

“Don’t You Care?”

Franklin Church of Christ
Edwin Crozier
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Introduction:

As we approach the end of the year, we naturally examine what has happened in our lives. We think about the good and the bad; what we have learned and what we need to learn. As I reviewed this year and the years leading up to it, I recalled some pretty devastating occurrences. Some of us and our family members endured lengthy illnesses. Some of our spouses and parents died. Some continue to deal with issues of cancer or heart problems. Some have repeated debilitating pains and illnesses. Some of us have lost our jobs. Some of us have incurred major healthcare expenses. Some of us have learned of major tax issues that have put us into debt. Some of us have faced major marriage problems. Some of us have watched as children or other family members made devastating mistakes affecting the whole family. We have faced major congregational issues. Some of our friends have fallen away. Some have simply left (and not always on positive terms). Some of us have faced multiple issues. Some of us have faced all this and more. How easy it is to become discouraged. Have you ever asked God, “Do you not care about what is happening to me?” We have a tendency to look at the Bible stories through rose-colored glasses, thinking the disciples in the Bible were always strong enough to know Jesus cared. However, that is not true. The Bible characters often felt exactly like this. Consider Abraham who couldn’t understand why God wouldn’t accept his son Ishmael. Consider Moses who complained about having to deal with all those people. Consider David who wrote **Psalms 22**, which began, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Consider Job. Consider Elijah who wanted God to kill Him because of Jezebel. There is nothing we have felt or said to God that our Bible heroes didn’t feel or say. There is one story on which I want us to focus. It is the story of a storm and of disciples who thought Jesus didn’t care. We can learn some great lessons from this story in **Mark 4:35-41**.

Discussion:

I. The Story: **Mark 4:35-41**

- A. We will focus on Mark’s account. However, the background of this story is set best by Matthew. **Matthew 8:18-22** describes Jesus’ teaching just before He got into the boat. A scribe wanted to follow Jesus, who essentially responded, “Are you sure? If you do, you will lose all your comforts. I don’t even have a bed.” Then a disciple said he wanted to follow but had to bury his father first. Jesus responded, “If you want to follow Me, don’t let anything get in the way, not even family.” Following Jesus was a major commitment. **Vs. 23** specifically says, “When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him.” The disciples did more than get in Jesus’ boat. They made a commitment, following Him despite the sacrifice and challenge. Surely Jesus would keep them out of the storms. After all, they were the special few completely committed to Him.
- B. However, **Mark 4:35-41** presents a different story. As was wont on the Sea of Galilee, winds rushing down from surrounding hills and mountains caused a sudden gale. Keep in mind, Jesus and the disciples were not in an ocean liner, but a fishing boat. The waves were atrocious. They crashed over the boat as it rocked back and forth. If the boat didn’t capsize, it would sink. The life of every person on the boat was in danger. I have no doubt the experienced fisherman, Peter, Andrew, James and John, were shouting orders. Some of the disciples were busy trying to steady the ship. Others were busy bailing water. Every man knew if anyone was to survive everyone had to pitch in—everyone except Jesus, who was asleep.
- C. Picture the scene. Someone is trying to steer the ship. Someone is dealing with the sails. Someone is manning oars. Others are bailing water. Everyone is hanging on for dear life. Then they notice Jesus snuggled up in the stern, sleeping. They are doing all the work and He is cushioned peacefully. What is up with that? The disciples start to yell, trying to wake Him. Someone struggled to Him, shook Him awake and said, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” It is as if to say, “Hey, wake up and do your part or we are all going to die.”
- D. Jesus awoke. Instead of grabbing a rope, oars, sails or a bucket, He simply spoke to the wind. “Hush, be still.” Immediately, the wind stopped and the water calmed. Can you imagine the look on Peter, Andrew, James and John at that moment? In shock, they continued to bail water, but with one eye on this Man who just stopped the wind by speaking to it. Jesus said, “Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?” But the disciples were afraid, saying among themselves, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

II. Lesson #1: Storms happen to committed disciples.

- A. Too often our American citizenship hinders our Christianity. Because we live in the age of plenty and of rights and entitlements, we have the idea if we have made the right choices we should be immune to storms. If we have decided to make a commitment to Christ, He should maneuver the storms around us. We should be able to walk without an umbrella because we always avoid the rain. That is not the case.
- B. **Matthew 7:24-28** demonstrates everyone will endure storms. The question is whether or not we have built our house in a way that can withstand them. We know about persecution. In **Acts 14:22**, Paul explained entrance into the kingdom comes through much persecution. **II Timothy 3:12** says all who desire to live godly will suffer persecution. But surely Jesus will protect us from the storms of just plain old suffering. Actually, **Ephesians 5:15-16** says otherwise. The days are evil for us, just as they are for all. We have no idea what today will bring. We will all face storms. We lose jobs. Our business ventures fail. We get sick. Family members die. Children disappoint. Family and friends take advantage. Storms happen to committed disciples. Don't get me wrong, a lot of good things happen to us and we need to count our blessings. Yet, we need to face life with our eyes wide open. Storms happen to committed disciples.

III. Lesson #2: Storms happen in order to drive us to Jesus.

- A. The disciples were doing all they could, but they couldn't do enough. They turned to Jesus. Apparently, they didn't expect Him to do what He did (cf. **vs. 41**). However, this Man had demonstrated control over the fish in the sea. He had shown authority over demons. He could heal the sick. He could do amazing things. Surely He could at least help. Without this storm, Jesus would merely have slept in the stern and the disciples would have been happy to let Him. They would have traveled across the sea confident in their own sailing ability. But the storm drove away all conception of self-sufficiency. They needed Jesus. They were driven to Him by the storm.
- B. Storms happen to drive us to Jesus. Again, our Christianity is impacted by our American mentality. In America, we are self-sufficient. We pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. We spend most of our time convincing ourselves we are strong enough to handle what we face. When others face storms, we spend most of our time trying to convince them they are strong enough to handle it. Storms do not come to convince us of our own strength. Storms happen to drive us to Jesus. In **II Corinthians 12:7-10**, Paul discussed one of his personal storms. He had a thorn in the flesh. The whole point was to remind him how weak he was. Only when he knew and accepted his own weakness would he turn to Jesus for real strength and power. Don't get mad at Jesus over the storms, realize them for the lessons they are. Use them to turn to Jesus for strength.

IV. Lesson #3: Jesus does care but acts in His own time and own way for our good.

- A. Was Jesus sleeping because He was unconcerned? Was He unaware? Of course not. Jesus does not act on our time table. While we think Jesus should have kept the storm from occurring, it was greater for the faith of the disciples to let the storm occur and then save the disciples. Wouldn't it build your faith to see Jesus calm a storm by speaking to it?
- B. Jesus did care. But He acted in His own time and in His own way for the disciples' ultimate good. I don't know what everyone here is facing. I do know this. God does care (**I Peter 5:6**). But He acts in His own time and in His own way for our ultimate good. Consider again Paul's thorn in the flesh in **II Corinthians 12:7-10**. God could have simply removed the thorn. He could have removed the storm. But that would have made Paul more susceptible to self-exaltation because of the greatness of His visions. We must remember **Romans 8:28**, which does not say God causes all things. But it does say God causes all things to work together for our good if we love Him. No matter what is happening in the storm, no matter how we think God should act, we can have faith that God will act in the way that is most beneficial to His disciples in the long run. Jesus does care. So let's have faith in Him.

V. Lesson #4: Jesus can calm the storm.

- A. The disciples expected Jesus to help. But they had no idea how helpful He could be. Despite the miracles they had seen, despite seeing His previous authority over sickness, demons and even nature, they did not know Jesus could simply the storm. But He could. And He did.

- B. I don't know what you are facing, but you can have faith Jesus can calm the storm. According to **John 1:1-4**, through Jesus all things came into being. If He is that powerful, how can we doubt that He can handle our storms? No matter how big they seem to us, they are small to Him. As we already noted, He may not work on our timetable. He may not work the way we thought He would. But He can calm the storms. He will calm the storms when it is most beneficial for us.

VI. Lesson #5: True peace is not living in perpetual calm, but having faith throughout the storms.

- A. As you review the story told in **Mark 4:35-41**, where is the picture of true peace? Is it in **vs. 39** after Jesus spoke and the wind died down and the waves were calmed? That looks like peace. In fact, the NASU says "it became perfectly calm." Is that real peace? No. If you want to see true peace, look in **vss. 37-38**. The wind was fierce, the waves were breaking over the side of the boat, it was rocking and filling up with water. But Jesus was asleep. How could He do that? The noise, the motion, the water, nothing impacted His sleep. That is the picture of real peace.
- B. That is the peace we are to work for—peace that passes all understanding (**Philippians 4:7**). True peace does not mean having a perfectly calm life. True peace means enduring the storms in the security of our relationship with God. The story is told of a young man hired on as a ranch hand. The rancher hired him because the young man had given such interesting responses. For instance, when the rancher asked why the young man was qualified for the job, he simply said, "I can sleep when the wind blows." The rancher thought that odd, but figuring the boy certainly couldn't be worse than some other hands he had hired and wanting to find out what that meant, he hired him. Several weeks went by and the young man had worked hard and been a great hire. Then one night, a storm came up. The rancher raced into the worker's quarters, roused the young man and said, "Get up, we have to make sure the horses are stabled properly." "I already did that, Sir." "Great, we still need to make sure the equipment is put away and protected." "I already did that, Sir." "Great, we still need to make sure the barn is shut up right." "I already did that, Sir. There is no need to worry. I told you. I can sleep when the wind blows. I can do that because I make sure every thing is done right every time." True peace does not mean the wind never blows. True peace means we have already settled our relationship with God and when the wind blows, we can still sleep. Look at Jesus asleep in the boat.

VII. Lesson #6: We must allow the storms to strengthen our faith not cripple it.

- A. When all was said and done, though the disciples were afraid, this storm increased their faith in Jesus. This was not just an odd event. It was a learning experience. They were following the Master who could not only teach well, cast out demons, heal the sick and feed the multitudes. They were following the Master who could calm the storms. To whom else could they turn?
- B. Like the disciples, we face storms. Don't let these storms cause you to turn from Jesus. Let them cause you to turn to Jesus. Don't let these storms cause you to doubt Jesus' wisdom, concern and ability. Let them cause you to trust in Jesus, knowing He will act in His own way and His own good time so that it will most benefit us in the long run. Let them be a reminder that Jesus can, in fact, calm the storms. Don't let these storms destroy your peace. Let them provide an opportunity to grow in your peace with God. Don't let these storms cripple your faith. Let them strengthen it. As **James 1:2-3** says, count it all joy when you encounter various trials. They will produce faith and endurance. As **Romans 5:3-4**, it is through the storms that we learn perseverance. It is through perseverance we gain proven character. And through proven character we maintain hope. Hope will not disappoint because the love of God has been granted to us. We can rest in that. Don't let storms cripple your faith. Let storms strengthen it.

Conclusion:

If you have ever wondered if God cares, don't wallow in guilt over those feelings. Recognize you are in good company. I imagine every disciple has felt that way at some time. Instead, simply turn back to God. Let this story be implanted on your heart. God does care. God will act in His time and in the way that is best for us. Strengthen your faith. Keep bailing the water. When it most benefits us, God will calm the storms. Rely on Him.