the boat, the momentum for that continues for some time, hours, days even, after the wind has calmed.

[22 : 35] But here we see this careful exercise of divine power in calming the wind and at the same time calming the waves so that all is calm.

It is this mega calm. So divine power displayed in the words of Jesus, but also divine authority.

And here what I have particularly in mind or what I want to draw out is the language that is used by Mark to describe what Jesus says.

First of all, the verb that he uses there in verse 39 describing what Jesus did. We read, he got up, rebuked the wind, particularly this word to rebuke.

Now this is a word that we've encountered already in Mark's gospel. It's used in the context of Jesus liberating men under the dominion of evil spirits.

[23 : 41] On more than one occasion we've already come across this verb. It is a verb that would ordinarily be addressed to a person. You rebuke a person, in this case a personal being, an evil spirit, on the occasions that we've met it already in this gospel.

So that is an intriguing word for Mark to use. But then also we have the actual words of Jesus that are recorded by Mark.

Quiet, be still, and focusing on the second of those words, be still. It can carry the sense of be muzzled.

It's in the second person singular. The significance of that is that again that is a form of the verb that would ordinarily be used in addressing a person, not an inanimate force as we might imagine the wind or the waves to be.

Why is this significance? Why is this language that Mark uses to describe what Jesus said and the very language that Jesus uses, why is it significant? Well it seems that Jesus and Mark in recording the incident see the wind and the waves as symbolizing hostile, demonic forces over which Jesus prevails.

[24 : 59] Jesus here is not only prevailing over the forces of nature though he is doing that, he is also prevailing over every power or force that would seek to be hostile to Jesus and to his disciples.

His word is a word of authority over such powers. Again when we think of what we've already encountered in the gospel of Mark, here on the lake we witness Jesus as the stronger man who vanquishes the strong man.

Remember two, three weeks ago we thought about this, Jesus as the stronger man. Well we were told about that in the form of a parable, now we see it in real life.

The stronger man vanquishing the strong man. This portrayal of Jesus as God, truly God, as the portrayal of Jesus as truly a man, serves as both an encouragement and a challenge.

In what way does it serve as an encouragement? If we look at the passage, we read the passage and we maybe try and identify ourselves with the disciples, well they don't seem very encouraged.

[26 : 29] How are they described in the face of what Jesus did? Well we read there in verse 40, Jesus said to his disciples, why are you so afraid?

He doesn't say why are you so encouraged? Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? And then Mark tells us in very similar language, how they were feeling, they were terrified.

They were terrified. Here again we have this curious use for the third time of this little Greek word mega. They were mega afraid.

There had been a mega storm, then there was a mega calm and now they are mega afraid. They are terrified. If anything the fear that is being spoken of here is greater and deeper than the fear that they had in the face of the storm itself.

It's a different kind of fear. It is a deeper fear in the face of this man who is able to do such things.

[27 : 39] And so why do I say that we can find in this portrayal of Jesus as God encouragement? Well I think even the disciples as they would have looked back on the occasion, as Peter retold the story to Mark, that Mark might record it for us if indeed that is what happened.

As Peter, as the others who were present would remember this occasion, as they would retell what happened on that evening on the lake, they would be encouraged.

And they would be reminded of the Lord that they served, of the power that he holds, and that he continues to hold his power over every storm.

Indeed, those who would first have received Mark's gospel, many of them suffering brutal persecution at the hand of Nero, they would read of this Jesus, their Lord, their Savior, and they would say, this is the one we suffer for, the one who can calm every storm, the one who by pronouncing the word, can bring calm, mega calm, in any circumstance, in any storm.

Their Lord, our Lord, is Lord over the storm, over every storm. He is Lord over every storm you face.

[29 : 11] I don't know what storm you are facing, in what storm you find yourself, what way, storms, or coming into your boat and threatening to sink the boat you're in.

Whatever that storm is, your Lord is Lord over it. Every storm. So be encouraged. But there's not only encouragement in this portrayal of Jesus as truly God, there is also a challenge.

In the face of this man, Jesus, calming the storm, we must with the disciples ask, but not only ask, answer the question, who is this?

Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him. If what Mark records for us here is true, we are persuaded that it is true.

if this is true, then each of you have a serious and urgent need to ask and answer this question, who is this?

[30 : 32] What is your answer to that question? The question that Jesus posed to his disciples, who do you say I am? Who is this? who is he?

How will you respond to him? He is presented to us in this passage and in all of scripture as we are enabled to draw the threads together.

He is a man, truly man. He is God, truly God. God, how will you respond to him?

In the light of who he is, yes, fear him, but also turn to him and trust in him.

The one who is altogether trustworthy, the one who can be by your side in every storm, the one who can calm every storm, turn to him and trust in him and bow down before him in awestruck and joyful worship.

[31 : 45] Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for Jesus. We thank you for who he is. We thank you that he today, in and through the passage that we have read, poses that question to us anew.

Who do you say I am? We pray that we would not only be able to give an answer that is doctrinally correct, but that we would respond to the person of Jesus as we ought, that we would know what it is to fear him in the face of his awesome power, but that that fear would go hand in hand with turning to him and trusting in him as the one who knows us and understands us and cares for us and can help us and calm every storm, that we would bow down before him, granting to him and offering to him the worship that he is due.

And all of these things we pray in his name. Amen. Amen.