

'Who Then Is This, That Even the Wind and the Sea Obey Him?'- Mar 4:41

by G. Campbell Morgan

The sermon explores the significance of Jesus' power and authority, as revealed in the story of the storm on the sea, and how it led the disciples to a deeper understanding of Him and His parabolic method.

Scripture: Mark 4:35

Topics: "The Authority of Christ", "Faith in the Storm"

Description

G. Campbell Morgan explores the profound question posed by the disciples, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?' after witnessing Jesus calm a furious storm. He emphasizes that their fear shifted from the storm to the awe of Jesus' authority, revealing their need for deeper faith and understanding of His divine nature. Morgan highlights the significance of Jesus' calmness amidst chaos, illustrating that true peace comes from recognizing His presence in our storms. The sermon encourages believers to trust in Christ's sovereignty, even when He seems silent, and to find rest in knowing He is always with us. Ultimately, the event serves as a reminder that no storm can thwart God's plans when Christ is in the vessel.

Transcript

Mar 4:35-41.

THIS was the question of a great fear. The statement of Mark, which our translators have rendered, "They feared exceedingly," quite literally rendered is, They feared with a great fear.

Moreover this fear was not produced by the storm, but by the calm. Whatever fear they had in the presence of the storm was lost as the greater fear and consternation took possession of them, when the storm was suddenly hushed and ended. In the question, therefore, we discover the effect produced upon the twelve by what the Lord had done. The stilling of the storm was a sign granted to the twelve only, the men who at this time were

Mark was most careful to link this wonderful stilling of the storm with the day of parabolic teaching, that day of wonderful teaching, when Jesus requested His disciples that they should cross to the other side, and when their compliance with His request was ready and immediate. As Mark graphically states it, they took Him "as He was" in the boat; that is, without making any change of situation, without making any

special preparation for crossing over, or for being away for any length of time. In all probability the phrase "as He was" also suggests that He was tired with the strain and tension of that day, the crowds pressing upon Him, and the pouring out of Himself in parabolic teaching, followed by the private exposition of His teaching to His own disciples.

The boat put away from the land in the quiet and the calm of the evening. Almost immediately they were in the midst of the storm, one of those furious storms that still sweep so suddenly from the mountains and lash the sea into turmoil and unrest, storms which Rob Roy has described for us so graphically as to enable us for all time to understand this story better. As he has said, the wind, having gathered force, seems literally to tumble in avalanches upon the water, and beat it into wildness. The word that Mark used here means more than an ordinary storm, it means a furious storm.

There, in the hinder part of the vessel, with His head upon the cushion (not a cushion, but the only one there), Jesus was asleep. The disciples were filled with perturbation. The storm undoubtedly was of unusual severity, for these men were sailors who understood the management of their craft; but they were at their wits' end, and at last made their way toward the sleeping Jesus, and waking Him, said to Him: Master, is it no concern to Thee that we perish? Then quietly rising from His slumber, He looked out over the storm-tossed waters, and addressed the wind with anger: "He rebuked the wind." This is a very strong word. One of the earliest translators rendered it, "He menaced the wind." Morison, with that quaint accuracy which characterized him, says that the real force of the statement is, I He rebuked the wind, and then addressing Himself to the sea, said, Be muzzled. The peculiar quality of what happened was that of the suddenness of the change. The wind ceased; and the sea, which in the ordinary course of events would be a long time sobbing itself back into quietness, was almost immediately - o use the forcible thought of the Greek word-beaten back into levelness. Over the sea, and away to the mountains, and everywhere, with sudden swiftness there was quietness and calm. Then, looking at the disciples, Jesus said to them, "Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?" They then forgot all about the terror of the storm in the new fear, a great fear, an exceeding great fear that possessed them, and a fear that had at its heart a sense of awe. They said one to another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

The story is suggestive in a hundred ways. Perhaps every preacher turns to it sooner or later, some often in the course of a life's ministry; and yet it is ever fresh, fascinating, and forceful. It is so full of suggestiveness that it has inspired the poets also, and we have a rich collection of hymns expressive of its varied values. The story has values which make for new strength and new joy, however tempest-tossed man may be.

The first value of the event to the twelve is revealed in this question, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" To understand their question we must observe with some care what they observed, the things that gave rise to the question. We will try to observe them from their standpoint as though in very deed we were with them in the boat and passing through their experiences. What did they see that day in Jesus that made them ask the question? The question was new, "and one compelled by some new manifestation. These men had been with Him now for some time. They had seen Him in many circumstances. They had heard many different tones in that voice which in itself was all music. Yet something happened which made them say, Who then is this?"

Then secondly, in order to understand them, we must pay special attention to their question; These remarks will indicate the lines of our meditation. First, let us see Jesus as the disciples saw Him that day; secondly, let us see the disciples as they are revealed by the question they asked.

Jesus as the disciples saw Him. For the sake of brevity, I will summarize everything by saying they saw Him asleep, and they saw Him awake.

They saw Him asleep? Let us look at Him as they thus saw Him. He had been teaching. The day had come to its close, the shadows of the evening were about them, but He had requested them to cross to the other side of the sea. With alacrity and immediateness they had yielded to His request, and the boat was moving away. They saw Him find His way to the after-part of the boat, and pillow His head upon the one cushion there, and go to sleep. They saw a Man tired, feeling the strain of suffering, conscious of the drain made upon Him by the success of those gathered multitudes, and the opposition which was growing against Him. He was asleep. He needed sleep; and He was able to sleep. That in itself was a sign, that He was a Man of perfect physical health, and of mental peace. Mark their own word when they presently came to Him. Have You no concern? That was exactly it. He had no concern, and was at peace. He was a Man therefore of spiritual holiness. These are the elements that make for sleep. A man who is in physical health, without mental concern, and at peace with God, will sleep.

We have seen Jesus asleep. Responsive to their touch and their cry, He awoke. 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. There is no need to lift that thought to any higher level than that of His glorious humanity. That does not deny His Deity, but it does help us to see what we supremely need to be reminded of-the perfection of His humanity. 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. This was supremely manifest in the Lord, for all the excellencies of motherhood were also in Him. Thus awakened, He looked out upon the storm, unperturbed in His own soul; and with authority He rebuked the winds, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!"

Without laying undue emphasis upon the fact, it is interesting to notice in passing that in His dealing with the storm upon this occasion, our Lord employed exactly the same method as when dealing with demons. For the sake of illustration, glance back at the story, of the first Sabbath morning in Capernaum. Then a demon cried out and disturbed Him in His teaching: "What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth. Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee Who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Jesus listened to the words, and rebuked him, employing exactly the same words. This fact is suggestive; It does seem to suggest that there was something in that storm of the nature of the storms that swept upon Job in the olden days, which were caused by the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in the kingdom of darkness. I will not argue it, nor dogmatize about it; but I cannot understand Jesus speaking evidently in tones of anger to a wind. He rebuked the wind; and the word suggests anger. I cannot understand Him saying to the sea, Be muzzled. I believe that He knew that the storm was due to the spirit of darkness, to the underworld of evil.

Dismiss that thought if you will, and simply look at the actual fact, that He rebuked the wind, and it ceased; and then spoke to the sea, and it beat itself back into levelness, and was calm.

Then while their hearts were filled with wonder at the deed, they heard Him reproving them: "Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?"

Mark the strange merging. The disciples saw a tired Man asleep. They saw a Man so tremendous in power, that the wind that tossed the sea into fury ceased; and the sea, tossed into fury, was immediately

calm. What wonder that they asked: "Who then is this?"

We have more than those men had. We have the story in the light of subsequent events. Observe the things which they did not see, which they could not observe, for they themselves must be observed also. They saw the tired Man suddenly rising from the slumber made necessary by His weariness, and hushing the storm to rest. What can we see? We see the mighty One Who f can hush the storm to rest, confronting the human soul, and saying, "Why are ye fearful." In other words, it is suggested by this story that the problem that confronted God was not that of stilling the storm on the sea, but that of stilling the storm in a human soul, and that is a harder work for God! With a word the storm on the sea is over, but even He must ask these men, "Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?"

In that question there is reminiscence of the way along which He had led them, of the things He had said to them, of the things He had done, of all the pathway along which they had travelled. We see the mighty One limited in the presence of a human soul; but not ultimately, nor finally. Before He has finished He will also bring peace there; but He had not yet accomplished it, in the case of these men. For the moment we see men, to whom this very operation of peace brings no peace, but 'a new fear.

Let us look then at the disciples themselves as they are revealed by their question. We must observe them in the immediate experiences of the storm; in the sign that was given to them by the stilling of the storm.

Look first at the start they made. Wondering at His wisdom, after the day of parabolic teaching, doing His behests with eagerness, they immediately put out to sea. Then, suddenly, the storm came. At first they forgot everything in their terror in the presence of the storm, for they were reduced to the point of hopelessness. The waves beating into the boat, threatened to engulf it; it seemed that all must be over; nothing could save them; they were going down; they were going to perish; there was no help for it; this was the end of everything! Then they woke Him Here we must watch them with great care. They remonstrated with Him in protest, not expecting that He would do anything. We have generally been inclined to interpret this story by saying that they woke Him in order that He might still the storm. Nothing of the kind. They were intensely surprised when He did still the storm. When they said, "Carest Thou not that we perish," we need to be very careful to understand what they meant. They were not protesting against Him for being careless that they were perishing. They were protesting against His lack of concern in view of the fact that they were all going to perish, Himself amongst the number. Their "we" referred, not to the disciples only, but to all who were in the boat. To take their words exactly as they were uttered, this is what they said: Is it no concern to Thee that we perish? Not, Art Thou neglecting us? But, Thou art not perturbed in an hour like this, when the boat is in peril, and our lives are in peril, and Thy mission is in peril, when we are all about to perish beneath these waters which in the morning will be blue and placid again, with all the enterprise of the Kingdom buried beneath them? Is it no concern to Thee that we perish? It was not a request to Him to do anything; but a protest against His apparent indifference.

Then He awoke, and they watched Him. They heard His angry rebuke, His authoritative command. They heard the rushing and moaning of the wind cease; and they saw the waves beaten back into levelness.

Then He startled them more than ever. He turned round and reproved them, "Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?" No word of comfort this, but a word of reproof! If this story had been a fabrication, it would never have entered into the heart of man to make Jesus speak that word of rebuke! He rebuked them, and they were startled; so startled were they, that they feared with a great fear. It was not the storm that filled them with fear, but the calm, and what He said to them.

"Who then is this?" said they. "Who then" in view of this rebuke-"is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" These facts demonstrated His right to rebuke. Evidently He was justified in sleeping. They had no right to awaken Him; and they ought to have known that they had no right to awaken Him, or else there is no meaning in His rebuke.

What then were the ultimate values of this event, and what the place that this scene really occupied in our Lord's method with these men, and in His training of them?

The first value is that of the question which they asked; in the fact that they were compelled to the attitude of mind that expressed itself in that question. They had discovered in their Master, in that hour of stress and strain and storm, followed by quiet and peace and calm, followed again by strange and new rebuke, an authority and a power, demanding a more intensive discipleship ; and that more intensive discipleship had its manifestation in the question, "Who then is this?" We must get nearer to Him! We must find out more about Him!

This was a fine attitude of soul to which He brought these men by that event. All down the centuries again and again He has brought men to that attitude through storms. "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" The attitude of mind that inspired the inquiry is the first value of the experiences through which they had passed

The second value is that of the necessary effect upon the past, and upon the future of His ministry, produced by the things that had happened that day, by that actual stilling of the storm, and by His strange rebuke of them. In that hour there was a seal set upon the authority of all He had been saying. Among other things, in that hour there was a vindication as well as an illustration of His parabolic method. He had been employing the parable in all that long day of teaching. They had challenged Him as to His reason for employing the parabolic method, and He had answered them. Here was an illustration in their experience. This also was a parable, a parable not in words but in deed, intended to explain and correct an attitude in-their own lives. It was a parable made necessary by their dullness; seeing, they did not see; hearing, they did not hear, neither had they understood; or, they never would have awakened Him. But because they were blind and deaf and dull, He gave them a parable by stilling the tempest; and having done so, suggesting the reason of His absence of concern, and the meaning of His sleeping, and why it was unnecessary to wake Him; then He rebuked them, and left upon their souls the impression of the teaching of the parable. He exercised this parabolic activity of power, in order to remove the dullness that made it necessary; and in that hour there was a vindication of what He had said about His parabolic teaching; and thus a new authority was set upon all His teaching by reason of what He had done.

From that time forward the event became to them, and not to them alone, but to all the Christian Church-our sermons, expositions, and hymns bearing witness-a source of strength in days of stress and storm. Can we think that these men could ever forget that scene? There was another occasion when He came to them in the night, over the sea and through the wind, and that also was for them alone. Neither of these wonders of the deep were wrought in view of the multitude, but for these men alone. The sea is always typical of the possibility of storm, even when most beautiful, as it is lulled to quietness and rest. The sea is ever the symbol of peril. At last the seer in the island washed by the sea, wrote as One of the ultimate things of the final order, "There shall be no more sea." To repeat our question therefore, can we imagine that these men who were with Him that day in the boat, ever forgot the spiritual values of that event, and the fact that He slept at the heart of the storm? Could they ever forget that when they went to Him, He woke and ended the storm?

I do not think that His waking and ending of the storm was the value of the lesson to them. I think the chief value of the day's experience was its revelation of the fact that there was no need to wake Him; that

"No waters can swallow the ship where lies

The Master of ocean, and earth, and skies."

They certainly did learn that in days of stress and strain and storm, if they cried out, He would end the storm. Yes! but the deeper thing they learned was this; that no storm can wreck the programme of God; that though all hell be let loose, and though it have power over elements, and events, and the hearts of men, and the passions of the world, to stir them into storm, and wreck the apparently frail bark where Christ lies asleep, it is all useless. If He be there, all is well!

That is the profoundest lesson of all. I am not prepared to say that these men learned it so perfectly as always to live in its power; but whenever they failed, He would help them, and the memory of it and of His rebuke would come back.

"With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm."

That is not waking Him! Can I smile at the storm with Christ in the vessel? I am not sure that I can; but I ought to, and I want to. I believe it is one of the profoundest lessons of life, whether in regard to personal experience, or world wide affairs. There ought to be no panic in the heart of a man, when he knows Christ. We may be sure that Christ is at the heart of every storm. He apparently sleeps in the hour of our anxiety. We go to Him, and say what these men said, and as others have said, Carest Thou not that we perish, Lord? What art Thou doing?

"See round Thine ark the angry billows curling."

We are in danger of being swamped. Everything is going wrong!

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. It is, perhaps, more easy to believe that about the world, than it is about our own life. It is a curious fact, but it is quite true. We can often trust Him for the world, more readily than for ourselves. 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.

Though nearly two thousand years have run their course, and in some senses we know more than these men, we are still driven to say, Who then is this? In the answer to that question is the secret of rest. In proportion as we really know Him, in that proportion we shall be quiet. It was Jeremy Taylor who said that we are far safer in the middle of a storm with God, than anywhere else without Him. And that is what we need to learn and to remember, that we may be at peace, and that we may cooperate with Him.

Source:

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