

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/29/04 Brad Brandt

Mark 4:35-41 "When the Lord Is in Your Boat"**-

Main Idea: We learn three truths about the Lord from the stormy experience described in Mark 4:35-41.

I. The Lord allows storms (35-38).

A. Jesus initiated a teachable moment.

1. He took His disciples into a storm.

2. He slept.

B. The disciples questioned His care.

1. Trials reveal what we really think about the Lord.

2. Trials reveal how well we know the Lord.

II. The Lord can remove storms (39).

A. Jesus spoke.

B. The wind ceased.

C. The sea became calm.

III. The Lord uses storms (40-41).

A. He teaches us about ourselves (40).

1. We see our fear.

2. We see our need for faith.

B. He teaches us about Himself (41).

1. He is the Lord of creation.

2. He does care for us.

The Bottom Line: If the Lord is in your boat...

1. You can expect storms.

2. You can experience peace.

The early American Indians had a unique practice of training young braves. On the night of a boy's thirteenth birthday, after learning hunting, scouting, and fishing skills, he was put to one final test. He was placed in a dense forest to spend the entire night alone. Until then, he had never been away from the security of the family and the tribe. But on this night, he was blindfolded and taken several miles away. When he took off the blindfold, he was in the middle of a thick woods and he was terrified! Every time a twig snapped, he visualized a wild animal ready to pounce. After what seemed like an eternity, dawn broke and the first rays of sunlight entered the interior of the forest. Looking around, the boy saw flowers, trees, and the outline of the path. Then, to his utter astonishment, he beheld the figure of a man standing just a few feet away, armed with a bow and arrow. It was his father. He had been there all night long.

"I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Who said that? Jesus did, just prior to His return to heaven. *I am with you always.*

Does it make a difference to know that the Lord is with His people, that He never leaves us alone? Don't answer that too quickly. It should make a difference, for sure, but the question is, *does it?* What kind of difference does it make in your life knowing that the Lord is always with you?

I've entitled this message, "When the Lord is in Your Boat." Before us is the familiar story of the time Jesus took a boat trip with His disciples and ran into a storm. But it's more than a story. It's packed with significance about the Lord, about how He works, and about the difference it should make knowing that He is with us in the storms of life.

Your child comes home from ball practice, head hung, eyes moist. "I got cut from the team," she shares.

Does the Lord's presence make a difference when you find out that not only is your child not going to be all-state, she's not even going to be on the team?

The boss calls you into his office and says, "Clean out your desk. You're done here." Does it make a difference then knowing the Lord is with you?

The phone rings. It's the doctor's office, and you hear the doctor himself on the other end. "I've got some bad news," he says. "The tests we ran came back positive. You've got MS." How about then?

What difference should it make when you know that the Lord is "in your boat?" We'll find out this morning. We can learn three valuable truths about the Lord from the stormy experience the disciples went through in Mark 4:35-41.

I. The Lord allows storms (35-38).

Our story begins with these words in verse 35, "That day when evening came, he said to his disciples..." *That* day. What a day it had been! Earlier on this particular day Jesus had taught the crowds using parables (Mark records four of the parables in 4:1-32). Subsequently, on the same day Jesus had spent time alone with the disciples explaining the parables to them (34). It had been a phenomenal of great teaching and learning for the disciples. Now it was time for a pop quiz and the Master Teacher gave the quiz *that same day*.

It's one thing to sit in the classroom. It's another thing to transfer what you've heard in the classroom into real life.

As we pick up the narrative at verse 35 we've actually moved into a new section in Mark's gospel. The parables are done, and now Mark begins to present Jesus as the Lord of nature. We'll see Jesus performing several nature miracles, such as calming storms (here and in 6:51), multiplying loaves (6:41 and 8:6), and withering a fig tree (11:20). Mark has already made it clear that Jesus possesses power over diseases and evil spirits in chapters 1-3. Now he begins to show Jesus' authority over creation itself.

Verse 35 again, "That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side.'" The Lord is talking about the other side of the Sea of Galilee. He and the disciples have been ministering in the region of Galilee on the northwest side of the lake near Capernaum, but now He gives the order to head to the eastern region of the Gerasenes (5:1).

You say, "Why did Jesus want to leave Galilee. It seems to me He had a good ministry going there, with lots of people flocking to Him." But His goal wasn't to attract crowds. His goal was to fulfill His Father's plan which included teaching, healing, rescuing sinners, and ultimately dying for sinners on the cross. Besides there was a divine-appointment for the Savior in the Gerasene region, a demon-possessed man in desperate need of the Lord's liberating words—but that's our next story.

Don't miss an important point. Who's idea was this boat trip? The Lord's, right? He say, "Let's go to the other side." Did He know there was a storm brewing? Absolutely. But that's the way He works. Sometimes the Lord allows storms.

Verse 36—"Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him." Mark is the only gospel writer to tell us there were other boats. Interestingly, he doesn't tell us what happened to them when the storm hit—we can assume they turned back. Mark also says the disciples took Jesus "just as He was." Apparently this means they began the trip "without going to shore." Again, Jesus had been teaching from that boat all day long and now wants to leave directly from that spot in the water to head east, so the disciples fulfill His wishes.

Typically, this six mile boat ride would have taken about an hour and half or so. But as it turned out, this was no typical boat ride.

Two things happened that evening long ago. First of all...

A. Jesus initiated a teachable moment. The Lord doesn't waste experiences. Indeed, He specializes at creating opportunities designed to enable us to learn the truth about ourselves—painful as it often is—and Him—wonderful as it always is. In forming this teachable moment...

1. *He took His disciples into a storm.* Verse 37—"A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped." It's been well documented that due to its location the Sea of Galilee experiences sudden and violent storms. The lake is in a basin surrounded by mountains. Listen to Smith's description of the Sea's susceptibility to storms: "The atmosphere, for the most part, hangs still and heavy, but the cold currents, as they pass from the west, are sucked down in vortices of air, or by the narrow gorges that break upon the lake. Then arise those sudden storms for which the region is notorious."

We know the rest of the story, but read it as though you didn't. Put yourself in the boat alongside the disciples. It's dark, the evening sky blackened by the ominous clouds. You're in the middle of a lake that's 15 miles by 8 miles in size. Lightning is flashing, thunder is clapping, and the wind is roaring all around you. Ferocious waves are crashing into your vessel—correction—crashing *over the sides* of your vessel. You've got a crisis on your hands. Your boat is taking in way too much water—she's starting to go down (the KJV says the boat "was now full").

And don't forget that several of the men in the boat with you are experienced fishermen who've navigated these waters all their lives. If they say the situation is serious, they're not exaggerating—it's serious!

What did Jesus do? Here's the amazing part. Mark says...

2. *He slept.* Verse 38—"Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion." Did you catch that? Jesus *slept*. You say, "Did Jesus need sleep. I thought He was the Son of God." He was and is, for sure, but He came into the world clothed as a man, a perfect man. In the words of Philippians 2:7, He "was made in the likeness of men." According to Wessel, it's the only place in the Gospels where Jesus is said to have slept. Of course, He did tire from a day's hard work, as this verse makes clear.

There's nothing wrong with sleep after a hard day's work. By the way, what kind of work had Jesus been doing that exhausted Him so? He'd been working with people, specifically preaching the Word to them.

You say, "Is preaching hard work?" Jesus just spent a day in the hot Galilean sun, in a boat no less. But it wasn't just the physical strain that took a toll. J. D. Jones explains:

"To warn men to flee from the wrath to come, that is not a thing a man can do with a glad and irresponsible heart. To watch for souls as those who shall give account, that is no pastime, that is not something a man can do with a laugh and a smile. Preaching, when it is worth the name, is a costly business. I know a great many folk think it is a very easy thing to preach, that the preacher has what is known as 'a soft job.' Possibly some who are themselves preachers find it such. But that is only because they have missed their vocation; for there is no work so burdensome, so toilsome, so exacting, so costly, as that of the true preacher. It puts a strain, not upon body and mind simply, but upon heart and spirit as well. It costs blood and sweat, and agony and tears; and of all preachers Jesus realized most vividly what preaching meant. His heart went out in a perfect passion of pity to the crowd to whom He spoke."

And so He slept. See Him there sleeping, my friend. He is secure in His Father's purposes. He has worked hard doing the Father's will. Now He sleeps hard, without a trace of anxiety or fear.

"But didn't He feel the storm?" you ask. Sure, He felt it. But security doesn't require the absence of storms. Security is confidence in God in the midst of them.

Years ago in Burma, missionary Adoniram Judson was lying in a foul jail with 32 lbs. of chains on his ankles, his feet bound to a bamboo pole. A fellow prisoner said, "Dr. Judson, what about the prospect of the conversion of the heathen?", with a sneer on his face. Judson's instant reply was, "The prospects are just as bright as the promises of God."

The storms of life are teachable moments. How did the disciples respond?

B. The disciples questioned His care. Verse 38 again—"The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?'" Isn't it amazing how the Lord can demonstrate His love for us in hundreds of ways, but when He allows us to face a hard situation and we don't understand why, we are quick to conclude, "He doesn't care about me." We question the love of Him who is love.

I even catch a hint of rebuke in the disciples' words. "Lord, You told us to take this boat ride and we obeyed You! What were You thinking? Why would You send us into a storm that could kill us?"

Could the Lord have prevented this storm? For sure. Did He know the boat was heading right into it? Without a doubt. Why then didn't He do something about it? He was doing something. He was using this storm to teach these men He loved something vital—just like He does in our lives.

Trials (and especially big ones—*storms*) are revealers. They make two things clear.

1. *Trials reveal what we really think about the Lord.* Until now the disciples thought Jesus was wonderful. They loved His miracles and His teaching. They'd forsaken all to follow Him. But now He's doing something they don't understand—and they call His care into question.

If you want to know what a person really thinks about the Lord, you won't find it in his doctrinal paper, or in his sermon, or by what he says in a church testimony time. That's where he says what he thinks about the Lord. But if you want to know what he really thinks about the Lord, watch how he responds when the storm hits his life.

Trials reveal something else, not only what we think about the Lord, but also...

2. *Trials reveal how well we know the Lord.* Why were the men afraid? Didn't they know who was in the boat with them? Oh, they knew Jesus, but they had so much to learn, just like us.

They had lost sight of the simple fact that Jesus was in the boat and that if they drowned He drowned, too. And hadn't He said, "Let us go to the other side"? Beloved, when Jesus says you are going to the other side, you are *going to the other side!*

You see, the issue for these men and for us is, do we really believe the Lord is with us, and do we really believe He keeps His promises? It's easy to say we know and believe the Lord, but moments of crisis reveal the truth.

A lot of people think that God sends storms into their lives only when they've disobeyed Him. That's not always the case. Granted, Jonah faced a storm because he disobeyed the Lord, but the disciples faced this storm simply because they did obey the Lord. The fact of the matter is, the Lord allows storms and one of the reasons is to *teach us*.

The following letter was found in a baking-power can wired to the handle of an old pump that offered the only hope of drinking water on a very long and seldom-used trail across Nevada's Amargosa Desert: "This pump

is all right as of June 1932. I put a new sucker washer into it and it ought to last five years. But the washer dries out and the pump has got to be primed. Under the white rock I buried a bottle of water, out of the sun and cork end up. There's enough water in it to prime the pump, but not if you drink some first. Pour about one-fourth and let her soak to wet the leather. Then pour in the rest medium fast and pump like crazy. You'll git water. The well has never run dry. Have faith. When you git watered up, fill the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next feller. (signed) Desert Pete. P.S. Don't go drinking the water first. Prime the pump with it and you'll git all you can hold."

So the Lord allows storms. That's the first thing we learn about the Lord from this story.

II. The Lord can remove storms (39).

Verse 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."

Note the first words, *He got up*. I hope you are encouraged by the fact that Jesus heard the cry of men who lacked faith and questioned His care. That means there is hope for us! Jesus doesn't help the deserving—for there are none—but the desperate.

And did you catch how responsive Jesus was to the disciples' touch? G. Campbell Morgan offers this insight, "The rush of the storm, and the sweep of the wind did not wake Him; but the touch of the trembling hand, and the cry of men in trouble, did. The moment they touched Him and said, 'Teacher, carest Thou not that we perish?' He was awake... We have seen something of this glory in a mother, whom all the noise of traffic will not waken, but who will be aroused by the sigh of a baby."

And so He got up. At this point Mark tells us in a very matter of fact way that three things happened next, in this order.

A. Jesus spoke. Note to whom He spoke and what He said, "He rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!'" It's worth noting that these are the same words Jesus uttered when He addressed the demon-possessed man in Mark 1:25, "Quiet! Be still!" literally, "Be muzzled!" What happened?

B. The wind ceased. The roaring wind stopped instantly. Furthermore...

C. The sea became calm. Usually, even after strong winds cease the waves they produced continue to churn. Not this time. It's a double miracle. Jesus told the wind *and* the waves to stop. And they did.

Do you see the unique character of the person of Jesus Christ in this? One moment He is an exhausted man, sleeping on a cushion while a storm batters His boat. The next moment He is wide awake, exhibiting such power that He stilled that storm with a simple command. No wonder the disciples promptly asked, as we'll see momentarily, "Who is this?"

The Lord allows storms. The Lord can also remove storms and sometimes He does.

III. The Lord uses storms (40-41).

He uses storms to teach us about two subjects.

A. He teaches us about ourselves (40). "He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'" It's the first of several times Jesus rebuked the disciples for their lack of understanding and faith (cf. 7:18; 8:17-18, 21, 32-33; 9:19). But His rebuke is for our good, not our harm.

The two questions Jesus asked the disciples indicate storms help us see two things.

1. *We see our fear.* "Why are you so afraid?" He asked them first. You say, "It seems logical to be afraid of a storm that has the power to kill you." It may be logical, but it's not necessary, not if the author of the storm is right next to you in the boat! The Lord uses storms to show us what's in our hearts that shouldn't be there, in this case, fear.

2. *We see our need for faith.* "Do you still have no faith?" In the KJV, "How is it that ye have no faith?" The disciples had heard Jesus teach and seen Him perform miracles, but they lacked something vital. They lacked *faith*.

The modern objector would say, "Wait a minute, Jesus. I have *some* faith. Remember, I walked an aisle ten years ago and said I believed. I'm just struggling a little right now." But Jesus calls it *no faith*. You either believe the Lord or you don't.

Fear and faith are mutual exclusives in the Bible. Cole says that no command is more often reiterated in the Bible than the simple, "Do not fear."

"I will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb 13:5)." We know that's what He said, but that's not always how we feel.

When a traveler in the early days of the west, came to the Mississippi, he discovered there was no bridge. Fortunately it was winter and the great river was sheeted over with ice. But the traveler was afraid to trust himself to it, not knowing how thick it was. Finally with infinite caution, he crept on his hands and knees and managed to get halfway over. And then he heard--yes he heard singing from behind. Cautiously he turned, and there, out of the dusk, came another traveler, driving a four-horse load of coal over the ice, singing as he went!

That's an appropriate picture of some of us. We would do well to hearken Jesus' question, "How is it that you have no faith?"

Oswald Chambers put it this way, "Faith for my deliverance is not faith in God. Faith means, whether I am visibly delivered or not, I will stick to my belief that God is love. There are some things only learned in a fiery furnace."

The Lord uses storms to teach us about ourselves. But that's not all. There's a second subject in the curriculum.

B. He teaches us about Himself (41). "They were terrified"—Literally, "They feared with a great fear." And this fear wasn't produced by the storm, but by the calm. Whereas they had been alarmed by what was happening *outside* the boat, now they're petrified by the One standing before them *inside* the boat. Isn't that interesting? The disciples still feared, no longer the storm but now the Lord. Cole explains, "A friendly, familiar, human Jesus they wanted, but not a supernatural Son of God."

"And asked each other, 'Who is this?'" They thought they knew Him before, but now they're sure they don't know Him, not fully. Have you been there before? To be saved, you must know Him. But that doesn't mean you know Him fully—that's a lifelong process, an eternally lifelong process.

The disciples learned two things about the Lord that day.

1. *He is the Lord of creation.* Hear their fearful cry, "Even the wind and the waves obey him!" And if the wind and waves obey Him, can we do less? Dare we do less?

That's the question of all questions. *Who is this?* Who do you believe Jesus to be? A good teacher? A miracle worker? A moral example? Is that who He is to you? Or is He indeed the Sovereign Lord and King of

the entire universe, including your own life?

You must settle this issue or His death won't make sense. If He was merely a good teacher then His death was an accident, nothing more. If He came to be a moral example, His death is little more than motivation for you to think of others. But if He is the Sovereign Lord over creation, that means that nothing takes Him by surprise. That means He was in control while on the cross as He was while in this boat. That means He died because He chose to do, for a purpose. Which He did. He died to fulfill His Father's plan to rescue sinners from eternal destruction by taking their place.

That's why you can receive the gift of eternal life from Him. That's why you *must* receive the gift of eternal life from Him—there is no other way. He is the Lord of creation.

There's something else the disciples learned about Him that day in the boat.

2. *He does care for us.* "Don't you care if we drown?" they had asked. Now they have their answer. He cares! It's been well said, "We are far safer in the middle of a storm with Jesus than anywhere else without Him."

My friend, no storm can wreck the work of God. Though all hell break loose, it makes no difference. If Jesus is be there, all is well!

There is no need to panic if you know the Lord. We can be sure that Christ is with us in the midst of the storm. Oh, He may seem to us to be sleeping. We may seek to wake Him from His apparent slumber with the cry, "Don't You care?" But of course He cares. If He would go to the Cross to rescue us from the greatest storm of all—the eternal storm of God's wrath poured out on sinners in hell—is it possible He would forsake us in the lesser storms of this life? Never, a thousand times never!

G. Campbell Morgan offers this application: "All such panic is unnecessary, and unworthy. The Lord is at the heart of the storm, and we may rest in Him, and smile at the storm...Does Christ seem asleep? Ah! But He is there. If we would see the greatest things we had better not waken Him. It will be great if he will hush the storm! But there are greater things. What are they? Watching Him through the storm. That is what He wanted these men to do. In proportion as we believe this, we ought to have no panic."

It's a simple story, but it makes the point. One night a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, "Jump! I'll catch you." He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke, and blackness. As can be imagined, he was afraid to leave the roof. His father kept yelling: "Jump! I will catch you." But the boy protested, "Daddy, I can't see you." The father replied, "But I can see you and that's all that matters."

Edward Hooper wrote, "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me:"

Jesus, Savior, pilot me

Over life's tempestuous sea;

Unknown waves before me roll,

Hiding rocks and treach'rous shoal;

Chart and compass come from Thee—

Jesus, Savior, pilot me!

The Bottom Line: If the Lord is in your boat...there are two guarantees...

1. *You can expect storms.* He allows them. He can remove them. He loves to use them for our good and His glory.

On March 15, 2004, five evangelical missionaries were traveling by car to conduct relief efforts in Mosul, Iraq. Without warning, the vehicle was assaulted by automatic weapon fire and rocket-propelled grenades. The car was torn apart as the gunmen unleashed the barrage; three of the missionaries were killed at the scene.

Then an amazing thing happened. Missionary David McDonnall, despite being mortally wounded, pulled his wife Niki from the wreckage. She had been shot at least twenty times, but was still alive. Desperate to save her life, David got Niki out of the car and to a hospital where she was immediately rushed into surgery. When Niki awakened about a week later, she learned that her husband had not survived. His last effort in his own life was in saving hers.

Still walking with a cane as she heals from her injuries, Niki shares her heart's desire to remain with the Iraqi people and with recruiting believers to commit to global missions. She passionately declares that many Christians need to get out of their comfort zones and get proactive about their faith.

"I can't help but believe that if we truly know Christ, if we truly pursue Christ and we delight in Him," she said, "I'm pretty sure missionaries wouldn't have to stand here and tell you that we need to go; it would burn in our hearts. If we truly saw Christ for who He is, and allowed it to make us into His likeness and to reflect Him, wouldn't this world be filled with people who mirror Jesus? And the Lord of the Harvest would have a field full of workers that were passionate about making His glory known among the nations."

Niki, who is living with her parents while she recovers, adds, "I pray that we would recklessly abandon our lives of ease and that we would pursue Christ and that what we think about our Christ would so penetrate our hearts and lives that the world would see and God would be glorified."

If the Lord is in your boat, you can expect storms. That's a guarantee. But so is this.

2. *You can experience peace.* Sometimes He quiets the storm. Sometimes He quiets our hearts while the storm continues. But always He gives peace, His peace.