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Bridgeway Church

Sermon Summary #13

Worship or Curse! Mark 4:35-41

When a human being is confronted with the reality of who God is and what he does: whether it be his holiness, his power, his authority, or his love, **there are only two options: worship or curse.** When a human being finally comes to grips with the inescapable presence of God, his sovereignty over nature and the nations, his mysterious ways and judgments, **there are only two options: either worship or curse.**

No one knew this better than Job (see Job 1:1-2:10) . . . But how does this relate to the story of Jesus bringing calm to the stormy Sea of Galilee?

Review the circumstances: One would think the disciples were in a good place and had no reason to be afraid of the storm. They were, after all, **experienced fishermen** who had spent countless hours on the Sea of Galilee and were familiar with her many moods. Danger wasn't something new to them. High winds and unruly waves were **commonplace** and they had undoubtedly faced this before. **Also, Jesus was with them.** They had every reason to be confident and courageous. But they weren't!

On this particular night, during this particular storm, they struggled long and hard and concluded they were no match for the sea. They were going to die unless Jesus intervened, yet he was **sound asleep**, utterly oblivious to the existence of the storm, completely unaware of the life-threatening circumstances and the fear of his disciples.

The disciples were **more than annoyed** at Jesus. They were **offended** that he seemed so indifferent to their plight. But what did they expect him to do? They certainly had no idea that he would speak to the storm and reduce it to a calm. Did they want him to pray? Did they simply want him to share their fear?

They accuse him of not caring, of being devoid of compassion. "We're your friends, your followers. We gave up everything to follow you and now it's all about to end in one big wave. What's the matter with you?" What makes their accusation all the more shocking is that they had seen Jesus' compassion toward the demonized man in Mark 2, and for the man with leprosy, and for the paralytic. Yet they accuse him of lacking concern for their welfare.

Jesus didn't bother to respond to their charge. Neither does he pray. He doesn't use incantations or religious gyrations. He simply speaks an authoritative word and reduces chaos to calm: "Peace! Be still!"

What significance, if any, is there in Jesus' use of the word "**rebuke**"? See Mark 1:25; 3:12. Was there a demonic factor in play? Had this particular storm been the result of Satan's attempt to kill Jesus and his followers? When given permission by God, Satan can influence the weather and the elements of nature (see Job). He can also kill God's people (Rev. 2). However, it's more likely that Mark uses these words to make it clear that Jesus has just as much authority over the forces of nature as he does over the forces of Satan.

This was not our Lord's only miraculous encounter with water. When he chose to walk upon it, he spoke and it suddenly became solid beneath his feet (Mt. 14:33). At the wedding feast in Cana, he spoke to the water and it suddenly became wine. John declared that in doing this he "manifested his glory" to his disciples (John 2:11). And here Jesus speaks to the stormy waters of the Sea of Galilee and they are reduced to a glassy calm.

Note: the forces of nature are subject to the sound of his voice. He has authority over every drop of rain, over every rush of wind, over every falling leaf, over every tectonic shift beneath the surface of the earth, over every Gulf Coast hurricane. The physical elements that comprise water and wind and lightning are not personal; they can't think or speak or interact relationally with a human being. The point is that the physical particles, quarks and protons and electrons that comprise all matter are under the control of a sovereign God (Col. 1:16-17).

The wind and waves “heard” the voice of their Creator and obeyed! See Psalm 107:23-32; 147:7-9, 15-18; Job 26:5-14; 37:1-13; 38:8-30; Jer. 10:12-13; 14:22; Amos 4:7.

Irony! The reason for the disciples fear was the wind and waves. Yet, when they are suddenly reduced to a glassy calm, the disciples are still agitated. In fact, they are more frightened **after** the storm is silenced than they were while it raged and threatened their lives! Why then didn’t they themselves settle down and give thanks for their deliverance? Why does their fear actually increase? See Mark 4:41 (“great fear”). The danger had passed, had it not? Why, then, are they now more afraid than they were before?

They had come face to face with the God of the universe, the Lord over nature, the sovereign creator who is holy and righteous and whose power knows no limits.

“Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him” is a question we all must ask. The answer is that he was a man. He was God. **He is the man who is God.**

If during the time of his humiliation on earth, before he entered into the fullness of resurrected and glorified life, Jesus could speak and control the wind and the waves, then who could possibly question his power and authority to do so now? Yes, Jesus can control the forces in the Gulf of Mexico and elsewhere that account for east coast hurricanes. Yes, Jesus can speak and intensify or minimize the effect of the jet stream. Yes, Jesus can orchestrate the path of an F-5 tornado. Yes, he can speak and lift it above one house, and speak as it descends upon another.

The best and most helpful way for us to grasp what is happening here is to work **backwards**.

According to **v. 41** they expressed **ignorance** or **bewilderment** about who Jesus is. This is largely the reason why their **faith**, according to **v. 40**, was defective. It was the lack of depth in their faith which largely contributed to their **fear** of dying in the storm (**v. 38**), all of which **explains why they question whether or not Jesus even cares for them**. Thus, if they had known who Jesus truly was their faith would have been strengthened in such a way that they would have known that Jesus really did care about their welfare, all of which would have given them courage and confidence in the face of the life-threatening storm on the Sea of Galilee.

Consider how this applies to Kurt and Karen Mahler and what they shared with us last week. Many of you were asking the question: **“How can people live like that?** How could they have made the choice to exist in the midst of the ‘storm’ of Afghanistan? What happens in a believer’s life that enables them to respond to danger and threat with such courage? How do they find the strength to make that sort of sacrifice? **What can I do** to live a life like that and to see the world the way they did?”

People like the Mahlers live and make choices like they do because **they know** the answer to the question: “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” **Eventually the disciples will grow into a deeper understanding and knowledge of who Jesus is.** But they are still early in their relationship with him. They have not yet witnessed the resurrection and experienced the filling of the Holy Spirit that will come on Pentecost.

But Kurt and Karen know who “this man” Jesus truly is. They know he is **the man who is God!** Therefore **they know** that every wisp of wind and every spray from the sea and every malicious threat from the Taliban must “obey” Jesus! **They know** that “whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it” (Mk. 8:35). **They know** that without Christ the Muslim faces a hellish eternity. **They know** that the apostle Paul spoke truth when he said, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). And it is because they know these truths that their faith, unlike the disciples, is strong, not perfect, not beyond shaking and stretching, but still strong. **It is because they know these truths that they don’t question whether or not Jesus cares about them in the face of life-threatening circumstances.**

People like the Mahlers don’t simply know the answer to the question **about** Jesus, they know **Jesus!**

The key is in knowing Jesus. Not from a safe distance. Not when it’s convenient. The faith that triumphs over fear and enables you to persevere and live courageously and sacrificially for the Lord Jesus Christ comes from knowing him and then trusting him in the moments of crisis no less than in the moments of comfort to be and to do what he has promised.