

JESUS CALMS THE STORM

Mark 4:35-41

Key Verse: 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."

Jesus had a plan to have a weekend vacation with his disciples. The disciples left everything and followed Jesus. They were not used to hard working. They were spiritually young to embrace all the needy people. Jesus knew they needed a short weekend vacation. Because of bad weather, their vacation plan was frustrated. But in the stormy sea, Jesus shows himself, who he really is, and teaches his disciples very important spiritual lessons for the future leaders.

I. A happy vacation (35-36)

It seems good to think about what has happened before a happy vacation was announced. A voice came from heaven saying, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (1:11). It was the inauguration speech from heaven for the Messiah of the world. After the inauguration at the Jordan River, Jesus only taught the word of God and healed the sick and drove out demons from people. Mark 1:15 says, "'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'" When Jesus preached to people the good news of the kingdom of God, what was people's response? Even if Jesus told them the old, old story, people were amazed by his teaching and said, "What is this? A new teaching--and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him" (1:27). Where there was a work of God, there was a work of Satan. The Pharisees hindered each and every event. They were looking for a basis to press a charge against the work of the Messiah. Even Jesus' family members regarded him as beside himself (3:21). When Jesus shepherded the flock of God, he was despised and rejected and became a man of sorrow. Nevertheless, Jesus overcame the constant attack of Satan through prayer. It was hard for new disciples to bear with persecutions. They could hardly bear the irregular eating schedule.

Look at verses 35-36. "That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side.' Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. These verses tell us that Jesus wanted to have a spiritual retreat with his disciples. Jesus knew they were very tired and that they needed to know the spiritual meaning of what Jesus was doing. One day, Jesus worked all day long and they were very tired. And when evening came Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side. Leaving the crowd behind... (35, 36a). The disciples immediately understood Jesus' words; it was a short vacation. The disciples hurriedly prepared a boat and said,

"Sir, the boat is ready." The twelve disciples were so happy. In reality, they were a little bit excited to go on a vacation with Jesus. Immediately, they began to shout, "Let's go!" The mountain across the horizon understood their joy and echoed, "Let's go-o-o."

The sea was unusually bright and looked glassy. After a while Jesus and his disciples went into the deep water. The gentle water of the lake splashed and sparkled along the boat under the moonlight. The sound of their rowing was smooth and rhythmical because they were fishermen. It was their first vacation with their master. Now they were some distance from the shore. The boat was gliding on the glassy sea.

II. The storm training (37-41)

First, Jesus rules the heavens and nature. Something unexpected happened. Look at verse 37. "A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped." Suddenly a great storm troubled the lake. This lake is surrounded by plateaus, beyond which rise great mountains. Rivers flowing from the mountains over the plateaus into the lake carve out deep ravines. These ravines play the role of funnels, drawing down cold wind from the mountains and thus causing a sudden storm to arise. A storm on the lake was unpredictable. This is the characteristic of the lake which is also called the Sea of Galilee. Waves beat into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Some of them were skilled fishermen and men of the sea who had braved many a storm, and they steered the boat as skillfully as possible. But it did not work. They lost control. They were in great danger of drowning. Suddenly, all the sad stories they had heard became real to them. They felt that a large group of sharks was lurking there to tear them to pieces. Their vacation spirit was gone. What was Jesus doing? Look at verse 38. "Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?'" Jesus fell into a deep sleep, pillowing his head on the stern of the boat. It was a moment of quiet peace for Jesus.

What did Jesus do when his disciples woke him up? Look at 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." After calming the sea, what did Jesus say to his disciples? Look at verse 40. "He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'" What was the disciples' response to his rebuking? Look at verse 41. "They were

terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'" Jesus revealed that he is God who controls the heavens and nature. Jesus controls winds and waves of the sea. We are familiar with Julius Caesar. Julius Caesar once met a stormy sea on the voyage to a battle. He struggled hard to save his warships from wreckage and finally fell down from exhaustion. Even though Julius Caesar was known as the best conqueror in history, he revealed that he was a mere man in the time of storm. But to God the whole world is like a drop in a bucket and the nations are regarded as dust on the scales. He weighs the islands as though they were fine dust (Isa 40:15). Our God is a great God. Our God is everlasting God. This short event reveals that Jesus is the Creator God.

It is very necessary for us to know that Jesus is God who created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." When we believe in God, God gives us the Spirit of God. Then we become courageous and fearless. King Saul was a bashful young man. When Samuel came to anoint him as king, he hid himself among the baggage (1Sa 10:22). But when God gave him the Spirit of God at the time of anointing, he became so courageous that he grabbed a pair of oxen and cut them into pieces (1Sa 11:6,7). Later, when he became proud and did not listen to God, the Spirit of God left him. Then he became a demon-possessed man (1Sa 16:14). When we believe that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, God opens our spiritual eyes to see his kingdom and his righteousness. When we believe that God made the heavens and the earth, God gives us his happiness in us. When we believe that God made the heavens and the earth, God helps us believe that all peoples of all nations are his precious children and that we are all brothers and sisters in God. When we believe that God made the heavens and the earth, God helps us learn that God made us to be a blessing.

Up until now, his disciples were living together with Jesus. They sensed that Jesus was an extraordinary person when they saw his compassion and broken heart toward the thirsty and sick. But they could not grasp definitely who he was. When they saw Jesus rebuke the wind and sea, they learned that Jesus is God who rules the heavens and the earth. Look at verse 41. "They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'" For the first time the disciples

learned that Jesus is God who rules heaven and nature.

Second, Jesus gave them storm training. Jesus intended to have a retreat with his disciples so that he could explain more about the secret of the kingdom of God. Jesus never wanted to give them storm training. But the devil hindered and frustrated their retreat through the storm. What did Jesus do to his disciples? Look at verse 40. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" First, Jesus rebuked them because they were full of fear.

Jesus wanted to raise them as the future leaders. They should be the men who handle the situation with courage. But when the sea became violent they felt as if they were dying. So the disciples woke Jesus up and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" (38b). They were so afraid that they felt as if they were all dying. Timothy was a right-hand man of St. Paul. But the spirit of timidity blocked him from growing up to be a great servant of God like St. Paul. So Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

When we read the Bible, there are two kinds of leaders. One is those who are full of fear. Their fear comes when they have no faith in God. There is a handsome young man who can be President of the United States if he overcomes his fear and storm training. But he is very fearful if he would lose his public aid. So he cannot get a job to get married. In the history of Israel, King Ahaz was in an important situation. Ahaz had to take over the throne of King Uzziah, who ruled Israel for 52 years. He also had to defeat the allied armies of northern Israel and Aram. He should be a fearless man to maintain his national situation of the time. But he was gripped with fear at the news of the allied armies. He began to tremble like the trees in the forest when they are shaken by the wind. Then the people also trembled like him. God spoke to him through his servant Isaiah. Isaiah 7:7 says, "Yet this is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'It will not take place, it will not happen....'" Again 7:9b says, "If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all." But Ahaz did not believe God Almighty. He died as a godless man. He led his people as godless people.

The other kind of leader is those who are fearless. King David was a man of faith in God. When King Saul was humble, God blessed Israel. But when King Saul abandoned God and began to exalt himself, God did not bless his people Israel. God harassed Israel through the army of the Philistines. Goliath, the Philistine champion, challenged the army of Israel, saying, "Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." The Israelites were dismayed and terrified (1Sa 17:8b-11). At that time, David was an errand boy for his father. He came to the front line of battle to see if his brothers were well. Boy David overheard Goliath's threatening for a duel. David said, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1Sa 17:26b) Boy David responded to Goliath's challenge. He took only his sling shot. In a duel, David slung a stone and it struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead.

Jesus knew that his disciples needed faith in God when they had to be future leaders of the world. So instead of comforting them, Jesus rebuked them that they had no faith. Here we have to think about ourselves. Do we have faith that Jesus is God who rules the heavens and nature? Do we have fear of God and fear nothing else in the world? If we have any kind of fear in our hearts, we must solve it first. Otherwise, we are nobody.

Third, beautiful storms of life. Many wise men of old compared human life to a storm. All human beings want to sail their boats with a gentle breeze from the beginning to the end. But one's voyage cannot avoid many storms. Some confront the storm of losing a young husband. Some confront the storm of a lazy demon. One boy wanted to learn how to play the violin and study well and become a medical doctor and finally go as a medical missionary to Russia. But his laziness hindered his training in violin and school study and future medical studies. Some confront the storm of promiscuity. Some confront the storm of a broken family. Some confront the storm of sorrow. One young and cute girl said that she was very sorrowful. But she solved her sorrow problem by studying Genesis, especially Genesis 1:31. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Life is how to overcome the storm of life with faith and please God and experience the sense of victory. We must learn how to handle the storms of life. We must enjoy how to ride on the storms. In order to overcome the storms of life we must discipline ourselves. Without discipline nobody can be a useful man. Jesus is the best example. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." Even the Son of God had the storm of obedience. It was to suffer much to obey God's will for world salvation. How much more necessary it is for sinful human beings to receive training! The disciples of Jesus did not have a formal education. But Jesus believed they would be the true leaders of God's will for world salvation through the storms of life. They needed to know how to have faith in God. They needed to know how to pray to God. They needed to know how to forgive others (11:22-25). To have faith in God or pray to God in the midst of impossible situations and to forgive nasty ones is not easy for us to master. But we must master them through training. We must know that one who has never overcome the storm of life cannot be a normal man. To have faith in God is the way to master the storm trainings.

In this passage we must learn that Jesus is God who made the

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heavens and the earth. We must learn how to overcome the storm of life by having faith in God.