

Christ in our Crisis - Mark 4:35-5:20

“Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him.” Mark 4:36

INTRODUCTION:

There’s a story I once heard about a mom who looked out her open window and saw her little Johnny “playing church” with the family cat. The cat was sitting quietly while Johnny preached to it. She smiled and went about her work around the house.

Sometime later she heard loud meowing and hissing outside, so she ran to the window just in time to see Johnny baptizing the cat in a tub of water. She called out, “Johnny stop that! The cat is afraid of water!” To which Johnny replied to his mom, “He should have thought of that before he joined my church!”

Unfortunately, the same statement could be said of many Christians today, who go through times of trial. All too often we don’t mind sitting and listening about Christ, we just don’t want Him to disrupt our lives by moving us out of our comfort zones and allowing storms to come into our lives.

We’d rather participate in the enjoyable things of following Christ, things like the worship music, the powerful teachings, the potlucks. But we certainly don’t like the Christ that says take up your cross daily and follow me. We like the calmness of the shores, preferring not to go through the difficult times. And so when God tries to grow our faith, pushing us into deeper waters, our natural reaction is to hiss and moan and begin to question if He even really cares about our well-being. But you’re in good company.

This is what the disciples experienced with Jesus on the Sea of Galilee as we come to the end of Mark 4. The disciples had been witnesses and even participating in all the amazing things of Jesus – the healings, the teachings, the deliverance from evil spirits – but they had never really had their faith tested. As we’re about to see all of that is about to change. No longer were they going to just be observers, instead they were going to be placed smack-dab in the middle of a very real crisis. And their response to Christ in this Crisis is going to tell us all we need to know about who they thought Jesus was.

So let’s read Mark 4:35-41 together – If you are able, would you stand with me as I read the odd numbered verses and you read the even numbered verses.

I. THE SETTING:

Looking back at the previous chapters of Mark, we see Mark portrays a very active and engaging Jesus. He opens up the gospel with prophecies from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 about a Messenger preparing the way for the Messiah, he then shares about Jesus’s baptism by John the Baptist and then by verse 12 – Jesus is off and running.

The other 3 gospels give a little bit of Jesus's background. Matthew and Luke both provide His genealogy, they talk about his birth and the events surrounding it, John even goes into the eternality and deity of Jesus.

But with Mark, by verse 16, Jesus is calling His disciples and starting His ministry. It is an action-packed gospel. I've heard it referred to as the "Go Gospel." When we I was leading our College Sunday School, I recall giving Mark the nickname Microwave Mark, b/c everything Jesus did was done immediately.

By the time we get to chapter 4, we see that Jesus has a rather large following. Word has gotten out that there was this young man who was healing lepers and paralytics (1:40-45; 2:1-12), delivering folks from "unclean spirits" (1:23-26), and challenging the rules and teachings of the religious leaders (2:23-28; 3:1-6). Even though He was around 30 years of age, He spoke as one with such authority. An authority greater than the scribes (1:22). As a result of all these things Jesus was doing, Mark at one point notes "*And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee*" (1:28). In other words, Jesus was becoming a celebrity among the people.

And just like with any superstar there are those who are drawn for the right reasons, and then there were those following for superficial reasons. They didn't necessarily care what He had to say about serving God, or His take on the Sabbath, they just wanted to see Christ perform a miracle, or perhaps they wanted to receive a healing for themselves. And so the crowds grew larger and larger and their expectations of who He was supposed to be grew more and more.

Things were getting so out of hand, that by Chapter 3 of Mark, Jesus is realizing the people in their enthusiasm might actually "crush Him." So, He instructs the disciples to acquire a "small boat" and keep it ready just in case.

It would have been very easy for Jesus to get wrapped up in this stardom. Outside of the religious leaders and the Roman authorities, everyone wanted to see Him and touch Him (3:10). I'm sure He had people offering Him fame and fortune. But Jesus remained faithful to His mission of serving and teaching God's Word to the people, as we see in Chapter 4.

When we get to Mark 4, Jesus tells the disciples to get the "small boat," and He begins to teach the people, as they sat on the shore. But His teachings are different than what the people are used to. It's not the dry and boring Pharisaic teaching. Instead, Christ teaches in parables using everyday objects and everyday people in His lessons.

So as the people sat on the shore, Jesus begins to share with them stories containing spiritual truths about His Kingdom. In the last three parables before launching the boat, Jesus reveals how the Kingdom grows not in isolation but when the gospel is shared with others:

1) Vs. 21-22 He teaches that a lamp is not hidden under a basket but shines on a stand for everyone to see

2) Vs. 26-29 He teaches how scattered seeds don't grow by the skill of the farmer but by the hand of God, who brings a harvest for all

3) And then in Vss. 30-32 He explains to them how a mustard seed, though tiny, grows large and shares its shade with birds that nest under in its branches.

Today as we read these parables, we understand what Jesus was teaching. However, I'm sure many of the people were left scratching their heads wondering what Jesus was talking about. In fact, we're told that He often took time to explain His parables to the disciples, b/c even they didn't understand. But Mark notes in verses 33 & 34, this was how Jesus taught the people. That he did not speak to them without a parable. Some were able to comprehend, many were not.

It didn't seem to matter too much because the people kept coming to Him, pressing Him for healings, for deliverance, to be ministered to. And Jesus was more than willing to do these things.

But all of these things took a toll on Jesus. At this point He was exhausted. So when evening came and He was done teaching the multitude, He didn't dare risk coming back to the shore for fear of getting swamped. He simply tells His disciples in **verse 35**, "*Let us cross over to the other side.*" No washing up, no supper, no packing, no checking the weather report...just "pull up the anchor and let's get going."

Mark records in the next verse, **verse 36**, "*Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him.*"

I've read this passage several times in my life, but something about that line, "they took Him along in the boat as He was" jumped off the page at me. AS HE WAS. Who was He? At that time the disciples knew He was a man who did some pretty remarkable things, taught some astounding lessons. They knew He was the kind of guy they wanted to be with. YET as they were pulling away from the shore, the disciples didn't fully know who He was. However, they were going to find out pretty soon.

II. THE STORM: **READ MARK 4:37-38**

"Red morning, sailors take warning. Red night, sailors delight."

AS they began crossing the sea, my guess is that the disciples were expecting everything to be ok. Several of them were seasoned fishermen. They had been out on these waters so

many times, it was practically their 2nd home. Most storms took place in the daytime, and apparently there weren't too many signs of a storm. What was there to worry about.

But evidently things changed rather rapidly.

I'm no expert on the Sea of Galilee, but from what I've read the body of water is situated 700 feet below sea level and is surrounded by steep hills and mountains. At times the basin's low elevation traps warm, dense air over the water. When cold air masses from the surrounding high mountains rapidly descend, they violently collide with the warm air, triggering sudden and intense storms.

Such was the case with the sea that particular night. Mark records in **verse 37**, that *“a great windstorm arose and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.”* The storm came on unexpectedly and soon the disciples found themselves very much struggling to keep from sinking. You can imagine their terror. Even though they were experienced fishermen, they were not used to being out on the open waters when storms like this came along. They were not expecting to be in a position, fighting to keep their heads above water.

As I was thinking of this situation they were in, I was thinking about how so many times in our lives we expect life to go about normally when out of the blue we get hit by storms of life and changes everything.

Many of you remember September 11, 2001. It was a day that really altered the course of our nation, perhaps the world. It's hard to believe it's coming up on 25 years. But how many remember September 10th.

I went back and looked at some of the headlines. **(PHOTO)** This was the New York Times on Tuesday morning. It was actually written Monday evening, and then ran at 3am so it could be ready for people to buy on the streets.

You can see what the top priorities were – Mayoral race, the economy, and a debate about school dress codes – all on the front page of the NY Times.

Then at 8:46 local time, everything changed. America came under attack by Islamic terrorist. Killing over 3000 people. Causing complete chaos everywhere. Airplanes were immediately instructed to land; people were stranded across the country. Our nation was in crisis. No one woke up expecting the day to go like that.

How about on a more personal level. How many of us have launched out into the day, thinking it was going to be a normal day, only to hear bad news about your job, or your family, or your health. You just wanted to get through your day, but then everything falls apart.

What do you do in these moments of crisis?

A lot of times we think we can do like the disciples tried to do, and power through it. We grab our buckets and we start to bale water. So we try to live healthier, we'll try to cut corners, we'll try to work on our relationships, we'll read self-help books. But what happens when none of that works. What happens when the stormy waters don't just rock your boat, but starts sinking your boat with all the worries and troubles that this world brings? What do you do then? Who do you turn to?

Going back to the Disciples, they eventually realized they needed to turn to Jesus. Everyone was doing everything they could to save the boat and themselves, everyone except Jesus. So where was He? Why wasn't he up on the deck helping bale water?

Mark tells us where Jesus was in **verse 38**, he writes, "*But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?'*"

That question exposes the true nature of their fear. So often fear causes us to doubt God and His love for us.

When circumstances become difficult, we begin to interpret God's silence as indifference. We start assuming that because He's not acting according to our timetable, He must not care about our crisis.

Yet nothing could have been further from the truth. Jesus cared deeply for His disciples. He knew exactly what they were experiencing. But He knew the outcome before the storm ever began.

Fear distorts our perspective. It causes us to focus on the size of the storm instead of the greatness of our Savior.

Unfortunately, the disciples were more impressed with the wind than they were with Christ.

And it's easy to sit here and condemn them. But how often do we do the same? A medical diagnosis arrives. A financial burden grows. A relationship falls apart. A family crisis develops. Suddenly all of our attention shifts from God's faithfulness and onto our crisis.

We begin measuring God by our problems rather than measuring our problems by God.

The disciples weren't suffering from a storm problem. They were suffering from a faith problem, and all too often you and I suffer from the same affliction.

Jesus slept through the storm, but His sleep wasn't indifference. It was confidence. He rested because He trusted the Father completely.

His peace should have encouraged His disciples. If Jesus wasn't worried, then why should they be worried?

The peace of Christ often serves as a reminder that our circumstances aren't out of control. The world may panic. People around us might be afraid. The future may seem uncertain. But Christ remains calm because He remains sovereign.

III. THE SOVEREIGN: READ MARK 4:39-41

After being awakened, Jesus doesn't say a word to the disciples. He goes topside and rebukes the wind. He spoke to the sea, and immediately the storm ceased. The raging waters became calm and the violent winds became silent. Just like that, the crisis was over.

The very thing that had terrified these experienced fishermen, in an instant submitted to the command and sovereignty of Christ.

This miracle reveals something profound. Notice that Jesus didn't pray for the storm to stop. He commanded it to stop. Why? Because He possesses divine authority.

The winds recognized their Creator and the sea obeyed its Master. The same voice that said, "Let there be light" now says, "*Peace, be still.*" And creation obeyed.

Of course, the disciples were astonished. We read in **verse 41** that they begin to ask each, "*Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?*" In other words, who was this man that was in their boat that they've been following around town to town.

That is the central question of the passage. Who is Jesus? Is He just a teacher. Is He just a prophet, or a miracle worker. The answer is, He is the Son of God. He is Lord over creation. He is sovereign over every force in the universe.

Nothing is beyond His authority or outside His control, and nothing can resist His command.

After calming the sea, Jesus addressed the disciples. In **verse 40** He asks them two very pointed questions, "*Why ARE you so fearful?*" "*How is it that you have you no faith?*"

Notice that Christ deals with their hearts after dealing with the storm. The external storm had been dangerous, but the internal storm was even more dangerous.

Jesus was pointing out to the disciples that fear, doubt, and unbelief posed a greater threat than wind and waves, and this is still true today.

Many of our greatest battles are not around us, but within us. Anxiety, fear, doubt, discouragement, unbelief. These inner struggles often create more damage than the crisis that triggered them.

Jesus was concerned about developing faith in His followers. He wanted them to trust Him even when they couldn't understand Him.

He wanted the disciples, as well as us, to know that faith is not merely believing God when everything makes sense. Faith is trusting God when nothing makes sense.

Anyone can praise God on a sunny day, but real faith keeps praising Him even during the storm.

******PERSONAL STORY ABOUT MOVING TO ST JOSEPH******

I remember having some of the same thoughts when Sara and I moved here from Indiana to take the Youth Pastor position at Grace.

I had been working 3 years at a trailer manufacturing plant, but I knew I had been called into youth ministry. I had applied everywhere nearby but couldn't find any positions.

Eventually Sara and I decided we wanted to start a family. Sara was moving up in her job, her parents and brother's family had moved out there. Our plan was to purchase a home, have our first baby, Sara's family would help with childcare and we'd pay off all my school loan. It was a good plan, it was a safe plan. But then Jesus said – "let's cross over to the other side."

We had just moved into our first home and was 6 weeks from having our first child when out of the blue, Pastor Darrell Jones calls asking me if I would apply to be the new Youth Pastor at Grace Evangelical church. My initial thought was – why didn't you call 8 months ago – my second thought was –Sara is going to kill me!

She loved our new home. I loved the four-car garage and the flat yard. We loved living near her family. This was completely disrupting our plans. I remember praying a lot, and I recall Jesus reminding me of His call on my life. So I made the decision to accept the position. There was a peace that I can't explain, other than it was from God.

To Sara's credit, she trusted my decision to move us three states away. But it was not an easy move.

- She loved our house and had spent a lot of time fixing it up
- We had to cut our income basically in half, while adding on another family member
- We didn't really know too many people in St Joe
- Her family was crying, she was crying
- I could tell her dad wasn't too pleased with me
- And to top it all off, we had to move on her birthday

As we made our way to St Joe, we had to head south ½ hour and then turn west. The weather was beautiful for the first half hour, but then when we turned west, it began to snow. And it snowed, and it snowed, and it snowed. For 14 hours it snowed while we were

on the interstate. My dad was driving the UHaul while I followed behind in the car with Sara and our newborn. Things were so bad, we had to use a walkie talkie to help him pass cars because he couldn't use his side mirrors b/c his windows were too frosted over.

At one point we stopped at a gas station/DQ. There were so many cars in the parking lot. And it was right then that we discovered our baby had a huge diaper blow out. It was all up his back, his onesie and clothes were trashed. Sara had to try and find a place to change him. It was a fiasco.

I remember getting back into the car and driving down the interstate looking at my wife who was an emotional wreck, my little tiny baby we were still learning how to raise, windows on the car that were frosted over, traveling down a road that was difficult to not slide off, and just thinking – God, is this really the right thing to do? Is this really your will? Are you really out there? Do you really care that our whole life has been completely flipped upside down?

But then I began to look back at how he had taken care of Sara, myself and my family all along the way. The miraculous way he'd sold our house; the opportunity to minister at Grace – full time. They were such great reminders of how great He was. It really did bring a moment of peace in the middle of a crisis.

And that's what Jesus does when He's in your boat. He calls you away from the safe shore and pushes you into deeper waters, to places you've never been. Things usually get rocky! But He always makes sure you make it, even if it causes you fear and to question your faith.

So why did Jesus want to cross over to the other side? Because a man needed a Savior!

IV. THE SAVIOR – READ MARK 5:1-8

The storm had delayed them but had not diverted them from God's purpose.

We're told that after arriving safely on the opposite shore, Jesus encountered a man possessed by demons. This was no accident. This was a divine appointment.

This was a man whose life had been completely devastated by Satan.

The disciples had just witnessed Christ's authority over nature. Now they would witness His authority over the kingdom of darkness.

Mark tells us this man that met them was a wild and tormented man who was difficult to deal with. The towns people had tried chaining and restraining him, but he'd simply break free and harm himself and others. So he was forced to live among the tombs because the people couldn't deal with him.

From a human perspective, he appeared beyond help.

Yet, he was exactly the kind of person Jesus came to save. Even though others avoided and feared him, Jesus sought to reach out to him. So while you and I would see a hopeless case, Jesus saw a soul worth rescuing.

That's the heart of the Gospel. Jesus saving and transforming lives that others consider beyond redemption.

The condition of this man reveals the destructive agenda of Satan. **John 10:10** teaches us, that *the devil comes to steal, kill, and destroy*. Everything about this man's life reflected that evil mission.

Every one of his relationships were ruined, he was unclothed, had no dignity left, and any kind of peace he had was gone. Everything in his life was destroyed. Evilness had gotten ahold of this man so much that he barely had any signs of humanity.

That's exactly what sin does. It always promises freedom but at the end of the day it always produces bondage. Satan always promises fulfillment but ultimately he only delivers misery. The enemy NEVER improves a life. He only destroys it.

This demoniac serves as an example of what happens when evil gains control. I'm not here to say everyone experiences demon possession, but every UNbeliever experiences spiritual bondage apart from Christ. The details may differ. The degree may vary. But the basic reality remains the same. Without Christ, humanity is enslaved to sin.

Notice that as Jesus confronted the man, the demons immediately recognized Him. They knew exactly who He was. They even acknowledged His authority. **Mark 5:7** they say to Jesus, "*What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.*"

Ironically, the demons had better theology than many religious people. They knew Jesus was the Son of God and they knew judgment was coming.

They also knew they were powerless before Him, so the demons begged for mercy and permission to inhabit another body, even if it were swine.

Notice the significant truth here, the demons could NOT act independently. They required Christ's permission. Even the powers of darkness operate under God's ultimate authority. Nothing in the universe exists outside His sovereign rule.

In **verse 8** we see Jesus speak saying, "*Come out of the man, unclean spirit!*"

The demons had no choice, they departed and the man was delivered. What years of suffering could not overcome, one command from Christ accomplished instantly.

The saving power of Jesus is always greater than the power of Satan, ALWAYS! There's no contest, there's no uncertainty. Christ reigns supreme.

The most beautiful part of the story appears after the demons leave. The man is found sitting, clothed, and in his right mind. What an amazing picture of salvation.

The wild man became peaceful. This man who had been isolated from everyone now found fellowship. A man who was broken found restoration and freedom from the torment.

Only Jesus Christ can produce such transformation. The Gospel does not merely improve people, it literally changes them. Salvation is not self-help, it's a new life.

And the same Christ who transformed that man continues transforming lives today.

Addicts can become free.

Broken families and marriages can be restored.

Sinners can become saints.

The hopeless can have hope.

Those who are lost can be found.

And the dead are made alive.

That is the power of our Savior, Jesus Christ!

The world needs to hear more about this Savior. Lost people need to hear the Word of God. They need to see His light. We need to continue to spread the good news of Christ and continue to bring the light to dark places. Christ continues to send us out

V. THE SENT – READ MARK 5:18-20

We see in verse 18 the healed man wanted to follow Jesus. His request seems reasonable. Who wouldn't want to remain with the One who just radically changed your life? Yet Jesus refused.

Instead, He gave the man a mission. He says to him **in verse 19**, *“Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.”* In other words, Jesus tells him, share your testimony.

We often think of Paul as being one of the first to take the gospel to the Gentiles. But right here we see that this man became one of the earliest missionaries to the Gentile world. His transformed life became evidence of Christ's power.

Notice where Jesus sent him...He sends him home. Ministry begins where we are known best. It's easy to impress strangers, but it's harder to influence family members who know our weaknesses. Yet, our greatest witness often begins among those who know us best.

The man's story became his sermon. His transformed life became his evidence and His testimony became his ministry. The same principle applies today. Every believer has a story worth sharing. You have a story worth sharing. You may not be a preacher or a teacher, or a missionary, but if Jesus has changed your life, you have a testimony. And your testimony has power.

CONCLUSION:

A couple Sundays ago Graham shared something I used to share with my students – In our lives we are all either in a storm, coming out of a storm, or about to hit a storm. In other words, we all have to deal with crises time to time.

Perhaps today you're facing a storm. The winds are strong, the waves are high, and fear is growing. Remember the lesson of the Sea of Galilee. The storm may be great, but your Savior is greater.

Or perhaps you feel trapped by some form of bondage. Sin, shame, maybe addiction. Whatever it is, you probably feel one thing - despair.

Remember the lesson of the demoniac. No chain is stronger than Christ, no darkness is deeper than His light, and no life is beyond His reach.

The disciples asked, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Mark answers that question clearly. He is Jesus Christ, Sovereign Lord of creation, Savior of sinners, and King over every circumstance.

He is worthy of our trust, our worship, our obedience, and our faith.

And whatever storm we face, we can rest in the confidence that the One who calmed the sea is still in the boat.