

FEAR VS. FAITH

Mark 4:35-41

What are you most afraid of in life? What is your greatest fear? Fear of failure? Fear of financial insecurity? Fear of being alone...? Maybe it's the fear of dying?

Fear can be a crippling emotion. It can leave us helpless and unable to cope. In today's text, the disciples of Jesus found themselves paralyzed by fear. But the lesson they learned is something we can all learn from and is something we need to remember when life throws us something that leaves us crippled by fear.

Review:

- It had been a long day of teaching ... Jesus was on a boat, teaching the people who were on the shore – 4:1 (see 3:9)
- Jesus used many parables to teach the truth about the kingdom of God to those who were willing to hear and understand.
- He explained the truths of the parables to his disciples privately – v. 34 – not sure just when this took place...
- Matthew records many more parables than what Mark chose to write down (see Mark 4:33) ...

So now, it's probably close to evening – v. 35 – Jesus is obviously tired – his humanity is showing... they are already on or near the boat – quite possibly Peter's fishing boat. Jesus tells his disciples, *"Let us go across to the other side."* Take a short side trip here to show map and where they were going...

- Put up map – Sea of Galilee (Pilgrim's Map of the Holy Land, Israel Ministry of Tourism)
- Location of Capernaum area where Jesus was teaching
- Entrance and exit of the Jordan River – splits the lake in half
- The other side simply means across that dividing line
- Location of Gergessa (the Gerasenes – see 5:1)
- Route they would have been taking on this late afternoon or evening trip across the Sea of Galilee

Read v. 36 – Jesus, together with some of the disciples, gather in the boat and push off from the land.

The boat – a typical fishing boat – show slides... this boat was discovered in 1986 ... now in a specially constructed museum in Kibbutz Ginosar. It has been dated to around the time of Jesus, although there is no evidence to connect it to Jesus himself.

These are not big boats – this one was 27 feet long and 7.5 feet wide. But it is typical of a fishing boat of those days – probably similar to the one Jesus and his disciples were in to cross the lake.

Note also that they were not alone. There were other boats also making that journey across the sea that day.

Read v. 37 – a great windstorm arose... Luke says, *"...a windstorm came down on the lake..."* The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by mountains (high hills). Storms apparently are not unusual and can be quite violent ... the boat was already filling with water.

v. 38a – It seems that Jesus was exhausted from his day of preaching and teaching and the press of the crowds. He was sound asleep in the back of the boat, resting on a cushion. It's hard to imagine how a person could sleep during a violent storm like that...

In fact, the storm was intense enough that these hardened fishermen, who had spent their lives in boats out there on the lake, were scared to death. They were frightened to the point that they thought they were facing imminent death by drowning ...

So, *"...they woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care that we are perishing.'"*

Are you ever like that? When facing a frightening situation, something that strikes fear into your heart, do you ever ask a question like that? Oh, you probably don't say it out loud. But don't we often wonder if God really notices or if he cares about what we are facing.

- The doctor breaks the news that you have cancer
- You come home to find your house on fire
- The knock on the door is a police officer with the word that your daughter has been killed by a drunk driver.

Suddenly you are in the middle of a storm that threatens to swamp your boat and destroy your life. And like the disciples you are afraid, and you cry out to God, wondering does He care, does He even know what is happening?

The truth is that Jesus does care. And He cared about the disciples... v. 39. Immediately everything was calm. The storm was over. *Discuss the miracle – not the calm, but how quickly it happened.*

Then comes the application from this whole incident. Jesus looked around at the disciples – the fear on their faces turning to relief – and He asked the piercing question, *“Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”*

It is clear from v. 41 that these men still had a long way to go in learning the truth about who Jesus really was ... it's hard to imagine what may have been going through their minds.

- They had been with Jesus for close to 2 years by this time
- They had heard his teaching regarding the kingdom, about the blessings of following God (Sermon on the Mount, Beatitudes)
- They had seen the miracles – healing, demons cast out, etc.

Yet, when faced with a frightening situation, which threatened their own safety and security, their faith failed. But they cried out to their Master and he responded, while also challenging them about their trust in Him.

And when they saw the miracle, and the storm subsided so quickly, they were so astonished, they still did not know what to think – v. 41.

I want to close by going back to the question, what are you facing today that puts fear in your heart? Illness ... aging and all that goes along with that ... loss of a loved one ... loneliness ... uncertainty about your future?

1 Peter 5:6-7 - *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”*

Jesus didn't just calm one storm, He can calm all our storms. Fear can be overcome by faith... trust in the One who truly cares.