

Mark 4:35-41

“The Keeping Power Of Christ”

Vs35-41

It was Christmas Eve, 1875, a man by the name of Ira Sankey (who was the co-evangelist, soloist and song leader for D.L. Moody throughout his crusades) was traveling by steamboat up the Delaware River. It was a beautiful, starlit evening and many passengers were on deck who encouraged the famous evangelist to sing. Sankey, who was leaning against one of the steamship's great funnels gazing at the stars in silent prayer, consented, intending to sing a Christmas song, but felt compelled to sing William Bradbury's "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us."

There was a deep stillness as his baritone floated across the quiet river that Christmas Eve. When he had finished, a man stepped from the shadows and said: "Did you ever serve in the Union Army?"

"Yes," Mr. Sankey answered, "in the spring of 1860."

"Can you remember if you were doing picket duty on a bright, moonlit night in 1862?"

"Yes," Mr. Sankey answered, very much surprised.

"So did I, but I was serving in the Confederate Army. When I saw you standing at your post, I raised my musket and took aim. I was standing in the shadow, completely concealed, while the full light of the moon was falling upon you. At that instant, just as a moment ago, you raised your eyes to heaven and began to sing. 'Let him sing his song to the end,' I said to myself. 'I can shoot him afterwards...'

"But the song you sang then was the song you sang just now. I heard the words perfectly: 'We are Thine, do Thou befriend us. Be the Guardian of our way.'

"Those words stirred up many memories. I began to think of my childhood and my God-fearing mother. She had many times sung that song to me..."

"When you finished your song, it was impossible for me to take aim again. I thought, 'The Lord who is able to save that man from certain death must surely be great and mighty.' and My arm of its own accord dropped limp at my side."

Completely oblivious to any danger, Ira Sankey was delivered from certain death. Was it all coincidence? He just happened to be there that night, the other man just happened to have him in his sights, he just happened to sing this song, and the man just happened to give his heart to Christ right there and resolve not to pull the trigger... You guys that see the sovereign hand of God at work, that's the keeping power of Christ, how that God is able to keep His own until the time He's finished with them. and We need to understand that, really believe that, that Christ is able to *keep* us until His purpose is completed *through* us.

and As we come to this particular text in Mark Ch 4 that's the lesson that the disciples are about to learn and come to understand, that when Christ is with you, and has a plan for you, storms may come but He is well able to keep you regardless of the tempestuous times and situational struggles around you.

We note in Vs 35 that this particular happening took place, “on the same day.” What day? Well, the day we’ve been studying now for 3 services. Believe me when I tell you that Jesus knew what it was like to lead a full life, to maintain the type of schedule that keeps you swamped and utterly exhausted. It’s taken us 3 weeks to get through a single days worth of His activity. It began by delivering a demon possessed man only to be blasted with accusations that He was casting out and controlling demons by the power of Satan only to be followed up by His mother and brothers (perhaps his sisters as well) trying to get to Him, wanting to take Him away from the people back to Nazareth because in so giving Himself to the needs of the people and neglecting His own bodily need of nourishment they thought He’d flipped His lid. Maybe the fame was getting to Him or something.

After all there was both political and religious tension mounting around Him in a hostile kind of way and at this point it wasn’t a matter of “if” they were going to kill Him (in their minds) it was only a matter of “how” and “when.” and That didn’t seem to make a difference to Him, He wasn’t shrinking back in light of the pressure of persecution and /or even death.

Then, leaving this packed out house in which He was ministering He made His way down to the shore of the sea of Galilee whereby thousands of people were pressing in *upon* Him and all *around* Him hoping to receive some sorta miraculous touch *from* Him. and Getting to the point whereby He couldn’t effectively minister any longer He got in a boat and spent the rest of the afternoon in the hot sun teaching the people in parables. Now I know what it’s like to lead worship and teach God’s word for a few hours at a time and generally in a controlled environment and seek to minister to people’s needs and give direction, or occasional correction as the need may be and when I go home I feel like collapsing. I don’t know what it is *about* it, be it the spiritual aspect *of* it but it’s taxing. Jesus had been going at it all day, doing good works *and* teaching God’s word, not in a controlled environment, but out in the brutal heat in the midst of the crowd and then finally from a boat.

and Now in Vs 35 we read that evening had come and having hit the proverbial wall, His “tank” was on “E” and He said, “Let’s cross over to the other side.”

Now, having read this story in it’s totality we know what’s about to come upon them specifically. Right now things seem nice, probably a gentle breeze blowing, but it won’t be long and a hurricane like condition will be upon them, there’s a storm that will hit them suddenly. Understand that the sea of Galilee isn’t really a “Sea” in the way that we’d think, it’s about 8 miles wide by about 13 or so miles long and it’s located at about 628’ below sea level and it’s surrounded by mountains that have these deep ravines running through them that act like giant funnels that focus these whirling cold winds down to mix and mingle with the warm air rising from the valley and the result can be sudden storms that take place with out warning.

Vs 36 tells us that there were other “little boats” that were with Him. So you can sorta see the scene there, Jesus has been teaching. and Not only were people mounting up on the shore, but other boats that were upon the water began to make their way to His area so they could listen to Him as well. and Now that He’s done teaching, probably at a point whereby He’s so exhausted He doesn’t want to try and fight through the crowd He just says to His disciples “Let’s pick up anchor and go to the other side of the lake.” and So they hoist the sail and head off and these other boats decide to come along with them following after them.

and In that I believe there's something worth noting thought we've mentioned it many times before and that is this. There will always be those people who although they may be peripheral *to* our lives they will be impacted by what's going on *in* our lives. These guys were just kind of "along for the ride." Not apart of "core group" if you will, but by the very nature that they're with in their sphere they'll be impacted by what's about to take place in the lives of the Lord's disciples. and I say all that to say this; we have this tendency (often times) to think that we're all alone in the decisions we make. "It's my life, it's not hurting anyone but myself." That's never true, you will never engage in some sort of sinful situation whereby someone else or perhaps an entire group of people won't be caught somehow in the *wake* of it. We see it over and over and over again throughout the scriptures, and we see it happen everyday in real time. The paths that we take, the decisions that we make will *always* affect those around us.

Be it in sin or rebellion, or even upright integrity and obedience, the corrosion and fallout that follows sin, or the blessing that follows obedience, or even the life lessons that God simply has for us, or perhaps when He simply pours out His grace upon us other people *around* us will be impacted. They'll find themselves in the wake of what's going on in your life be it for the good or for the bad. There were "other little boats" around them that were about to go through the storm with them. This was to be a lesson in the life of the disciples regarding the keeping power of Christ, and because these people were *around* them, they were going to get in on the lesson *with* them.

Now there are 4 words there in Vs 35 that help to qualify this particular premise, did you catch them as we read over it? You might underline them or draw some sort of attention to them, "*He said to them.*" Really we could narrow it down to 2 simple words, "He said." Remember what's been happening throughout the day. Jesus has been teaching about the power of the word of God. The work of God's word with in the human heart, He's said, "If anyone has ears to hear let Him hear." He's been speaking *about* His word, now He's giving *them* His word and they're about to find out how they've fared, what kind of confidence they have, and how much trust they place in the words of Jesus.

Remember faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, but faith will always be put to the test to prove out its validity, it's legitimacy, is it a working reality, or do you abandon ship when the storm is raging violently in your life? You see they'd just spent all day in the proverbial classroom, learning *academically*, now it was time to learn these life lessons *experientially*. It's one thing to sit and listen to the divine ideal and go, "Yes, yes of course, that sounds great." But it's something altogether different to be in the midst of a life crisis and recall those promises, those principles and stand on them with the same assurance, not hit the panic button and freak out, and fail miserably.

Ok, Jesus gave to them His word, essentially He made them a promise, “Let’s cross over to the other side.” “Let’s leave point *A* and make our way over to point *B* by *these* means. He was very specific, there was no ambiguity about what He said, no reason to 2nd guess its application. He didn’t say, “Let’s get somewhere out in the middle and drown.” Or, “Let’s get out there and we’ll see what happens, I’m hoping we’ll make it but you can never be sure.” He was very direct, He gave them His word. and God is very clear about the certainty of His word, the reliability of His word, how trustworthy His word is. He places nothing higher than His Word, He even magnifies His word above His name. *Ps 138:2, “I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.”* Isaiah assures us that when God’s word goes out of His mouth that it will not return to Him void, But it will accomplish what He pleases, And it will prosper in the thing for which He sends it. There is nothing more concrete than God’s word, and the promises He’s made to you.

Now, we believe that, but do we *really believe that*? Unfortunately these guys were a lot like we are, we know what Jesus has said, it’s not vague or uncertain, it’s absent of ambiguity, yet things can come along that rock the boat and suddenly we find ourselves questioning the authority of His word. Can we really trust *in* it, can we really stand *on* it? When our boat is being rocked and we feel as though we’re being swamped and it seems inevitable that unless something changes in a drastic way sinking is inevitable.

Vs36

3 more words in this Vs I want to draw your attention to briefly, “as He was.”

As far as the interpretation goes we realize that statement lends itself to the fact that He was in the boat, He didn’t leave the boat, He was right there, so they just loaded up and went. But as for an application I think it’s important to understand that we need to *know* Jesus, and *take* Jesus as He is.

Often time’s people are looking to fit Jesus into their particular mold, they want Him to be a certain way, but that’s not the way He is. Or they’ll perhaps buy into a way someone else is projecting Him, or as long as He’s willing to conform to a set of conditions, or will be tolerant of certain areas of personal indulgence in my life. We are to receive Him as He is, the sinless Son of God, crucified and resurrected for the sin of the world, He has become for us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption. He is full of grace and truth and calls us to lead lives that are holy and set apart to God, to deny ourselves and take up our cross that where He is there we may be also. He’s not an “I’m ok, you’re ok, we’re all ok” kind of Savior. He went to the cross because we’re not ok. Sin has sent us on a one way every increasing freefall toward the pit of hell and through the cross Jesus has intervened, He is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through Him. and We’re to receive Him as He is, we’re either for Him or against Him, and the one who doesn’t gather scatters abroad. “They took Him along in the boat *as He was*, and other little boats were also with Him.”

Vs37-38

You get the picture don’t you? The weather is *storming*, the Lord is *sleeping*, and the disciples are *shouting*. They’re hitting the “panic” button, they’re freaking out and failing. Not

because they're afraid of the storm, that's only natural, but because they're doubting the Lord; His care and concern *for* them and His faithfulness *to* them.

Few things we want to draw out here. 1st of all we can't get past this scene with out noticing the profound picture of the Lord's humanity. I find that often times we're quick (and rightly so) to assert and defend His deity, Jesus was fully God (and this passage certainly puts that on display), however Jesus was also fully Man. and Here He was so spent personally, so worn out physically and pushed to the point of utter exhaustion that even though waves were crashing over the boat, water and spray splashing on His face, He was just comatose, "K.O.'d" in the stern. Sleeping in the midst of this violent, sudden storm.

But not only was this a heavy sleep due to overwhelming *fatigue*, this I believe is also a sleep of *faith*. Jesus is sleeping securely, resting in the reality that even though circumstances may seem out of control God is in control. Think about it, there were plenty of things that could've kept Jesus awake. How many times have you lied awake in bed at night worrying about various things, how they might turn out, what you need to do, what if things go a certain way. Jesus could've laid there awake simply because of the storm literally, He could've laid there worrying about the plot to take His life from both the religious and political leader, He could've worried about the way His family perceived Him, He could've worried about what the future held in store *for* Him (the agony of the cross). But He knew what it meant to cast His cares upon God knowing that God cared for Him and that He would keep Him, and fulfill His plan through Him. This isn't the sleep of apathy (Teacher, don't you care?) but rather the sleep of great security. As David said, "*I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.*" Ps 4:8 That's what we're seeing here, not neglect of the circumstance as was the accusation, but rather giving the disciples an opportunity to learn through the situation at hand. This wasn't all about fatigue (though that was no small part) it was also about faith.

So the question comes up, "Why do storms break out (some times suddenly and unexpectedly) in our lives?" At least 2 reasons. Some storms are storms of *correction*, take Jonah for instance, a storm broke loose in his life due to disobedience. and That's a valid reason that storms break loose in our lives, however that's not the only reason. Sometimes we have this tendency to believe that the only time things go bad in our lives is because we've somehow sinned or are doing something wrong. That's not necessarily true (though it can be), some storms aren't storms of *correction* but rather they're storms of *perfection* whereby the Lord is teaching us, stretching us, breaking loose fleshly tendencies from us and giving us life lessons in humility, the dependability of His word and all the rest. That was the situation here, the Lord led them right out into this storm, don't think for a second He didn't know it wasn't coming. He was about to give them an object lesson they'd never forget.

A commentator by the name of Kent Hughes said, "They had no way at that terrible moment of knowing it, but that miserable storm was a vehicle for teaching them about God and His power in their lives. The storm was essential to their spiritual development. Here we see a principle of universal and spiritual application. with out difficulties, trials, stresses, and even failures, we would never grow to be what we should become. Storms are part of the process of spiritual growth." He went on to say, "The fact is, we would be spiritual pygmies, insufferably self-centered, proud and empty people, with out adversity." The bible says, "...*the testing of*

your faith produces patience.” James 1:3 God has a purpose in every problem, somehow and in some way we know that all things work together for good to those who are called according to His purpose. That’s a good all purpose promise to tuck away right there (Rom 8:28).

But here’s the deal you guys; storms come into every person’s life regardless of whether or not they’re believers. Jesus acknowledged that, even as there is common grace, and God’s goodness comes to all in the form of life, breath, rain to grow crops, so and so forth. Even so problems come into every person’s life as well. Storms blow on the homes of those who aren’t founded on His word, and those who are, those who are doers of the word and those who aren’t. and They have this way of separating those who are anchored deep from those who are just along for the ride as long as it’s smooth sailing. and God is able to do a redemptive work, taking those things and making of those things that would otherwise be meant for, or make for our destruction, and turn them in such a way so as to teach us and show us how faithful He is, and how strong we’re not.

Now initially they turned to Him, there’s no problem there, it’s what they said when they came to Him that presents the problem. They woke Him up and said, “Teacher, *do You not care* that we are perishing?” “Aren’t You going to do anything *about* this, grab a bucket or help out *with* this, why are You so indifferent to our apparent problem?” Can anyone relate with this feeling? Perhaps you’re going through the ringer, your life is being swamped by the circumstances at hand. Your boat is being rocked and you feel as though if something doesn’t change you’re going down, destruction is eminent, and though you may not say it specifically, the inflection of your heart is very clearly, “Lord, can’t You see what’s going on here, or do You just not care?.. I’m dying here and You seem to be doing nothing about it.” But listen, here’s what I want you to see. Jesus was right there with them, there He is in the boat, right out in the storm with them, He didn’t abandon them, didn’t leave nor forsake them, He’s the thick of it right there with them. They’re not alone, and I’m just going to tell you that when Jesus is in your boat, it’s not going down you can rest assured.

Remember these words? “*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;*” Isa 43:2-3 Listen, Jesus said that no greater love has anyone than this, than to lay down his life for his friends. Jesus proved His care, His concern, His compassion at the cross, and how dare we have the audacity to ever doubt it?

Question; did Jesus ever promise them smooth sailing? No, He made a declaration regarding the certainty of the arrival at their destination, beyond that there were no guarantees. So to with you, and so to with me concerning this great salvation; Jesus hasn’t promised us smooth sailing. Simply a guaranteed arrival at our destination. As a matter of fact He promised us that in this world we’d have tribulation, He was very clear in informing us of the fact that narrow is the gate, and difficult is the way that leads to life. But He’ll pass through the waters with us, He’ll never leave nor forsake us. You guys, this is the only time in the gospel records that we see Jesus sleeping, that should probably tell us something. We can trust the Lord in turbulent times, rest securely in the fact that having begun a work in you, He’s going to be faithful to complete it until the Day of Jesus Christ

Vs39-40

We've seen His humanity, here's a blatant display of His deity. The wind and the waves obey Him, from storming to sleeping, to shouting, now...silence, a "great calm." The storm didn't arouse Jesus, but the cry of His disciples did, and Jesus spoke peace into their otherwise turbulent lives. Jesus said, "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" John 14:27 and Really this is like a double miracle because the Vs indicates that the wind immediately ceased and there was an incredible calm. In other words even though the wind stopped the waves didn't keep sloshing for another hour. It was like a great hand had brushed aside the wind and pressed down the sea.

and There where He said, "Peace," more literally He said, "Be muzzled." and Because of that many believe that this storm was satanically inspired with the intent to destroy the Lord. Because that's the same way Jesus was known to speak to demons when He told them to be silent and quit speaking. and So with out getting to frank He took authority over the elements and said, "Shut up and keep silent" and there was an immediate with out hesitation type calm.

and Jesus said, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith." and The word fearful here is the word that speaks of a coward. Why are you such cowards? How is it you have no faith. Notice fear and faith are mutually exclusive. But it wasn't the storm that disturbed Him, it was the lack of faith found in His disciples. and Again it wasn't that He was rebuking them for being afraid with regard to the situation. But rather in the midst of that situation they chose to doubt the Lord as opposed to placing their faith *in* the Lord. Jesus was with them, He'd given His word *to* them, the Father was watching over Him (and they were with Him), they'd seen His care and compassion on the multitudes but in the pinch they doubted His care for them. How do you approach the Lord in times of tribulation? with frustration, exasperation, doubting His care or concern, that'll He'll do anything about it, or are you placing all your trust, all your faith in Him to see you through knowing that He'll never leave nor forsake you and that He's well able to keep you?

Vs41

They're stunned, you can just sorta see them sit down with eyes wide open and fixated on the Lord in a "twilight zone" kinda way. and They "feared" exceedingly, this is a different word here, not a cowardly kind of a fear. But a reverential, overwhelmed, "I've just encountered something supernatural" kind of fear. "Who can this be, that even the wind and the waves obey Him!"

The sovereign Creator of all the universe exercising His authority over His creation. What does the bible say? "*O Lord God of hosts, Who is mighty like You, O Lord? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. You rule the raging of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them.*" Ps 89:8-9

God wants to develop you, empty you of self confidence and fill you with Christ confidence. He's more than able to keep you through the storms that come to you. You have everything with you that they had with them. His promise, His presence, and His power... receive His peace. All authority both in Heaven and on earth are His, He is your Savior, Your Redeemer, don't just sit there and fight to stay afloat, cast your care upon Him, because He cares for you, look *to* Him, trust *in* Him, call *upon* Him, and your mind and heart will be overwhelmed *by* Him as He takes out of the great storm and into a great calm...

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Phil 4:6-7

Meditate on things that are true, that are noble, that are just and pure, things that are lovely, of good report, things of virtue, that are praiseworthy... and the God of peace will be with you. (Phil 4:8-9)

Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for Your promise, Jesus for Your presence, and Spirit for Your power, that we can look *to* You, call *upon* You, lean *on* you and trust *in* You because You're *with* us, will never leave nor *forsake* us, and You care *for* us. Thank You that You know every wave of tribulation and hardship that crashes over us, and that You're familiar with our ways, our weaknesses and You're an ever present help in time of need.

Maybe you're feeling like times are pretty turbulent around you, you're taking on water, but Jesus isn't in your boat because you've never given your heart to Christ. Jesus wants to rescue you today, you can call upon Him, His promise, His presence and His power is available to you, you can have peace through His forgiveness today, turn from your sin, and trust in Him. He'll give you a clean slate...new life.