

Lord Of The Storm

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[0 : 0 0] Yeah. All right. Good morning, everyone. Am I on? I'm on. All right. I'm having a little technical problems this morning, so I figured I would continue with that. As Jesse just said, my name is Alan. I am one of the pastors here at One Harbor Church, and it's just a great honor that you chose to be with us, especially on an absolutely gorgeous day that we have today.

We are going to be working and continuing through the book of Mark, which is one of the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which are eyewitness accounts of the life of Jesus, his death, subsequent resurrection, and then ascension back into heaven. Mark is the story of Peter, one of the disciples' eyewitness account. Peter was a generational fisherman.

He was known to be a little rough around the edges, if you will. But like I said, he was a generational fisherman. His brother was a fisherman. His dad was a fisherman, probably his grandparents, and so forth and so on. So it's all he knew until he met Jesus. And Jesus said, come and follow me. And that's exactly what he did. He dropped his nets. He left his boat. He left everything and followed Jesus. Later on in the life of Peter, he becomes one of the most influential people in the new church. Jesus refers to him as the rock on which the church would be built. Peter preaches one sermon, and over 3,000 people are saved in that one sermon.

People are being healed as his shadow passes over them. He's just a really radically changed individual because he heard the call of Jesus and followed him. So this guy, Mark, sits down and literally records the eyewitness accounts from Peter. And that is why the series, this series through the book of Mark, has been titled, A Story of Discipleship. It's looking at Peter and his following Jesus, becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. So we see this gospel account helps answer two actually key questions. One is, who is Jesus? And then what does it mean to follow him? So no matter where you are in your spectrum of Christianity, whether you're not a Christian, whether you're just here because somebody drug you along, and you're just thinking about what it would be like to follow Christ, or you've been a Christian for 50 years, this book applies to you. This is one of the reasons why I'm so excited about it. So we're going to hop right into one of the most amazing stories in the book of

Mark, and one that because we're from the coast, we're around a bunch of bodies of water, I think we're going to get and understand rather quickly. One thing before I start reading is remember what I just said about Peter, the eyewitness. He was a local commercial fisherman on this body of water, the Sea of Galilee. This is what he did. He knew this body of water like the back of his hand.

[2 : 5 6] So we're going to read in Mark chapter four, just a few verses, 35 through 41, should be on the screen behind me. It says, on that day when evening had come, he said to them, let us go across to the other side. That's Jesus telling the disciples, let's go across to the other side. And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.

But he, Jesus, was in the stern, the back of the boat, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? It's the word of God.

I feel like those of us that have grown up here or have lived here in this area for some time can relate to this passage somewhat better than, say, someone from Arizona. No, no dips on Arizona. Arizona's a great state. I've been there. It's beautiful and all that, but there's not a lot of water in Arizona. So nothing wrong with that. But when we talk about terms like seas and fishing boats, it's just more of our normal language. It's more of our culture here in eastern North Carolina.

We know what actual real fresh seafood is like, what it tastes like, etc. We can literally go and harvest fish or shrimp or clams, etc., and have them for dinner the same day. You can't do that in Arizona. Sorry. And if you spend a good amount of time on the water, you know what it's like to be out there with strong winds, big waves. It can get sketchy real quick. Let's just say they were in a scrape, if you know what that means. They were in a scrape. And don't forget, again, Peter is here telling the story. This is not his first radio. He was familiar with the boats on there. It was probably, actually, it was probably either his or a family member of his or some good friend of the, you know, another fisherman. Different boats handled differently. But he was familiar with the boat.

[5 : 31] You know, you can go to Raleigh or big cities and swipe your card and you can rent a scooter and do these kind of things. They all handled differently. But Peter knew this boat. And then Peter throws in this little detail that Jesus was asleep on the cushion. It's only recorded in this gospel. The other ones say that he was asleep on the stern. Guys, I want you to understand the waves are in the boat.

The boat is probably going to sink and Jesus is asleep on the stern. This is helpful. You cannot imagine how much is in this little story. So let's just dive right in. Firstly, I think it's good for us to have a little bit of context here on what's going on. The boat, about 30, 40 years ago, some archaeologists found the boat around this area in the Sea of Galilee and they were able to, you know, depict kind of like a normal size fishing boat in this area. And so the boat was about 26, 27 foot long.

It was about seven and a half foot wide at the widest point. And the gunnel height, the walls, were about four and a half foot tall. That's tall. You don't see boats around here with gunnel walls. They're usually about a couple of feet at the tallest. And then another key part about this is the Sea of Galilee is about 700 feet below sea level. And it's subject to crazy violent storms because on the left side of the sea are large, tall cliffs or mountains. And so you have these two different air masses going on. You have the cold and then the hot. And they're trying to swap. And oftentimes it happens, which leads to these really crazy, violent storms on a normally relatively calm sea. I watched a documentary on the Sea of Galilee earlier this week. And they said that when these storms come up, that there can be seas upward of 20 feet. Let me tell you something. If you're in a 25 foot boat and 20 foot seas, you're in a scrape.

You know what I mean? And then let's just throw in here. The Sea of Galilee is only about eight miles wide and about 14 miles long. So it's not a relatively, you know, large body of water, you know, with comparison to the Atlantic Ocean, which we're used to. But when you're in a boat with no electronics, there's no, there's no lights and you're in this crazy violent storm, there's no weather apps, there's no automatic bilge pump and there's no Coast Guard. Okay. There's no Coast Guard. If things go wrong, oh, sorry for you. So a major theme here, I just want you all to take that into context. This is what's going on. Okay. A major theme is who is Jesus and what does it mean? So what does it mean?

It means being a follower of Jesus doesn't always mean smooth sailing. When we're looking at what it means to follow Jesus, we aren't doing that as people who've never had any experience or heard anything. One of the challenges that we face, especially today, are some preachers, they have made it sound like following Jesus sounds like you're going to sail on a big cruise ship. Come on board and be waited on by the Holy Spirit. Everything is going to be kosher. We don't think there's any responsibility for us to serve or give or change. We also aren't expecting any kind of discomfort. [8 : 47] Well, you're in for a rude awakening. So this is hopefully very helpful because it shows us that followers of Jesus face hard things. Storms literally in this circumstance, but figuratively for us.

When we face hard things, we're tempted to wonder where we went wrong. We're tempted to wonder what what did we do? When did we veer off from the path? Remember in this story, they hadn't sinned.

They didn't, they did exactly what Jesus asked them to do. They hadn't abandoned Jesus. He was in the boat. But that almost makes it sound like happenstance or coincidence. Verse 35, it says, on that day, when evening had come, Jesus said to them, let us go across to the other side.

The whole boat trip was his idea. Jesus' idea, okay? They are following direct orders and did it perfectly. And now they're in the storm of their life and fearing for their life.

This is not a new idea though. In the Old Testament, Jeremiah speaks of the Lord testing our hearts. Jeremiah 12, 3 says, but you, O Lord, know me. You see me and test my heart towards you.

[10:10] See, we see that Old Testament prophets knew that God knew them intimately, saw what they were doing, and also tested their hearts. So sometimes we see that Jesus intentionally leads his followers into storms.

And there is no doubt that Jesus led them into this situation. There's no doubt. He picked the day. He picked the time and the journey. We're going to go up on this eight mile trek across the Sea of Galilee at night. You could have said, I'm sure the disciples said, that's the last time Jesus picks when we go across.

Jesus, you stick to the preaching, the teaching, and let us, the fishermen, handle the boat. You know what I mean? But Jesus knows all things. He knows what people think. He knows what will happen.

Friends, he knew about this storm. They didn't, but he did. So then the real question is, why would Jesus do this? And then sleep. They launch into accusations. Teacher, don't you care?

Teacher's not exactly the most seaworthy title to give somebody, by the way. Most of these guys were fishermen, like I said. And like I said, they were very, very knowledgeable of these waters.

[11:30] Yeah, they knew what was going on. So why in the world did we let a teacher plan the boat trip? I don't know. Don't you care that we perish? That's quite an accusation.

We'll get back to that. But as we sit in this story, what was Jesus trying to show them by leading them into such danger? In storms, we learn things we wouldn't learn in smooth seas.

In storms, we learn things we wouldn't learn in smooth seas. This is a story of discipleship. Who is Jesus and what does it mean?

Storms have a profound ability to reveal and instruct. Going back to the context of the sea, when the weather is perfect and the sea is flat, how do you learn to sail through these storms?

How do you prepare? Going through your life thinking you will never walk through a storm is, I would say, irresponsible. Jesus is teaching his disciples that they will experience some really dramatic and brutal times during their lives.

[12:33] But at the same time, they can trust him to lead and guide them through it. When life is good, we tend to do what? What do we tend to do? We tend to become self-reliant.

We drift away from needing a savior. Pride rises up. We all do this. Later on in his life, Peter writes in 1 Peter 4.12, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as if something strange were happening to you.

I wonder if he had been reflecting on this storm when he wrote those words. So how is the storm revealing those answers to us? In storms, we learn to cry out to Jesus.

Sometimes you hear people say, I only call on Jesus when I have no other option. It's the Hail Mary. Here I am to tell you different.

I'm telling you different. Call on Jesus. Plead with him. Beg with him. By all means. Don't wait to the very end to call on his name. As local fishermen, they would have been in storms like this, but apparently never like this.

[13:43] This must have been the storm of the century, the storm of the millennia. However, before they would have called out to God in a vague sense, here they had a personal relationship with Jesus, his presence.

They learned to go to Jesus, not just work hard and hope, you know, fingers crossed. We often feel like we can pull ourselves up. This is even more prevalent in today's world.

We have so many resources and ways to get help and feel protected that we oftentimes don't cry out to Jesus unless it's the worst of the worst of the worst. We don't know how long they had been in this storm, but I would wager they had been fighting to save the boat for quite some time.

And only when all hope was lost did they reach out to Jesus. All other resources have been spent. I can imagine them frantically working to bail out the boat and screaming to each other, why is this happening to us?

They had done nothing wrong. They were doing exactly what Jesus asked them to do and he is with him. How many of us are often too busy working to bail out the boat to call out to Jesus?

[14:52] Friends, call on him. He can do more with a few words than you and I can do with a lifetime of effort. Jesus solves their dilemma with a word and then responds to them in verse 40.

He says, why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? What's Jesus saying? He's saying, I was right there. Why would you be afraid? I'm with you. In storms, we learn that Jesus is with us even if it doesn't feel like he is.

We can empathize with him and I bet we can all relate if we're honest. I know I have felt like Jesus was not there with me. I felt like my world was falling apart and he was silent.

No doors were opening. No light at the end of the tunnel. Psalm 22, 1. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning?

Psalm 13, 1. How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? When in the middle of the storm, it feels like forever. These laments are easily relatable to.

[16:03] It seems like God is asleep. It seems like he doesn't care. Those are real. Those times can often make you feel paralyzed and afraid to do anything. Now, when I look back, I can see his hand in influence during those times.

And I can see how my life has changed on the other side of those times. But walking through them, I definitely had doubt and fear. And then we have some people that have really good intentions.

They like to quote scripture like Romans 8, 28. We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. For those who are called according to his purpose. What's wrong with quoting that?

It's in the Bible. Seems like it's everyone's life verse. Well, it's not the only verse. And too often we quote it while not really meaning it.

We say things like, oh, you're going to be fine. God's got it. Let go and let God, brother. That doesn't mean don't feel deeply and honestly.

[17:05] It doesn't mean don't hurt. We can oftentimes unintentionally shame people into silently doubting and worrying by doing those things. These guys were at the end of self-help.

They were done. They were terrified. And when they finally reached out to Jesus for help, look at his response. Jesus didn't rebuke them for waking him up and asking for help.

He calls out their lack of faith. Friends, don't mistake his inaction for indifference. Another thing we see in this picture is how Jesus responds.

He doesn't start bailing water like crazy or calling for them to get life jackets on. He woke up and addressed the sea and the wind. And then he spoke to them.

In storms, our anxieties are comforted by his presence and peace. Another beloved Bible verse comes to mind here. Philippians 4, 6 and 7 says, Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

[18:09] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. That is a great verse. But I say it's only relevant when you're at your wit's end.

When you're at the end of your rope and nothing else seems to work, only then do these words in Philippians kind of come alive and jump off the page. That's where they were at. They brought all of that anxiety to Jesus, shouting and screaming for their lives.

They woke him up. Does Jesus get up and join in the panic? No. In fact, can we just take a second to reflect on him being asleep? How do you sleep through that?

Water pouring in that boat. I remember back in the day when I was a wee little lad. My dad used to do some commercial fishing on the side to supplement our income.

We used to do shrimping and scalloping. Not scalloping. Scalloping. If you're in eastern North Carolina now, scalloping. Okay? Anyway, we were out one night doing some shrimping in Newport River, which is part of Carter County.

[19:17] And it was just he and I on our boat. And it was actually a very similar size boat to this one that I described earlier. And things were going great. And then a storm came up. You know, one of those summer evening storms that come through here?

And it got sketchy real fast. And, I mean, the wind was howling. The waves were breaking.

Lightning was bouncing all over the place. And we're out in the middle of the river there.

And I remember being, my dad telling me to go up under the bow. We had a little covered deck area up there. And I was up underneath the deck just trying to stay out. But let me tell you something.

The last thing on my mind was sleep. I thought we were going to die.

But, obviously, we didn't. And he was here at the first service, so he didn't either. So that was good.

But I don't know how in the world Jesus was asleep in that situation.

I'm just thinking about those things. How do you sleep? I said, well, did he take too many melatonin? I said, and then I thought, well, maybe Mary and Joseph have one of those swing chairs when Jesus was a baby.

[20 : 17] And they got a little excited and, you know, rocked it all out there. And he just went into a coma. Kind of thing. I don't know. I just don't know how in the world he was able to sleep in that situation. Other than Jesus is full of peace while all of those were being dominated by anxiety.

Friends, this is a powerful truth for us. Jesus isn't freaking out. No matter what storm you're facing, Jesus isn't full of anxiety. He's full of peace.

He's full of power. That alone should bring a ton of security to all of us. When you call him, he's the one that brings peace. This is why in the book of John, Jesus could say to his disciples in chapter 14, verse 27, Peace I leave with you.

My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled. Neither let them be afraid. You see, peace is not dependent on the circumstances surrounding you. Remember in this story, Jesus is in that storm too. But he fell fast asleep. He is teaching them an important lesson. He doesn't help his disciples have peace.

[21 : 26] He is their peace. So if Jesus abides in us and we abide in him, then our peace cannot be taken away. Literally, one of his names is Prince of Peace.

This doesn't mean we will not encounter stress, doubts, and fears. Quite the contrary. We are guaranteed to face those. But what we have as Christians is Jesus. And then the second question, lastly and most importantly, who is Jesus?

Verse 41 says, Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? In storms, we learn that Jesus can come through like no one else. Jesus isn't just there for solidarity.

He alone can rescue us. Really, this story is about Jesus' authority. And the context really helps. And I marvel at the fishermen back 40, 50, 60 years ago that would just go offshore and fish for weeks at a time.

With just simple navigational tools or using the stars. And they were able to go hundreds, maybe thousands of miles and then come back to port. Trip after trip. They had an amount of faith that I don't think a lot of us possess today.

[22 : 38] I couldn't do that. They just went. They didn't know if a major hurricane was on the horizon. Or a strong nor'easter was coming. They didn't know if a perfect storm was going to happen. We now know at least a week.

Maybe sometimes two weeks in advance if a hurricane is coming our way. We can get prepared. We can go to Lowe's. We can go to Home Depot. Get our plywood. Get our supplies. Our generators. We can be ready. They didn't have that. For the people involved in this story, the local fishermen and the seaside residents, pre any kind of weather prediction technology and any hurricane proof structures, this, there was nothing that threatened them more.

And therefore, nothing that could have been more mind-blowing to them than control over the wind and the waves. As experienced as they were, they were unable to save themselves.

Then Jesus wakes up and speaks to the lake as if it were an unruly heckler. Be quiet. And it obeys. This kind of question had come up before with the disciples.

What is this? We've never seen anything like this with previous miracles and things. However, it's not as extreme as this. They have been impressed by the miracles, but this was different.

[23 : 51] They no longer had a category for Jesus that fit their understanding. There comes a moment in every follower of Jesus' journey where we go from thinking he's a good teacher who does good things to realizing we don't have a human category to put him in.

Who then is this? Again, remember that later on when so many walk away, these few disciples would be left saying, to whom would we go?

You're the Holy One of God. There's nowhere else we can go. I believe it was because of storms like this that they walked through and they saw God. They saw Jesus command.

There's nowhere else we can go. You're it. All of this and more is what happens to us when we go through storms. Friends, Jesus led them into a storm, but he was with them through it.

Jesus doesn't abandon us, but he also doesn't prohibit us from trouble. John 16, 33, I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world.

[24 : 56] Jesus was taking them to a place where they would learn to put their hope in him for peace, not in their own abilities. That's a gift. For anyone who's ever lived through a traumatic event, it changes you.

When Jesus brings you through a storm, we live to tell the tale. There's a song in the Old Testament called, Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So. It's about how those who God rescued, rescues, should tell everyone.

Listen, this is Psalm 107, 23 through 32. Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters. They saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep.

For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven. They went down to the depths. Their courage melted away in their evil plight.

They reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at the wit's end. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.

[26 : 01] Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works of the children of man.

Let them extol him in the congregation of the people and praise him in the assembly of the elders. These weren't cruise ship tourists from Wyoming. They were salty men.

But they had met their match and were destined for death until. So how did we respond? How did they respond? Obviously, they were glad.

But then the songwriter goes on to instruct them what they should do. Let them thank the Lord. We're called to live lives of thankfulness to Jesus.

And then it said, let them extol him. We should tell everyone about how great he is. It's one of the values of our church. All of us are on mission. All of us are called to be thankful to Jesus and to tell everyone how great he is.

[27 : 04] The world is full of people who don't have hope. Not only for today, but for tomorrow. We're called to bring that to them. Don't be like the lepers, the group of lepers where all of them walked away except for one.

Be the one. Be the one that comes back and thanks Jesus. Let's live a life of thankfulness, and let's tell everybody else about it. Well, you might say, well, I haven't gone through any storm, so I'll be sure to do that if and when Jesus does that for me.

This question that they ask him is kind of haunting. Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Jesus will eventually give his life because he cared that we perish.

This story is also a sign. It's pointing to something much bigger. Jesus standing in that little boat, hearing them crying out, knowing that in a short time he'd be facing a much greater storm.

He'd face the wrath of God for sin, the shame of the world, all of it. And he wouldn't have anyone in a boat with him. He wouldn't call upon his father to quiet the storm.

[28 : 18] He would willingly give his life. Why? Because he cares that we perish. His whole reason for coming was that.

He cares that we perish. As the band comes up, if you're here listening and not yet a follower of Jesus, who then is this?

The one who can do what no one else can. He's not just a good teacher or even a miracle worker. He's God. And he cares that you perish. As skilled as you may be.

As strong as you may be. As hard-headed as you may be. There is a storm coming you cannot beat. Call on Jesus today. Ask him to rescue you and live the tale of the tale.

There will be a slide coming up behind me that will just lead you in a simple prayer of repentance. And asking for forgiveness. I encourage you, if you were that person today, make the decision to follow Jesus.

[29 : 21] He is worth it. If you're here or listening and are already a follower of Jesus, we're going to take the Lord's Supper in a moment. But first, we need to examine ourselves.

Those not yet following Jesus could do you more harm than good. Those already following are told to examine ourselves before we take the prayer. So we're going to take a moment.

Is there anything in the Holy Spirit is bringing to mind? Maybe you're a fair weather follower. That was me. Maybe you doubt Jesus.

I would say do business with God. Repent. He is faithful and just to forgive. There's no doubt about that. His grace is sufficient. Do business with God. And then we'll go on with the Lord's Supper here in a moment.

Thank you. Amen.