



June 20, 2021 Mk. 4:35-41 Job 38:1, 8-11

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### ENTERING THE SCENE:

Whenever we launch out into a situation that we have reason to fear, we are presented with an opportunity. Are we going to let the fear dictate our response, or are we like the disciples willing to go where the danger is because Jesus' teaching asks us to trust him? No sensible fisherman would go out on the Sea of Galilee at that time of day. Yet go they did. We have been, and will be asked again to set aside "common sense" and do uncommon acts of loving and serving. But this will only be possible if we answer in the affirmative once and for all the essential question that the disciples cried out in that boat; "do you not care"?

### Mk. 4:35-41

35 On that day, when **evening** had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the **other side**." 36 And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the **boat**, just as he was. Other **boats** were with him. 37 A great **windstorm** arose, and the **waves** beat into the **boat**, so that the **boat** was already being **swamped**. 38 But he was in the **stern**, **asleep** on the cushion; and they finally **woke** him up and said to him, **Teacher**, do you **not care** that we are **perishing**?" 39 He **woke** up and **rebuked** the **wind**, and said to the sea, "**Peace! Be still!**" Then the **wind** ceased, and there was a **dead calm**. 40 He said to them, Why are you **afraid**? Have you still no **faith**?" 41 And they were filled with **great awe** and said to one another, "**Who is this**, that even the **wind** and the **sea obey** him?"

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** The disciples cried out; "do you not care that we are perishing"? Can you remember a time when you cried out this same question? What happened to your faith because of this trial?

**PRAYER:** Sleeping Jesus, you are so grounded in the awareness of being God's beloved. I want to trust your teachings that reveal that I too am God's beloved and have no need to be afraid. Even though I have centuries of witnesses of people who came to know and trust this truth to guide me, it seems like each challenge faces me with another chance to test my trust in your word. Help me now as I open myself to whatever comes even when the wind and waves of life seem to threaten my being. Amen.

### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**EVENING:** Any experienced fisherman knows that evening is a bad time to be out on the Sea of Galilee. Fierce storms can develop in just a few minutes, due to the temperature changes at that time of day.

*What in chapter 4 gives you a clue to why Jesus wanted to get into the boat at this risky time of day?*

**OTHER SIDE:** Over and over, Jesus needs to get the disciples apart from the crowd in order to teach them the deeper meaning of his parables. In this case that means crossing the sea to get space and time alone with them.

*Have you ever had to cross over to the 'other side' of some threatening reality in order to get the space and time to learn what your life is teaching you? What was it like for you?*

**BOAT:** The early church was often symbolized as a boat or ship.

*What makes this symbol especially useful for understanding the reality of the early church? Is it still a useful symbol today?*

**WINDSTORM / WIND:** The wind can cause waves of 7-8 ft. in just minutes on the Sea of Galilee. This comes from a combination of temperature change and being 685 ft. below sea level.

*What conditions are you in now that have the potential for creating storms? Have you ever found yourself over-riding your common sense and launching out into a dangerous situation because you were searching for meaning?*

**SWAMPED:** In today's world we often use this word when we are trying to express being drowned by too much to do. But in Jesus' time it had a much more ominous meaning. (See below)

*Is there a great chaotic abyss in your life now? Does it seem like if you begin to fall, you will fall forever? Are you threatened with anything that could 'swamp' you? Are you, like the disciples, willing to get in the 'boat' anyway?*

**STERN:** The stern of a boat is the place where the person sits who is steering the vessel.

*What is Mark telling us by informing us that this is where Jesus is sitting?*

**ASLEEP:** Jesus is in the driver's seat, and yet is asleep. The early church of Mark, often felt abandoned and left to fend for themselves in those days after the Resurrection.

*Have you ever felt like God was off somewhere, or asleep, when you needed guidance or help? What made it possible for Jesus to rest in the midst of chaos? Does your faith help you to rest in God in threatening conditions?*

**WOKE:** The gospel says the disciples finally woke Jesus. This implies that they were at their wits end and none of their sailing skills were enough to deal with the situation.

*Have you ever wondered what might have happened if the disciples were able to trust like Jesus did?*

*Do you find yourself going to prayer only when you are at the limits of a situation?*

**TEACHER:** This story comes at the end of a series of teachings in chapter 4. The disciples call Jesus teacher and this gives us our clue to the meaning of this incident.

*What do the disciples learn about God in this story? Is there any message for you in it?*

**PERISHING:** The cry of the disciples is; "don't you care" that we are perishing?

*Is this the basic question of life? Do you feel that God does care about you, especially in those times when it appears you might perish?*



**REBUKED:** In the original language, Jesus uses the same word for exorcising demons as he uses now to still the storm. This points out that he has power over nature as well as spirits.

*How does your faith in the God of Jesus empower you to deal with spiritual and natural dangers?*

**PEACE:** Peace, or Shalom, is that condition of total well being. In other translations the word quiet is used instead of peace.

*Which word works best for you? Why?*

**BE STILL:** Stillness is a lack of motion. Jesus, with his word, transforms chaos into quiet.

*Are there any words in this gospel passage that can quiet the chaos for you? What are they?*

**DEAD CALM:** Stillness and calm are words used to indicate safety and comfort.

*How does adding the word 'dead' to calm affect the understanding of this episode?*

**AFRAID:** It takes a lot to scare a seasoned fisherman.

*What does this tell you about the situation?*

**FAITH:** Jesus' faith in God enables him to sleep calmly in the midst of this great storm. He knows that God loves him, and God wants only his well-being.

*Does this story help you to achieve this same sense of being loved by God? Do you trust that God wants your well-being?*

**GREAT AWE:** Awe is that experience of open-mouthed wonder. It moves a person to ponder realities that go beyond anything they have experienced before. The disciples move from crying out in fear to calling into question all they knew.

*How does awe enable you to move into wonder?*

**WHO IS THIS?:** One of the principle questions of Mark's gospel is this very one; Who is this? The disciples and the people will struggle with this question up through Pentecost and beyond.

*How does this episode help to answer this basic question?*

**SEA:** The sea represented a source of life and death for these fishermen. It was a vast untamable reality that only God could manage. *What are the sources of life and death in your daily life that are God sized issues for you? Are the issues of the beginning and end of life such realities?*

**OBEY:** All that God creates has the ability to respond to God's will. We believe that humanity is unique in that it can choose to respond or not.

*Do you find this ability a benefit or a burden? Why?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mk. 4:35-40 // Mt. 8:18, 23-27; Lk. 8:22-25; Mk. 4:41 // Mk. 1:27;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Ex. 24: 3-8; Ps. 107: 23-31; Heb. 9: 11-15; Mk. 14:12-16, 22-26; Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Sam. 17: 4-11, 19-23, 32-49; Ps. 9: 9-20; 2 Cor. 6:1-13; Mk. 4:35-41;

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

It is very hard to allow emptiness to exist in our lives. Emptiness requires a willingness not to be in control, a willingness to let something new and unexpected happen. It requires trust, surrender, and openness to guidance. God wants to dwell in our emptiness. But as long as we are afraid of God and God's actions in our lives, it is unlikely that we will offer our emptiness to God. Let's pray that we can let go of our fear of God and embrace God as the source of all love. Henri Nouwen

Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones. And when you have finished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake. - Victor Hugo

Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We would like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet, it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability — and that it may take a very long time. Above all, trust in the slow work of God, our loving vine-dresser. -Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

"God is not a deceiver, that He should offer to support us, and then, when we lean upon Him, should slip away from us." - St. Augustine

The opposite of fear is not courage but compassion. We fear what we do not know, and the mother of fear is ignorance, but we cannot fear that which we love, for, as Jesus tells us, perfect love casts out fear. Compassion leaves no room for fear; we are too busy doing what we can, what we must, and what God wishes us to do, to take time for fear the consequences. (107) Gomes, Peter J. [The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus](#). NY. Harper Collins. 2007.

Fear responses in humans are primitive, fast, and powerful; the amygdala appraises inner and outer situations in fractions of a second, from specific instances of past learning, and triggers anxiety in response to a vast array of internal and external cues. The amygdala also acts as a social brake, inhibiting contact with unfamiliar others until their safety can be assessed. Pg. 849. Hollingsworth, Andrea. *Neuroscience and Spirituality*. Zygon. 12/08

We go too far in fearing for our unhappy bodies, while our forgotten spirit shrivels up in some corner. Rilke

Fear is no policy; it represents the absence of courage and a poverty of imagination. To be defined by our fears is to accept as normal the lowest possible level of emotional intelligence. The risk of indulging in the fear factor is that not only will we not overcome our fears, but we will become dependent upon the means to control and contain them. (106) Gomes, Peter J. [The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus](#). NY. Harper Collins. 2007.

There was no concept of the world as we have it today. It was believed that if a ship went down in the sea, it would drop forever. The sea was a chaotic abyss with no limits. It was as if there was a hole in the floor of the cosmos. It was often pictured as an enemy of God. (Ps. 89:10-11; 93:4; 106:9; 69: 15; 107; etc) Therefore, a God that could control the sea was a great god.

When others are afraid as they look to the future, say to them, as Jesus says to you: Do not be afraid when some chaos upsets the orderly patterns of your life, because I can build a level road. Do not be afraid when darkness descends upon you, because I can make light shine in the darkness. Do not be afraid if your numbers as believers become smaller, because I can raise up a multitude from a faith-filled remnant. Do not be afraid when the death approaches, because I have overcome death. I am with you. I have come to set you free.

Maloney, Robert P. [A Letter to Young American Catholics](#). America. 9/19/05 Pg.18

For more information on the bible's reports of God sleeping, the role of humans and the gods, and the terror that the sea evoked see: Batto, Bernard. [When God Sleeps](#). Bible Review. Winter 1987. Pages 16ff

Christ came as the *word* to do for us what our mother tongue does, namely, to shape us in such a way that we can move beyond the fear, darkness, and chaos that prevent us from entering the world of love, thought, and self-expression. Pg. 209 . Rolheiser, Ronald. [Against An Infinite Horizon](#). NY. Crossroad Pub. 2001

Thanks to the Risen Lord, we live without fearing death and die without losing life. Pg. 243  
Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S. O. [The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies](#). Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002.

True terror is to wake one morning and discover that your high school class is running the country. Kurt Vonnegut

Physicist Fred Alan wolf argues that “modern physics, particularly quantum mechanics or quantum physics...provide a theoretical basis for understanding the mind’s basic functions: intuition, feeling, sensation, and thought “ In a chapter on the ‘physics of love’” he posits fear and love as structural elements of matter, as the particles of “annihilation-fear” we call fermions and the particles of “condensation-love” (cf. Teilhard’s “convergence”) we call photons – or particles of light.  
Ingrid Shafer. [What Does it Mean to be Human? A Personal and Catholic Perspective](#). Zygon. 3/02 Pg. 129.

A child's perspective

When a mother saw a thunderstorm forming in mid-afternoon, she worried about her 7 year old daughter who would be walking the three blocks from school to home. Deciding to meet her, the mother saw her walking nonchalantly along, stopping to smile whenever lightning flashed. Glimpsing her mother, the little girl ran to her explaining enthusiastically, " All the way home, God has been taking my picture!

Consider how each of us is blinded by what we fear. If we fear heights, we are blind to the humility vast perspectives bring. If we fear spiders, we are blind to the splendor and danger of webs. If we fear small spaces, we are blind to the secrets of sudden solitude. If we fear passion, we are blind to the comfort of Oneness. If we fear change, we are blind to the abundance of life. If we fear death, we are blind to the mystery of the unknown. And since to fear something is thoroughly human, to be blind is unavoidable. It is what each of us must struggle to overcome.

Nepo, Mark. [The Book of Awakening](#). Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000. Page 15.

There is nothing that wastes the body like worry, and one who has any faith in God should be ashamed to worry about anything whatsoever. – Gandhi

He who fears men much will never do anything great for God. Ignatius Loyola

The word *faith* comes from the Latin word *fides*, and its primary meaning is “trust.” Stephen Bullivant

Every evening I turn my troubles over to God - He's going to be up all night anyway. - Donald J. Morgan

#### **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

William R. White. [Stories for the Journey](#). Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN. 1988. WITHOUT BATTING AN EYE: Page 95.

Shea, John. [The Hour of the Unexpected](#). Argus Comm. Allen TX 1977. THE LAST PRAYER OF PETITION EVER: Page 18

Janice Grana Ed. [Images](#). St. Mary's College Press, Winona MN 1976. OPEN TO THE STORM : Page 82.

IT WOULD BE EASIER: Page 89. NOT FOR THE HESITANT: Page 130 THE JOURNEY: Page 135