

Mark 4:35 That day when evening came, He said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."

Mark 4:36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took Him along, just as He was, in the boat. There were also other boats with Him.

Mark 4:37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

Mark 4:38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke Him and said to Him, "Rabbi, don't you care if we drown?"

Mark 4:39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

Mark 4:40 He said to His disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

Mark 4:41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!"

Introduction.

Mark Twain said that there are two tragedies in life. The first is never realising your dreams and the second is realising them. Mark Twain is right. By nature we hanker after achievements or experiences believing that they will change our lives for the better only to find that when we do achieve them they simply change, or most often, rearrange the challenges or problems we have to face.

As you look at the disciples' encounter with Jesus you may feel something like this; "Now if only I could have an experience with God like that. Something really spectacular like, calming the storm, or walking on water, or seeing a dead person brought to life. After all the disciples experienced these things with Jesus."

What was this encounter with Jesus about, and what did it mean for the disciples?

The Storm

How had they got themselves into this predicament? Mark's Gospel portrays the disciples as helping Jesus to make His desire to get to the other side of the lake a reality. Matthew on the other hand puts Jesus in the forefront and the disciples behind.

Mat 8:23 Then He got into the boat and his disciples followed him.

To emphasize the point Matthew precedes this account with a discussion about leaving even unburied dead relatives behind in order to follow Christ

*Mat 8:21 Another disciple said to Him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."
Mat 8:22 But Jesus told him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."*

Now, when you follow Jesus that closely nothing can go wrong – right?

On the contrary, following Jesus did not make them immune from the storm. And today, the fact that you are serving Jesus and seeking to be faithful to God does not make you immune to the storms of life in terms of illness, tragedy, persecution, injustice – let that suffice (it's a long list.)

This may be the reason we fear in times of testing. Our expectations are false and unrealistic and so they determine the questions we ask about our situation.

Maybe the disciples thought that having Jesus with them (which is the Mark emphasizes it) or the fact that they were following Him (as Matthew puts it) ensured a trouble free passage.

However the lesson they learned that day could not have been learnt to the same extent on the shores of the lake. Imagine that Jesus had said to them while standing overlooking the lake from the hills that border it. "You know I can tell the wind to stop blowing and it will. And I can also tell the waves to calm and they will as well. All this is because the creation came into being through Me. Er... Peter, will you wake Andrew up and tell him to pay attention when I'm speaking"

No God takes us into situations to teach us through them without giving us an insurance policy against them.

Take the people of Israel. Where do you think they learnt most about God and His involvement in their lives? In the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey or in Egypt as slaves? Neither, in the wilderness without food and water where they would cry out in rebellion that they wanted to go back into slavery rather than stay in the wilderness. Yet it was in the wilderness that they received the Covenant. It was in the wilderness that they saw the pillar and fire of God's presence. It was in the wilderness that God fed them with manna and gave them water from the Rock.

Never again would they know God's sustaining activity in their lives quite so intimately.

Are you in the storm at present? Are you trudging through the wilderness?

Then do not limit your questioning to "Why am I here?" Rather listen for God.

As C.S. Lewis puts it,

Pain (suffering) is God's megaphone to a deaf world.

The Storm Stilled

So they got what they wanted. The storm was stilled. What do they do next?

Mathew tells us that they were amazed – fear-like amazement.

Mat 8:27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

The question of anguish – "Don't You care if we drown?" Is replaced by and even more fearful question "Who is this?"

Mark Twain was right – the second tragedy of life is getting what you heart desires!

They exchanged one fear for another. Why are you afraid – usually because we have peace when we are controlling things not matter how badly they are going. When we are placed in a position in which God is in control we can no longer rely on our own coping mechanisms which we trust and we are forced to trust God in a hostile environment – even to the point at which we have to trust him with our death.

This was Jesus battle in the Garden of Gethsemane

Mat 26:39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

Luke 23:46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last.

How could Jesus have taught this lesson from the shore?

Dealing with Fear

The storms of life are not the sign of God's absence and are part of the disciple's life how do we deal with them in a way that helps us to grow closer to God and makes us more effective as disciples?

1. Focus on God more than your situation
2. Learn to listen when times are good so that you are equipped for difficult times
3. Learn to ask "What" more than "Why?"

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