

Unshakeable Faith

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[0 : 0 0] My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us.

We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it.

Which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word. We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. You'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus in His life and His death and His resurrection.

And as we come to this Gospel, there are two questions in particular that it asks us. First of all, who is Jesus? And second, how do we respond to Him? I've mentioned before, these are not questions that we're imposing on the text from the outside.

They're actually questions that come out of the text from the inside. And we'll see this explicitly for the first time in our passage this week. It's in verse 41 of Mark chapter 4 that the disciples say, Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?

[1 : 1 6] And this question from the disciples is meant to be our question as well. We'll see that question again as we go through the Gospel, especially in Mark chapter 8. So this is the first time, but not the last time, that we'll understand this is the question this Gospel intends for us to ask.

We've moved on from the kingdom parables, at least for now. And this week we're going to look at one of the most famous stories in the Bible, where Jesus calms the storm, and there's this gap that we'll see between what we say that we believe and what we actually show that we believe.

In fact, perhaps most likely we're tempted, like the disciples, to wonder whether God actually cares when we find ourselves in the midst of a storm. And so our big question this morning is this.

How does following Jesus change our response to overwhelming situations? How does following Jesus change our response to overwhelming situations?

How does it change our response when we lose a job or miss a promotion? How does it change our response when we find out about a life-threatening illness for ourselves or someone else?

[2 : 3 0] How does it change our response when we find out that a loved one has been seriously injured? That's with that question that we turn now to God's Word. I invite you to turn with me.

We're in Mark chapter 4, starting at verse 35. You can turn with me in your worship guide. You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your Bible. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word.

And God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. And so that's why we read now, starting at verse 35.

On that day, when evening had come, He said to them, Let us go across to the other side. And leaving the crowd, they took Him with them in the boat, just as He was.

And other boats were with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.

[3 : 30] And they woke Him and said to Him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Verse 39. And He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace, be still.

And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in Heaven, You promise us in Isaiah 55 that Your Word will not return to You empty, but it will accomplish the purpose for which You sent it.

And so we ask You this morning simply that You would honor that promise. That as we look at Your Word, it would accomplish purposes in our lives. That it would encourage us with Your grace.

It would challenge us for our need for it. And most of all, You would show us Jesus in His beauty and His glory. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 2 that unless the Holy Spirit is with us, we won't be able to understand.

[4 : 48] And so we ask that You'd give us the Spirit and that we would understand. That we would see and know and believe You more and more. We ask all these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Amen. As we start this story at the very beginning on verse 35, it tells us that this happened on that day, which pulls us back to the very beginning of chapter 4 when Jesus began teaching by the sea.

If you remember from verse 1, it says, again, He began to teach beside the sea. And so what we're realizing here is that what we have covered as a congregation over the last four weeks, Jesus teaching about the kingdom of God in Mark chapter 4 is something that He actually did in one teaching session.

Even more than that, we're told in Mark chapter 4 verse 2 that He was teaching the many things. So we've spent four weeks covering part of what Jesus taught in one day.

We're getting a sample of what He gave to this people. So we come now then on the same day that that's all happened. We're at the end of the day, we're told.

[5 : 57] It says in verse 35, when evening had come. And this is going to help us understand why Jesus probably falls asleep quickly in this story. He's ended a very long day.

Anyway, verse 36, they took Him with them in the boat just as He was. And so they're probably just scooping Him right off the shore. If you remember at the beginning of the chapter, Jesus had gone out onto this boat, which had served as His natural sound system so He could speak across the water that amplified His voice to the people who were sitting up on the hill by the sea.

But we're told later in verse 10 that Jesus went out to answer some questions. So either they're scooping Jesus up right off the shore and putting Him in the boat, or He had returned into the boat. Either way, Jesus does not go off to do anything else.

He immediately leaves this teaching task and He heads out with His disciples. Now, that's all background to what we're coming up against. Everything's fine at this point until we hit verses 37 and 38 where we see the real problem that's at work here.

Verse 36, everything is great. They're traveling out. There are other boats with them. Verse 37, things get hairy. A great windstorm arose and the waves were breaking into the boat so that the boat was already filling up.

[7 : 17] Now, storm comes. We know storms are actually incredibly common on the Sea of Galilee. There's some science around this. The sea is at a low elevation. It's below sea level.

It has hills right around it that are higher. And so there's this interaction that happens between hot air and cold air that causes wind to stir up on the sea. In other words, this is not an uncommon occurrence.

These are fishermen. You'll remember from earlier in the gospel. They're familiar with this sea. This is their home court. This is nothing new for them. So on the one hand, these storms are common.

On the other hand, this particular storm is not. We see that very quickly. This one is actually dangerous. It's threatening.

It's frightening. Verse 37, the waves were breaking into the boat so that the boat was already filling. It's going to be a short amount of time before there's so much water in this boat that it sinks.

[8 : 16] Verse 38, in case we have any doubt, the disciples say, do you not care that we are perishing? They know that death could be imminent.

And these are coming from fishermen, and they're very experienced. They're not easily scared. They're here on their home turf. And so what we know is this.

They have assessed the situation correctly. If someone who grew up in the desert tells you it's hot, you know it's hot. If someone who grew up in the Arctic Circle tells you it's cold, you know it's cold.

If someone who's a seasoned fisherman tells you on their home turf sea that you're about to die, you're probably about to die. Okay, so this is an uncommon storm that is incredibly serious.

This storm is about to kill them. Now, it's not just the threat of the storm that has them stirred up. It's also a frustration with Jesus in action. There's this incredible disconnect between their present circumstances, their immediate circumstances, and Jesus' response.

[9 : 25] On the one hand, death is an option for them. And it could be an option very quickly. On the other hand, Jesus is asleep.

Now, I'll tell you, it makes total sense that Jesus is sleeping. He's had a long day. There are few things better after preaching and teaching to take a good and righteous nap.

And so I feel Jesus on this one. When I grew up as a 90s kid, and if you were in Christian culture in the 90s, you remember people had those bracelets that said WWJD on them.

What would Jesus do? I had one of those. I think mine was orange, if I remember correctly. What would Jesus do after preaching? This passage clearly tells us he would take a nap.

And so I may even follow the example of our Lord later today. Makes sense, right? Jesus is tired from a full day. He's asleep. We actually find out, verse 35, this is not just a nap.

[10 : 27] Evening had come, and so Jesus is going to bed early. There's a few things that we learned from Jesus sleeping here. We'll talk about that in a minute. Right now, I want you to see the fear and the frustration that the disciples feel in this situation.

In fact, we see it in their question, verse 38. Do you not care that we are perishing? We'll come back to that question in a minute, but our first question here is, who is Jesus?

So I want us to keep moving to verse 39. Jesus is sleeping. Verse 38, they wake him up. Verse 39, he revises, he rebukes the wind and says to the sea, peace, be still.

Jesus gets up and he calms the storm using the very same words that he used earlier in the gospel to rebuke demons. He is not casting something out at this point, though.

He's commanding nature, and it obeys. Jesus commands nature with his words. It does what he says.

[11 : 36] Who is Jesus? We have a partial answer here. He is the one who controls and commands nature itself with only his words. That doesn't fully, fully answer our question, though, because the disciples know that, and that's why they ask the question in verse 41.

Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? And so we have to keep digging deeper to figure out who is Jesus in this situation. If you've already looked at your worship guide and you've read our explanation for the Old Testament reading, you know there's only one biblical character who's able to regularly control creation with his words.

It is God himself. In fact, God not only controls creation with his words, he also creates it. Go back all the way to the very beginning of the Bible in Genesis chapter one.

We know that it's God who made the world out of nothing just by speaking. We saw in our Old Testament reading from Psalm 107 that God is the one who calms the seas and the storms.

In fact, we saw that in verse 29. It says this, he made the storm be still and the waves of the sea were hushed. There are other places in the Old Testament that tell us this as well, especially the book of Job, that it is God who has power and authority and control over nature.

[12 : 52] It is God and only God who creates things with a word. It is God and only God who controls things with a word. Who is Jesus?

Jesus is not simply a good teacher. Jesus is not merely a good example. Jesus is the man who has the power that belongs to God and God alone.

Jesus is God. That's why John chapter one, as it begins telling us the story of Jesus, tells us that in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the world was made through him.

Jesus was with God at the very beginning in Genesis chapter one. He was part of creating the world with just a word. In fact, even more than that, Jesus was the word.

This is why we're told in Hebrews chapter one, verse three, that the world is upheld by the word of Jesus power. In other words, the reason that you're sitting here today and the world is holding together and not falling apart is because Jesus right now is sustaining it with his word.

[14 : 04] I had a conversation with someone earlier this week who is not a Christian and she told me, I actually have more of a, I have a science background and I have a science perspective on the world.

And so that's part of why I'm not religious. And so I've been thinking about that all week. And I'll say this, it's because Jesus upholds the world with his word that we can believe in science.

That is the reason that the world is predictable. That is the reason we can have faith in the scientific method. That is why we can expect things to operate in the same way over and over.

We live, in other words, in this orderly predictable world because it was created and held together by an orderly predictable God. If we served a God who is chaotic and unstable, the world in which we live would be chaotic and unstable as well.

It was David Hume in the 18th century who raised this problem, which is that we cannot believe that the sun will rise tomorrow simply because it rose yesterday. The fact that something happened in the past is not reason to know and believe it will happen in the future.

[15 : 17] That is in fact a leap of faith. In other words, the scientific method relies on something that cannot be proven, which is that this world is something that's predictable.

This world is something that's stable. This world is something that operates by laws that we can understand and see. This is a way of saying that because Jesus is in control of the world, because he created it by his word, that is the reason we can explore and understand it with science.

In fact, it's miracles, counterintuitively, that should give us greater trust in science. And this is why. Miracles confirm that God is in control of the world.

Miracles confirm that God is in control of the world. If God is in control of the world, then we can have confidence that the world is predictable, that the world is organized, that the world operates by laws that don't change.

It is Jesus' power. It's what we see in Hebrews 1, verse 3, that he upholds the world with the word of his power that allows us, that provides the foundation for us to understand and explore this world with science.

[16 : 39] Jesus is the one who controls and creates the world. Jesus is the one who holds this universe together.

That's only part of our answer, though. Yes, Jesus is God. Jesus is the one who creates and controls the world even more than that.

That is not enough. Jesus is also benevolent. Jesus is not just powerful. He uses his power to save. Yes, Jesus commands nature, and he commands it for our protection, our salvation.

Verse 38, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Yes. Yes, he does. In fact, there's incredible irony in their question because they are saying much more than they realize.

Jesus cares so much that they are perishing that he's come to die for them. More than they can understand in that moment.

[17 : 50] They have a bigger problem than a storm on a sea, and God still meets them in that smaller problem. God came to earth as a man because they were perishing.

God came to earth as a man because we are perishing. And so God uses his power.

Jesus uses his power to save. He has come to deliver them from far much more than a storm. It's like we're told in Luke chapter 19, for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is the one who controls nature with a word. Jesus is, in fact, God. And he's not only God, he's a God who cares for the perishing.

Do you not care that we are perishing? Yes. Yes, he does. That's the God that we serve.

[19 : 07] That raises our next question here, which is, if that is Jesus, how do we respond to him? I've told you before that when we read the Bible, often we're presented with characters who serve as examples for us, sometimes positive examples, sometimes negative examples.

In this passage, we see that same dynamic play out again. The disciples here are negative example. Verse 38 again, they ask this question, do you not care that we are perishing?

In other words, they allow the difficulty that they're facing to lead to doubt. The disciples allow difficulty to lead to doubt. And Jesus says this explicitly, verse 40, why are you still afraid?

Have you still no faith? Jesus is telling them that fear is the opposite of faith. The circumstances that they are in have revealed their small and shaky faith.

When storms arise, our temptation is to doubt God's care and concern and his love.

[20 : 18] When storms arise, our temptation is to doubt God's care and his concern and his love. That's the trap the disciples fall into here.

That's what Jesus rebukes them for. It's not a coincidence that this happens immediately after Jesus teaching about the kingdom. Even after hearing everything he's taught them throughout Mark chapter four, they are confused.

They have not internalized what it is they're supposed to learn. They are coming off this teaching about the kingdom, still unable to apply it to their lives. And so one of the questions of this passage for us is how do we respond in difficulty?

What does that reveal about us? When we're out of control, when we're powerless in this world, we're like the disciples when we're at the mercy of nature.

How powerful do we believe God actually is? How much do we think that God actually cares? Do we really believe that God has not forgotten us?

[21 : 33] The disciples here fail this test. Often we do as well. Thankfully though, the disciples are not purely a negative example.

They actually provide a couple things that they do correctly in this passage. First of all, they get the most important thing right that we've talked about before. The disciples are with Jesus.

One man puts it this way, the disciples are in the right boat. And so another question is this, when the storm comes, which boat are you in?

When the storm comes, which boat are you in? Are you in Jesus' boat? Or are you in your own boat? The disciples get something incredibly important right.

They have decided to get into the right boat. They get something else right though. It's not just their location. They cry out to Jesus in their doubt.

[22 : 41] They're with Jesus. They turn towards Jesus. As fearful as they are, as much as Jesus rebukes them here in this situation, they do not rely on themselves and their resources.

They rely on Jesus who is with them. And Jesus in his grace, he does rebuke them. He doesn't send them away. Jesus cares for them.

Jesus saves them. And so the disciples here, they're mostly a negative, partially a positive example. Jesus here is our 100% positive example.

Indirectly, he is demonstrating the sort of faith that he wants to see in his disciples. As Jesus is sleeping, there's a sense in which he is demonstrating his faith in God.

In fact, I'm gonna invite you to turn to page five in your worship guide. We have this quote here on the top left. Deep, restful sleep embodies trust in God's sovereign hand. By sleeping during the storm, Jesus, the son of David, demonstrates his perfect and unswerving trust in his father's protection in the midst of grave physical and spiritual danger.

[23 : 54] The Old Testament does not just show us that God is the one who has control over nature. The Old Testament also shows us that sleep is what happens for those who trust God. Psalm chapter three, I lay down and slept.

I awoke again for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. Notice that word there, I will not be afraid.

I lay down and slept. Psalm 116, the righteous will never be moved. He will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news.

His heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. His heart is steady. He will not be afraid until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. Psalm 127, It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil, for he gives to his beloved sleep.

Jesus has so much trust in God that he is able to rest in the midst of the storm. Jesus is modeling for his disciples and for us what it looks like to have trust and faith and confidence in God.

[25 : 05] Unshakeable faith in God means that no matter what happens, we are able to rest. Unshakeable faith in God means that no matter what happens, we understand that God is still in control.

No matter what happens, unshakable trust and confidence in God means that we know God still cares. And so we can sleep.

And so we can rest. And so we have calm in the midst of chaos. I'm gonna ask you to turn also to page three in your worship guide.

You thought that was a quote about prayer, but it's about more than that. The second sentence says, learning to pray doesn't offer us a less busy life. It offers us a less busy heart.

In the midst of outer busyness, we can develop an inner quiet. And I'm gonna change that quote. In the midst of chaos and threatening and life-altering situations, we can develop an inner quiet.

[26 : 11] It's a way of saying, while our circumstances may not change, our faith and trust and hope in God means that our response and the posture of our heart does. We may not escape challenging and terrifying and life-threatening situations.

And we know that we can have a quiet heart. We can be like Jesus, able at times to sleep in the storm. The million dollar question of this passage though is what happens when Jesus doesn't calm the storm?

Being a Christian, following Jesus does not mean that God is going to calm every storm in your life. In fact, it's because they're following Jesus in this passage that they find themselves in a storm.

Jesus is the one who had the great idea of getting in the boat and going to the other side. So following Jesus is not necessarily going to keep you away from storms. In fact, sometimes it might take you straight into new storms.

It doesn't take away the storm. It changes our response to the storm. Faith in God following Jesus does not always change our circumstances.

[27 : 28] Sometimes it makes them worse. It does change our perspective. It does change our hope. It does change where we set our eyes.

Faith in God does not always change our circumstances. Sometimes, in fact, it makes it worse. It does change our perspective. It does change our hope.

It does change where we place our lives. We know that God loves us and he will not let us perish.

Faith does not mean believing that God will make everything okay now. Faith does mean believing that God will make everything okay fully and finally one day.

Faith does mean believing that no matter what happens, we cannot lose what is most important. Even if we die, when we die, we will not die.

[28 : 28] even if we die. When we die, we won't die. We'll die physically. We will not die spiritually.

In fact, believe it or not, all of the disciples who were in this boat died. They just didn't die that day. Right?

They died eventually. Jesus did not, in other words, solve their ultimate problem. Jesus postponed death for them. He did not prevent death for them.

Jesus doesn't say, peace be still in every circumstance. At risk of stating the obvious, sometimes Christians die in storms. Sometimes cancer kills someone.

And, but, Jesus does say, peace be still, fully and finally. Jesus does say, peace be still, in such a way that what is most important, what is most valuable, which is our relationship with him, cannot be lost.

[29 : 38] Our life with him cannot be erased. Jesus could have refused to calm the storm in this story, and his words would still be true.

Because he has already calmed the most important storm, the most threatening storm. Jesus said, peace be still, where it matters most.

And so our hope is that no matter what storm comes, we know God is more powerful. Even more than that, verse 38, we know he cares.

And so we can trust even when he doesn't calm the storm. When I call your attention to one more quote, today's quote Sunday, page five, the bottom left, this quote from Frederick Buechner captures what we're talking about.

Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us.

[30 : 53] Why are we not afraid? Not because terrible things won't happen. They will. We are not afraid because of what Buechner says here.

Nothing can separate us. Buechner's not putting words in God's mouth, by the way. He's paraphrasing the promises of Scripture, especially those from Romans chapter 8.

And so remember, our question at the very beginning of the sermon was, how does our faith and trust in God, how does following Jesus change our response in challenging and life-threatening circumstances? This is the answer.

If you find out that you have cancer, remember, do not be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us. When you finally realize that faith looks like admitting you may need to take medicine for your mental health, but you don't want to admit that you need help, don't be afraid.

I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us. When you find out that your child was in a car accident, don't be afraid. I am with you.

[32 : 02] Nothing can ever separate us. When you lose your job, don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us.

Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. If you live long enough, you will see not just a few of them, but many of them.

And so we're not here to have some sort of denial of reality. We're not here to have some easy believism that God is going to remove every storm in our lives. Simply this, that we have an unshakable trust in God, that we have quiet hearts in the midst of a tumultuous and threatening world.

We have unshakable hope and faith and trust in God. Our hope ultimately is that not that Jesus is going to face the threat of death in a storm, but that Jesus is going to face death itself.

1 Corinthians chapter 15 reminds us that Jesus is the one who faces death down and puts death to death. Jesus is the one who takes not just this one storm on one day, he is the one who takes on an even greater storm.

[33 : 13] Jesus comes to calm the storm of God's wrath and judgment coming onto the world because of our sin and our rebellion against him, that we have refused to listen to God, to obey him, to love him, and to worship him.

And that is the ultimate storm that we need Jesus' help and his rescue from. And that is the storm that in every situation for those who trust and believe and follow in him, Jesus truly does say, peace, be still.

And it's because Jesus calms that storm that no matter what happens in this world and in our lives, we know that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

That is the reason that we can have the unshakable faith and confidence that Jesus models in this passage that no matter what happens, our trust and faith in God means that we can rest.

Our trust and faith and confidence in God means that we can have quiet hearts in a chaotic world, in a threatening world, in a world that is falling apart because of sin.

[34 : 14] It's a storm Jesus always takes away for those who trust and follow him. If you've been with us for a while, you know I like to talk about hailstorms.

I was, of course, overly traumatized by the hailstorms in 2018. Then we got another hailstorm in 2020 back in August. 2018, I was not a homeowner.

2020, I was a homeowner. If you remember, I think it was sometime between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. It was late in the afternoon. I was working from home and this hailstorm started in August and I could see it coming in and so I went into my bathroom where there's a skylight and I watched the hail hit on my skylight wondering if it was going to hold up.

In that moment, as a homeowner, I knew that my roof was probably toast. I knew that it was probably going to take thousands of dollars to repair.

I knew that I had a long journey ahead of me to get that roof replaced. And I had a calm and quiet heart.

[35 : 27] Why? Because I knew who I was with. State Farm. And what does State Farm promise?

Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there. Point is this. My circumstances did not change in any way. State Farm was not going to come and stop that storm from hitting me.

And I have a contract and an agreement with State Farm. They have made promises to me about how they're going to show up in certain situations. I know I'm not going to be the one who has to pay the debt of that roof.

And so as I think about thousands of dollars of repairs ahead of me, that night I slept. Brothers and sisters, we have something so much greater and more powerful than State Farm on our side.

As we find ourselves in the storms and circumstances of life, we know no matter what that God is with us. We know no matter what that He is the one who will protect us and keep us from all evil.

[36 : 35] We know He is the one who guarantees that what is most valuable and precious we cannot lose. Who is Jesus?

Jesus is the one who controls nature with a word. Jesus is the one who is God Himself. He is the one who comes not just with power but with care. He loves us.

How do we respond to Him? We have unshakable faith and trust and confidence in Him. Romans chapter 8 says this, For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There is nothing and no one who is outside of His control. Rest and trust. Verse 38 41 Even the wind and the sea obey Him.

Let's pray. Our Father in Heaven we praise You and thank You that You have given us not simply stories but stories that tell us what is true about this world.

[37 : 57] We thank You that Jesus is with us and He's not just powerful but He also cares. We ask that You would use that truth and You drive it deep into our hearts that we would rest more and more in You and Your care and Your provision.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.