

COURAGE IS FEAR HOLDING ON FOR A MINUTE LONGER

Ps. Craig Mobey

SCRIPTURE – MARK 4:35-40

35 “That evening, Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Let's cross to the east side.’

36 So they left the crowd, and his disciples started across the lake with him in the boat. Some other boats followed along.

37 Suddenly a windstorm struck the lake. Waves started splashing into the boat, and it was about to sink.

38 Jesus was in the back of the boat with his head on a pillow, and he was asleep. His disciples woke him and said, ‘Teacher, don't you care that we're about to drown?’ John 16:33

39 Jesus got up and ordered the wind and the waves to be quiet. The wind stopped, and everything was calm.

40 Jesus asked his disciples, ‘Why were you afraid? Don't you have any faith?’

INTRODUCTION

There in the boat – asleep – is the One who created the universe, and the disciples were not only exhausting their own efforts to save themselves in the storm, but fearing death.

You have faced, and will still face storms in life, what is your first response to the storm? And what is your best response? Are they the same? For the disciples, their first and best were not the same response, even though Jesus was visibly in their presence.

These are the same disciples, who just witnessed Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount, heal many and at Capernaum, even healed a Centurion's servant. The disciples were with Him as He went to Peter's home and healed Peter's mother-in-law. They left with Jesus as He headed toward the lakeshore and heard first-hand as He told the parables of the mustard seed, the sower and light under the blanket.

And Jesus, naturally being tired, rested His head on a pillow in the boat, only to be woken by the disciples as they called out, “Teacher, don't you care that we're about to drown?”

BODY

Sometimes, standing on the mountaintops of the greatest blessings, we often can't help but feel a touch of fear in the knowledge that living in a fallen world means that storms can arrive like a thief in the night, raise havoc and steal your peace.

Circumstances beyond our control can happen at any moment. And some can be so terrible that they can leave you terrified, feeling that death is nearby.

In short, the disciples quickly went from security to fear – meaning that the storm demanded both their respect as well as an appropriate response from them. The fear is logical and needed: it brought them into motion and if they did nothing, then things would not end well. Then fear progressed to worry. Worry progressed to anxiety. Anxiety progressed to troubled. Troubled progressed to distressed. Distress progressed to terror.

Terror and faith are mutually exclusive from each other. Terror says, “I can't fix or run from my situation and there is no hope” and faith says, “I will fear no evil because God is with me.” When we cannot find help to change our circumstances and still the storm, terror grips our hearts and the once peaceful waters become stormy and life-threatening. At the same time, faith says that God is with us in the storm and He is the one who will come to our rescue.

I can't fix or run from my situation and there is no hope

Andrew, Peter, James and John (possibly also Bartholomew and Thomas) were professional fishermen, so they would be familiar with stormy seas and they would have done what should be done in stormy waters: they rigged the boat, lowered the sails, took to the oars to keep the boat heading into the waves and started bailing water so the boat would not sink. This was not enough, and the boat began to sink.

The terrified disciples seemed to accuse, not ask, Jesus, “don't you care that we're about to drown?” They were in a life or death situation and instead of praying, they interrogate and complain to the only One who can help them. The power of terror!

This was the disciples' first response, even though the creator of the Universe was in the boat with them.

All too often, it is also our first response to a storm, even though we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

I will fear no evil because You are with me

Jesus got up and quietened the storm with a single command: “Peace, be still.” Simple as that. The quietening of the storm was not because Jesus prayed, but because of His authority; the same authority that created the waters, calmed the waters (Job 26:10-12) and parted the Red sea (Psalm 106:9).

If only the disciples – in the midst of their fear storm – realized that the one who was asleep in their boat created the universe (Colossians 1:16), they would have known their terror was unjustified.

Now, suppose you were convinced, not only that the Holy Spirit is in you, but that God will never respond to our cries for help with greater burdens, but in love.

Then perhaps, your first and best responses might be the same response.

How could you?

The disciples asked Jesus “don’t you care?”

I would ask the disciples, “How could you?” You have seen Jesus heal a lame man, heal a person who could not walk because of crippled legs suddenly get up and toss his crutches aside, heal a man who had never been able to talk, heal a man with leprosy suddenly in the middle of a storm – fearing for your life – forget it all?

What if I asked you (and myself) similar questions? Does it feel that God does not care? Why are you afraid? Don't you have any faith? How could you, knowing that He saved you from a certain death?

Because in times of the storm, we react according to the instinct of the “old” self, instead of instinctively calling upon God.

When we feel powerless in a storm, does this mean that the best that we do is to stay in the eye of the storm and watch our hopes and dreams swirl around us; forever out of control and beyond our grasp?

Or will we meet the storms of life with confidence that God will fulfil His promise to do good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28)? Can you think of any promise that God has broken? Neither can I.

CONCLUSION

The disciples were on a familiar body of water, in a familiar boat and they knew what to do. Yet they chose to move from terror to courage to wake Jesus. Actually, they could have called upon Jesus within a minute of noticing the storm. And so can you.

Why wait? God is always with us.

General George Patton said, “Courage is fear holding on a minute longer.” If you give in to your fears, you are on the path to defeat. If instead you stand strong in spite of your fears, you are on the path to victory. And we must never forget that we are not in the battle alone. With the power of God on our side, we cannot be defeated.”

The next time that fear strikes, take a minute to realize that God is with you in the storm. Take courage, don't complain, God's got this!

Amen.