

Mark 4:35-41

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[0 : 00] of a church that does so. You have your Bibles over to the Gospel of Mark. Mark chapter 4. We're going to be in verses 35 through 41. So we're finishing up the fourth chapter. It's taken us a while to get here. For a Gospel that moves very quickly, it's taken us some time just to slow Mark down a little bit and see it in its bits and pieces.

But if you're physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God found in Mark chapter 4, starting in verse 35. And we'll read to the end of the chapter.

And if I'm not mistaken, this happens to be a portion of Scripture which our children learn about at Vacation Bible School as well. It says, On that day, when evening came, he said to them, Let us go over to the other side.

Leaving the crowd, they took him along. He was. And other boats were with him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.

Jesus himself was in the stern asleep on the cushion. And the wind died down, and it became perfectly calm.

[1 : 15] And he said to them, Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith? They became very much afraid, and said to one another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for this day. We thank you for the opportunity we have of gathering together. We pray now as we've taken a moment to be still and to read your word and to see it.

We ask that you would speak to our hearts and minds, that the truth of it would resonate within us. And Lord, that we would come to know more and more of you and all of your glory and splendor and wonder.

We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. I want you to see this morning what it looks like as we grow to understand.

Growing to understand who this is that is before us. At this point, you know that Christ has been teaching the multitudes or the crowds in parables.

[2 : 21] And the purpose of the parables was to disclose the truth of the kingdom to his disciples who were gathered around him. And to veil the truth of the kingdom to the crowds that were ridiculing and doubting him.

And there was this reality that to fully understand what Christ is declaring, one needed to be near him. It is only those who were in his presence and said, what does this mean that he would explain? The crowds went away scratching their heads going, what is he talking about? A parable throwing this sower, throwing seed and all these different types of soil or this seed becoming a mustard tree and the birds of the air nesting in its branches.

What does this mean? And these crowds were the same ones that had discounted and really dispelled the casting out of demons. Jesus had said that if I cast out Satan by someone greater or something greater than Satan, then the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

So he has declared and displayed the reality of the presence of the kingdom of heaven by his wondrous deeds. And now he has begun to proclaim the truth of the kingdom in parabolic form, disclosing it to those who are near him.

[3 : 35] So we would think that by this time, by this moment in history, the disciples would have this grand understanding. I mean, they've seen demons cry out.

They've seen demons beg for mercy. They've seen men who were possessed become made whole. They've seen a paralytic let down on a pallet, walk home carrying that after being declared

that his sins had been forgiven.

They've had the truth of his teaching disclosed to them in private. But still there's much to understand. There's still a lot of growth that needs to take place.

Well, how do we come to a greater understanding of who Christ is? The reality is that many people today say, well, I would follow him if I just knew. If he would just show me, or if I could just clearly beyond a shadow of a doubt have the certainty that these things are true.

And we really discount the truthfulness of scripture because we assume that one can come to an intellectual understanding of Christ and therefore make a decision about him.

[4 : 44] Friend, I want to tell you that the decision is not an intellectual decision. It is a response to the drawing of the spirit, to the love of the Father being disclosed to the heart of the individual who says, I need that.

We do not come to the salvific knowledge of Jesus Christ intellectually, that is, based upon the facts and information that we gain. If that were so, then every academic hall who spoke of the truthfulness of scripture and who would teach of it in any kind of way could intellectually display this truthfulness of the gospel and men and women would be coming to it.

If that were true, then every single child that has ever attended vacation Bible school throughout history and learned the reality that Jesus Christ is the Savior and that had been repeatedly told to them over and over and over every night, then if the intellectual knowledge was all that needed to take place, then every child who ever attended throughout all of history would have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

But the reality is, is that we need to grow in our understanding. Well, how do we do that? The first thing that we see in our passage is that to grow in our understanding of who Christ is, there is a risk that we must assume.

There is a risk that we must assume. It says, on that day, when evening came, he said to them, let us go over to the other side. Now, thankfully, Mark is a part of the synoptic gospels and you say, well, pastor, you keep telling us this.

[6 : 19] Right, there's a reason I keep telling you this. It's because that you don't ever want to pigeonhole your text. Let's not confuse ourselves. Anyone can take any text out of context and make it say whatever they want it to say, correct?

I can take any text of Scripture, pull it from its context of the entirety of Scripture, and make it say whatever I want it to say. I can bring text before you men and tell you that it is unlawful for you to trim the edges of your beards.

Some of the wives are like, he needs to trim the edge of his beard. I could bring text after text before you and take it out of context and make it say whatever I want it to say. But that is not what we ought to do.

As a matter of fact, we ought to let Scripture be the greatest commentary on Scripture that we will ever find. And especially when we read either Matthew, Mark, or Luke, and we're looking at the synoptics, it is very wise of us to see the parallel passages so that we can get it in greater context. Mark tells us that it was on that same day. Well, that ought to pique our attention and see what else happened on that day. We know that on that day, Jesus had been teaching the multitudes. We know that on that day, the multitudes had so gathered around him on the seashore that he needed to get into a boat.

[7 : 33] And when he got into a boat, he sat down in the boat and began to teach to them. And as he was teaching them, he was also disclosing to the disciples. Now, a quick question. Let's think about this. I was telling someone this this past week.

We were having a discussion, one of those boring preacher discussions, about what it looks like for pastors to prepare sermons. And I said, you know, there's one phrase in this whole passage that's really standing out to me. And it says, And they took him along just as he was.

Mark is the only one that tells us they took him just as he was. And it was really in my mind, what does that mean, just as he was? I'll get to that in just a minute. I didn't know I'd get to it, but I will get to it. So let's paint the picture so that we understand what's going on.

Christ has the multitude on the Sea of Galilee. He's sitting in the boat, and as he's teaching the multitude, he's disclosing to the disciples, which means the disciples are probably in the boat with him.

Because the boats of that day could easily hold 20 plus men. As a matter of fact, one was found on the shores of the Sea of Galilee in the early 1980s that was a fishing boat from that period in that

time.

[8 : 41] It's called the Jesus boat. We don't know for a fact that it's the boat he's set in, but we do know it is from that time period. A huge vessel, some 12 feet wide, easily holding over 20 individuals.

So Jesus isn't in the boat alone. Because how else could he disclose to the disciples who were with him and keep it from the crowd that were before him? Much like if I had someone up here beside me and I would tell them something, but not disclose it to you.

So he is on the sea. This is what is happening in that day. But Matthew tells us something else happened on that day. Matthew chapter 8, starting in verse 18, I believe it is, to verse 22, tells us that on that very day, someone from the seashore cried out to Christ and said, Lord, I'll follow you wherever you go.

That sounds great, doesn't it? But there's a word in there and it's wherever you go. And Jesus says, I have nowhere to go. The son of man has no home.

He has nowhere to lay his head. He has nowhere to go. And this individual doesn't follow. Someone else says, Lord, I'll follow you, but let me first bury my father.

[9 : 53] And Jesus says, let the dead bury the dead. You follow me. Now, before you get too carried away, thinking Christ was being upset or being rude there, to say, let me first bury my father was a way of saying, let me live as long, let me stay home until my dad dies.

And when my dad dies, and I get all the family accounts settled, so the implication is, is that dad was still healthy, right? It's not that he had a funeral he needed to attend. It's, let me first fulfill my family obligations and then I'll follow you.

Jesus says, you can't do that. And what Jesus begins to do is set a high standard of what it looks like to follow him. That is, you follow me even though I don't know where I'm going and you don't know where I'm going and you follow me even above and beyond your familial commitments.

And then it says, and then he looked at the disciples and said, let us go to the other side. See, here is the risk we must assume. The risk is this.

We are willing to follow Christ no matter what. We are willing to follow Christ no matter the cost, no matter the sacrifice, no matter the personal expense, no matter the uncertainty, no matter the unclarity.

[11 : 15] We don't have to have all the details. If we say, well I'll follow Jesus if, friend, that if will get you in trouble. Do you know what the most repeated phrase of Jesus Christ is?

Five times it says it in the four gospels. Whosoever desires to be my disciple must take up his cross and follow after me. The thing that he said more than anything else is that whoever desires to be a disciple of him must take up his cross and follow after him.

See, the call is to follow. It is a risk. And it says, and they took him along just as he was. Let's expound upon that just a moment.

That means that when he was sitting in the boat teaching the multitudes and they were gathered together with him, the phrase, literally, as he was means that they didn't go to shore and make preparations. They didn't take a break.

They just went in the very boat they were already sitting in. And it tells us that evening had already come. So they didn't say, okay, Lord, we'll go to the other side but first let us do this, this, this, and this.

[12 : 27] No, it says, he said, let's go to the other side and they did. And they did. It is a risk that we must assume.

Because like it or not, we do not grow in our understanding of who Christ is as long as we're in control of all that takes place.

We have to die to ourselves and live to Christ. We must risk it all to follow him just as he is wherever he declares.

We don't say, Lord, but first let me go, let's go to shore, let's get everything settled, let's get all our gear together, when he says, go, we go. I've described it to individuals saying this, one of the things that I have committed to in my life is to live my life open-handedly.

Whatever the Lord puts in, I'll keep and enjoy and whatever he wants to take out, I'll praise him for taking it out. It is not always comfortable. And there are things, surely, that he has taken out of my hand and I say, well, Lord, I really enjoyed that and I would want to close my hand but we get in trouble when we close our hands because what we're doing is we're risking holding on to something

at the expense of following after him.

[13:47] And we must say, Lord, here we are. And when he says, go, we take him along just as he is. And say, yes, Lord, let's go right now. I have made a commitment in my pastoral ministry.

I am rapidly approaching the 10th year ministry here. I'm now 20 years in pastoral ministry. Next February will begin my 10th year ministry here. I'm so excited and I praise God for it.

I have no ambitions, no desires to ever leave. I'm with you until the Lord calls me home. My desire is to be a pastor of this church until the Lord calls me home. That is my personal, and I don't say this to puff me up.

I've said, Lord, I want to pastor long term. And as long as they'll put up with me and as long as you'll leave me, I'll stay. But I have also said, Lord, I'll move in the next 40 minutes if you tell me to.

You just need to know that. I'll stay the next 50 years. I don't know if I'll live that long. I'll stay the next 40 years or I'll move in the next 40 minutes. Because if we don't, we're not risking it and saying, Lord, wherever you say, I'll go.

[14:52] There is a risk that we must assume and the risk is you can't be in control. Now, that's hard.

But you can't be in control. You can't say, Lord, I'll follow you wherever you go. Just tell me where you're going. Or, Lord, I'll follow you as long as you let me take care of what I need to over here and my responsibilities.

Jesus says, I am your responsibility. If we want to grow in our understanding, there is the risk we must assume. Number two, not only do we see the risk we must assume, we see the trials we must endure.

Notice what it says. They took him along just as he was and other boats were with him. Now, who were those who took him along? At least four of them that we know of had made their living as fishermen on this very sea.

At least four of them. At least four of them were professional fishermen on the very sea that they were going across. This is where Christ had found them on the shore and called them to follow him.

[16:02] And it says, and there arose a fierce gale of wind. Now, Mark is writing more than likely based upon the sermons of Peter. More than likely, Mark had traveled with Peter and as he heard Peter preach, he put these in writing and he dispelled them among the churches after Peter's death.

Peter is one of those professional fishermen. And listen, when a professional fisherman on the sea says it was a fierce gale of wind, it was a fierce gale of wind. In this land, the sea is so much further below the level of the hills around them that it is susceptible to these storms that would arise rather rapidly, some of them with hurricane-force winds even to this day.

But it says there arose a fierce gale. The word there used in Matthew is the word that we use for hurricane. And the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Those who had lived on this sea, those who had worked on this sea could handle a normal storm. But it says Jesus himself was in the stern asleep on the cushion.

That's a beautiful picture, right? Why? Because Jesus knew where he was going and didn't concern himself about all that was taking place. He knew he had stated a purpose, I'm going to the other side.

[17:25] And just mark this as a side note, when Jesus says he's going to the other side, it does not matter what happens in between. There's no doubt he's getting to the other side. But the storm came and the storm is real because look at what it says.

They cried out, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? When people who are accustomed to the sea in this region think they're dying, then we got a problem. So here's a reality that we must assume.

The presence of Christ did not remove the trial they went through. If anything, following Christ led them into the storm.

It was his idea to go to the other side. And this is where I say it must be a risk. He who created the heavens and the earth who controls it all and holds it all in the palm of his hands that all things were created by him, through him, and for him, and nothing was created apart from him, it tells us elsewhere in scripture.

Surely he knows because he is fully God and fully man. He knows all that will transpire and all that is going to come about. And when he said, let us go now, surely he knew a storm was coming.

[18 : 40] This isn't the only storm they go into. Later he sends them in a storm without him being present and then he walks out on the sea. By the way, that is called discipleship. I'll lead you through the storm and then I'll send you into the storm, right?

But he always meets us in the storm. But the reality of Christ's presence did not remove the threat of the trial and if we tell ourselves that as long as I follow Christ everything will be alright, well eternally, yes.

Temporally, sometimes it makes it worse. The crowd on the seashore all went home. The people who follow Christ in the boat are in the middle of a storm in jeopardy of their life.

Sometimes following Christ takes us into very, very difficult situations. Sometimes, historically this costs dear men and women their lives.

Often, in horrific ways. Yet, they understand there's something they learn there. It is a trial they must endure. And he asks a question, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?

[19 : 47] And I underline that question. Not in this script, my Bible, but the Bible that I keep in my office because the response comes really soon and it says, and he got up. Just so you know, he cares.

Because he got up. He displays his care by getting up. And he's about to do something. But, had it not been for the trial and had it not been for the storm, they would not understand what they're about to learn.

So we see there's a risk. There's a trial. Third and finally, look at this. Here is the wonder of the truth revealed. Something happens because they risked it all and they followed Christ into this trial.

And he got up and he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Hush, be still. And it says, and it became perfectly calm. Now that wording there is intentional.

It does not mean that it died down. It means that in an instant, in a moment, it became perfectly calm. Not just calm, perfectly calm.

[20 : 54] Like glass. Nothing more still, nothing more at ease, nothing more peaceful than when Christ told it to, Hush, be still.

But notice, in all of that region, there was something that wasn't calm. The sea became calm. And he said to them, Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?

Look at what it says, and they became very much afraid and said to one another, Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? Someone said, The fear of him who was in the boat with them superseded the fear of the storm that had assailed them.

They became more afraid of who was with them than they were of the storm that was berating them. Something more powerful than this grand storm has been revealed.

Something that they would not have seen had they not been in the middle of it. Well, the answer to that question, Who then is this, can be found in Psalm 65.

[21 : 56] As a matter of fact, the psalmist declares it multitude of times throughout the book of Psalms. But one of the grandest ones is Psalm 65. And if you'll bear with me, I'll just read the entire psalm to you.

It's not long. It's only 13 verses, but I want you to pay particular attention to verses 6 and 7 and 8. But Psalm 65 says this, There will be silence before you and praise in Zion, O God.

And to you the vow will be performed. O you who hear prayer, to you all men come. Iniquities prevail against me. As for our transgressions, you forgive them.

How blessed is the one whom you choose and bring near to you. By the way, the greatest blessing God can ever give you is to choose you and bring you near to him. That's the greatest blessing. is to call you into his presence. To dwell in your courts, we will be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple. Look at this.

[22 : 55] By all some deeds, you answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation. You are the trust of the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea.

Listen to verses 6 and 7. Who establishes the mountains by his strength being girded with might? Who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the tumult of peoples?

They who dwell in the ends of the earth stand in awe of your signs. You make the dawn and the sunset shout for joy. You visit the earth and cause it to overflow. You greatly enrich it.

The streams of God is full of water. You prepare their grain for thus you prepare the earth. Your water, you water its furrows abundantly. You settle its ridges. You soften it with showers. You bless its growth.

You have crowned the year with your bounty and your paths drip with fatness. The pasture of the wilderness drip and the hills gird themselves with rejoicing. The meadows are clothed with flocks and the valleys are covered with grain.

[23 : 54] They shout for joy. Yes, they sing. See, the psalmist said so long ago, you calm the sea, its waves, its tumult, and all the people stand in fear and wonder of your works.

Friend, by the time that boat landed on the other side, some amazing things happened on the other side, but by the time that boat landed on the other side, they knew who that was in the boat with them.

But the only way we come to that understanding is by being with him. See, they had had all the intellectual teaching. They had the insight to the parables.

They had seen the reality of the demons. They had heard the truth of the kingdom. They even had the nearness of having it explained to them. But in the moment of desperation, what they did not need was a teacher.

They needed a wonder-working savior. You may know what he has taught, but you don't really know who he is until you cry out to him in the middle of that trial and say, do you not care?

[25 : 06] And he stands up and says, hush, be still to the storm of your life. And you may have heard all the grand teaching about him you could ever imagine, but even then in that moment you have to stand and say, who then is this?

Because we don't come to an understanding by listening to what he teaches. We come to an understanding by being with him as he leads us. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for the opportunity we have gathered together. Now, as we come to this time of invitation, Lord, we know that we will be taking of the Lord's suffered together.

So, Lord, help us to search our hearts and to know our minds and to understand our ways. Lord, help us to take this moment to think accurately about where we stand before you.

Lord, may we come before you in holiness and approval because of what you've done, not because of what we know. Lord, to you be the glory and honor forever and ever. And we ask it all in Christ's name.

[26 : 12] Amen. We're going to have a hymn of invitation after the hymn of invitation. I'll have the deacons and elders come forward and then we'll take communion together. Amen. Amen.