

Sovereign

Mark 4

Look at the progression in the Gospel of Mark:

The Gospel of Mark

- "The Gospel of Jesus Christ" (1:1)
- "Who is this?" (4:41)
- "Who do you say I am?" (8:29)

From his opening verse Mark sets out to present the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Then he begins **calling witnesses to prove that Jesus is, in fact, the Christ** - the long awaited Messianic King of Israel and the fully divine Son of God. The opening chapters show Jesus leaping into action, healing people, driving out demons - even raising the dead. The most commonly used word in Mark is "immediately." It is a book filled with the action packed life and ministry of Jesus.

Mark 1-3 builds to this conclusion at the end of chapter four, with the calming of the storm and the question, **"Who is this?"** The reader is on a roller coaster, zipping through one miracle after another, seeing Jesus' authority to teach, his authority to heal diseases, his authority to drive out demons, even his authority to raise the dead. When I was leading a Bible study through the Gospel of Mark one time a woman got through chapters one and two and said, **"Wow, it seems like Jesus has authority over EVERYTHING!"** Exactly! That is precisely Mark's point.

Jesus does have authority over everything. He is the Messiah - the King; the Sovereign One. In other words, Jesus Christ is LORD. **This is the Gospel we believe and proclaim.** It all boils down to those four words. Jesus, the King of Israel, is the Lord of EVERYTHING. Jesus Christ is LORD.

Today as we walk through this story of the calming of the storm I want us to **feel what the disciples felt**. They had seen Jesus' healings, exorcisms and had heard his powerful teaching. But now their faith is tested as a storm suddenly surrounds them and they are terrified.

Whatever STORM you are riding through right now, hear the word of the Lord to you today:

"Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" Mark 4:40

We all experience storms in this world.

- Your **health crisis** is a difficult storm - but in the end it's not an issue of health it's an issue of FAITH.
- Your **financial challenges** must feel very stormy - but your problem is not about money it's about FAITH.
- Your **marriage trouble** probably has plenty of thunder and lightning - but that is not a marriage issue it's a FAITH issue.
- Your **worries and uncertainty** and fears about whatever... LISTEN to Jesus Himself speaking to you saying, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"

FEAR of a situation demonstrates lack of FAITH in the Lord of every situation. Look at what's happening. Jesus is in the boat with the disciples. He is asleep, but Jesus is right there in the boat. The storm was crazy enough to freak out fishermen who has spent their lives on the Sea of Galilee. It was perfectly natural to panic in a storm of this ferocity. But JESUS WAS RIGHT THERE!

It wasn't a WEATHER issue - as much as it felt like one - *it was a FAITH issue.* And though their fear of the storm is not exemplary, their approach certainly was - **they cried out to Jesus!** Granted, they only called him "Teacher," which illustrates the shallowness of their faith. But still, they knew the situation was beyond them and it was not beyond JESUS.

Do you believe this? Your situation is beyond you - but it is not beyond Jesus. He has authority over EVERYTHING, including your biggest challenges right now.

Do you know what happened with **Laura Story**? She wrote that powerful song from a few years ago - Blessings. *"What if your blessings come through raindrops, what if your healing comes through tears. What if a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes to know you're near... What if trials of this life are your mercies in disguise."*

<http://www.oakwoodfl.org/2019/08/08/blessings/>



[Please make a slide w/ this pic and the quote: *"What if your blessings come through raindrops... What if trials of this life are your mercies in disguise."* Laura Story]

Laura married her true love and just over a year into their marriage Martin began having trouble seeing and remembering things. They did some tests and found he had **a serious brain tumor** requiring life threatening surgery. They did the surgery, knowing there were no guarantees - he might

never wake up; he might never be himself again. And, sure enough, he had to re-learn lots of things from eating to walking to talking. It was a slow process in the hospital, one day at a time, one step at a time.

Two months into this grueling recovery, **Martin got mean**. This was a dramatic personality change. They eventually learned that he was afraid and didn't know who he could trust - even his own wife. This was the hardest thing for Laura. She was staying with him in the hospital, sacrificing her own sleep and comfort. She was sacrificing everything to be with him and to help him - and his response was **to question her, to even outright accuse her of trying to "sabotage his care."** He literally called a nurse and asked for protection from his wife.

As Laura fumed over this with her father, she realized that **she was doing the very same thing with God**. Though He was constantly with her, loving her and helping her in an infinite number of ways - she was questioning Him and even accusing Him - **accusing GOD - of not really caring for her**; not really having her best interests at heart.

Through this terrible trial God gave her the song **BLESSINGS** and the whole album, **God of Every Story**. Some of you should probably buy that album - and her new one Open Hands, which is all about surrender. I link from the blog to Laura's new book, When God Doesn't Fix It.

As we go through various storms and challenges, we desperately want God to FIX THEM so we can get back to OUR PLAN. Laura's sister challenged her at one point saying, **"What if this isn't a side track for you - what if this is the road?"** Here is the message of Laura's book:

Laura Story - When God Doesn't Fix It

Myth: The plan I have for my life is much better than the place God has me right now.

Truth: Where God has me right now is the best place for me.

Can you relate to this? You feel like you are on a side track from YOUR plan for your life. What if it's not a side track, what if it's the road God has called you to walk? What if God does not intend to fix that illness or restore that relationship or repair that situation? At least not right now... Do we have the FAITH to trust God that **His plan really is best** when it is diametrically opposed to OUR PLAN?

That's what this event represents. The disciples were very familiar with the Sea of Galilee but **none of them signed up for a midnight STORM CRUISE**. That was not their plan. They were in the midst of a busy speaking tour and I'm sure they were all tired like Jesus. But Jesus had a plan to grow their FAITH. In this passage we'll see **four reasons we can trust Jesus**.

Notice how this account begins:

Why we can trust Jesus

1. He Knows Everything

"On that day, when evening had come, Jesus said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.'" Mark 4:35

Jesus initiated this little boat trip. It was HIS idea. The disciples didn't know a storm was coming, but Jesus did. Jesus is NEVER surprised when bad things happen to us. He knows EVERYTHING.

[Ok, quick qualification - Jesus said "only the Father knows" the exact timing of the end of the world. Even Jesus doesn't know that, which illustrates His perfect submission to the Father. And during His earthly ministry it's one of those mind-bending questions to wrestle with how much Jesus knew using His perfect divinity and how limited he was because of his full humanity. But after he rose from the dead and in His current glorified state we can say with perfect assurance that Jesus knows EVERYTHING, ok?]

Apply this to your situation. Is Jesus surprised about your hardship? Did any event or issue catch Him off guard? Of course not!

In fact, think of that struggle as **Jesus' personal invitation to you, "Let's go across to the other side."** The disciples thought it was just a change of scenery but it was actually a change in their DISCIPLESHIP. Jesus was calling them to a deeper, stronger faith.

You probably say, "I don't want to go over there!" Well, the disciples certainly didn't want to ride through a life threatening storm either. But that storm was a necessary challenge to grow their faith. The same thing is true for us. Your challenge is God's exact prescription to grow your faith.

Jesus knows all about your problem. And even better than that, He cares about it even more than you do. This is our second reason we can trust in Jesus, the Lord. He not only KNOWS everything,

Why we can trust Jesus

2. He Cares for Everyone

"But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, '**Teacher**, do you not care that we are perishing?'" Mark 4:38

Now it may feel like Jesus is asleep in your situation too - but be assured, **Jesus no longer takes naps**. In our pain we share this question, "Jesus, don't you CARE?" You might feel like you are dying. Some in our church family might actually be dying in the next few weeks and months. But many of us probably FEEL this question... **"Don't you care?"**

There is an obvious truth in this passage: **Jesus was WITH THEM in that boat.** He was not floating above the storm. He was IN THE STORM, right there in the boat. The fact that he was asleep demonstrates first that he was fully human and needed rest. But it also demonstrates **his perfect faith in the Father**. He rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith but Jesus did not share their failure. He had PERFECT CONFIDENCE in the Father, as we saw last week in the temptation account.

- Jesus was content with the Father's provision.
- He was committed to the Father's praise and
- He was confident in the Father's plan.

When we are tempted to doubt the love of God for us, it is because we, like the disciples, **do not fully realize who it is we are addressing**. Notice they call him **“TEACHER.”** Was that true? Sure. Jesus was their rabbi and teacher. But at the end of this experience the disciples are looking at each other saying, **“WHO IS THIS?”**

They knew him as a teacher and maybe a novice miracle worker. Jesus, in His great love for them, wanted to show them that He is so much more than that. The whole point of the New Testament is that **Jesus was NOT JUST a good teacher**. C.S. Lewis says it best:

“You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

A good teacher cannot stand up in a thunderstorm and say, “Peace! Be still!” and have anything happen. There is only ONE BEING in the universe who can do that: The Creator and King of all things. We’ll get to that point in a minute. For now just notice **the wonderful compassion of Jesus**. He is so patient with these disciples. It takes them forever to realize who He is. They continually question him, they doubt, they struggle.

But Jesus stayed with them. He walked with them. He lived with them. He kept teaching, kept correcting them.

And doesn’t Jesus do the very same thing with us? He is so patient when we are so fearful and so slow to believe - so slow to realize the truth: that He is WITH US in our suffering. He is walking with us every step of the way - and, in fact, most of the time He is CARRYING US. We can trust Jesus because He knows everything and He cares for everyone - including you. He is with YOU right now. It may seem like He is asleep or unconcerned but please hear this - Jesus is working in this storm right now and He is with you in it. Look at the third reason we can trust Jesus:

Why we can trust Jesus

3. He Directs Everything

“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.” Mark 4:39

No dramatic hand motions. No long incantations. No flowery petitions to some higher power. Just two words along the lines of **“Hush! Calm down!”** It’s an expression a teacher would use with a classroom of children or a parent would use with an unruly child. He REBUKED the wind and the sea. Think of that.

The world Jesus made by saying, “Let there be light...” The world that God pronounced “very good” when it was first made... has been groaning and struggling since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden. Jesus stepped into the chaos and danger of this broken world and in the midst of this life threatening storm he spoke a simple word of REBUKE. “Stop it.”

Do you know that is how history will end? It will not be a great battle or a dramatic grand finale. It will just be Jesus appearing in the sky saying something like, "ENOUGH!" or "IT IS FINISHED!"

The Word of God, from the lips of Jesus - the same word that created everything will bring creation to a halt. Brothers and sisters do you feel the force of this truth?

- Jesus is supreme in knowledge. He knows EVERYTHING.
- Jesus is supreme in compassion. He loves everyone.
- And Jesus is supreme in POWER - he directs EVERYTHING. ***There is not one thing that happens without permission from Jesus.***

Now, is there **a mystery here** as it relates to evil and suffering? For sure. God is NEVER the cause or the source of EVIL. But He still directs and controls and limits it. **Job's experience** gives us a window into how it works. Remember that God initiated that situation, bringing Job to the attention of satan. Satan was the one who afflicted Job but God directed and limited those sufferings. And the whole book of Job is there to teach us that God has the right to GIVE AND TAKE AWAY according to His Sovereign Will and His good purposes.

It was not Job's plan to lose everything in his life in a single day. But God was there directing it for Job's good and for OUR GOOD so we could all learn to trust God through even the most intense suffering.

After rebuking the storm, Jesus turned to rebuke his disciples:

Why we can trust Jesus

3. He Directs Everything

"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?' " Mark 4:40-41

The point - according to Jesus - is that they were **afraid of the wrong things**. "Why are you so afraid?" If we really understood who Jesus is we would fear NOTHING BUT HIM.

All fears are relative, right?

- You might be nervous about a test coming up in school but then your car starts spinning out and all other fears disappear as you focus on surviving a car accident.
- You might be worried about a conversation with your friend, but then your boss walks in and says, "We need to talk."
- You might be concerned about your nasal congestion, but then pain starts shooting across your chest and you can't breathe.

The disciples were afraid of a storm - until Jesus silenced it. Then the disciples were utterly terrified of JESUS. And that was the point of the lesson. ***When you are with Jesus, all other fears become inconsequential.***

Our problem is not that we fear things in this world too much but that **we fear Jesus too little**. We don't really understand and appreciate WHO HE IS. Jesus is the Lord of EVERYTHING. He controls and directs every living creature, every single event.

When we say "Jesus is Lord" we mean that He RULES as King over EVERYTHING. Listen to some of the essential teachings of the New Testament on this central point:

3. Jesus Directs Everything

"He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything ***he might be preeminent.***"
Colossians 1:17-18

3. Jesus Directs Everything

"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and ***he upholds the universe*** by the word of his power." Hebrews 1:3

3. Jesus Directs Everything

"There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and ***through whom we exist.***" 1 Cor. 8:6

Even your very EXISTENCE - right now - is in the hands of Jesus. He upholds THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE by the word of His power. If Jesus stopped thinking about the world for even an instant, all of us would poof into powder like the end of Infinity War. Not half, but everyone.

Every molecule of your body, every particle in the air that you breathe, every atom in the entire cosmos is there because Jesus placed it there and wills that it remain there. He directs, controls, sustains and upholds everything. Because JESUS IS LORD. He is sovereign. ***He reigns and rules over every detail and event as THE DIRECTOR.***

The best human directors can only oversee the major elements of a film - they need a massive team of people to handle the details. Hundreds, probably thousands of people worked on Avengers, Endgame with its \$400M budget - to say nothing of the contracts with animation and other companies. The Russo brothers did an excellent job directing the whole movie but ***they needed tons of people to help make it all happen.***

Not Jesus. He Directs absolutely every detail of the universe from His place at the Father's right hand. Sure, He has angels who carry out His orders. But Jesus is the Director.

Why we can trust Jesus

3. He Directs Everything

"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?' " Mark 4:40-41

"Are you frightened?" As Strider asked Frodo. "Not nearly frightened enough."

We live in fear - but it is **a fear of the wrong things because we don't fully realize the One who is with us**. He commands the wind and the sea and they obey him. He commands diseases and they get better. He commands demons and they flee. He raises up kings and brings down others. He even speaks to the DEAD and commands them to live.

"Who is this?"

Indeed. That is the question. And the Gospel of Mark hinges on a more personal question, directly from Jesus.

The Big Question

"He asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' And they told him, 'John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.' And he asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?'" Mark 8:27-29

This is the center of Mark's gospel and it is the central question for everyone on earth. Who do YOU say that Jesus is? Do you agree with Peter who answered Jesus, "You are the Christ"? Do you agree with Mark who wrote this book to document the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Do you agree with the other apostles who proclaimed Jesus the Lord?

Who do YOU say that Jesus is?

Do you really believe that He is the Sovereign Lord? Remember, to make that claim is to assert that He is the LORD - all capital letters - of the Old Testament. The religious leaders of his day quickly perceived this which is why they frequently accused him of blasphemy - making himself equal with God.

But that was precisely the point. Jesus IS equal with God. He is ONE with the Father. **He is God in the flesh**. He is Immanuel - God with us. Jesus. Christ. Is LORD. The Living God, the Great I Am, the Creator and Covenant-Maker. Jesus is LORD.

Once you clearly see His identity, **it immediately follows to TRUST HIM**. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:8). Again, the problem is not that we fear things too much but that we fear God too little. We fear Jesus too little. He is not "safe." He is not tame. He is not this airbrushed, permed hair, meek and mild, happy smiling Jesus on a postcard. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the overflowing source of LIFE at the center of the universe who simply spoke and everything leapt into being. He is the perfectly HOLY and Righteous One who is coming to judge the living and the dead.

And when He comes back it will not be meek and mild smiling Jesus - it will be **Jesus the Warrior King**. And all who have not surrendered to Him as Lord He will strike down in an instant, for none can oppose Him, none can stand against Him.

You have to start with FEAR - trembling, awestruck reverence for Jesus as Lord - in order to begin to appreciate the fullness of His love. You have to realize the justice you deserve from Him before you

can be amazed at His grace. But once the light of that truth dawns in your heart and mind - once you see Jesus as Lord, then you will fall before Him as your gracious Savior - then you will trust Him completely. First, because he knows everything. Second, because he cares for everyone. Third, because he directs everything and finally because:

Why we can trust Jesus

4. He Died for Everyone

“And he began to teach them that *the Son of Man must suffer* many things and be rejected... and be killed and after three days rise again.” Mark 8:31

Jesus said this right after his question, “Who do YOU say that I am?” Peter rightly said, “You are the Christ.” Then Jesus explained ***the kind of King He was***. Jesus - the Almighty and All Sovereign King of Kings and Lord of Lords - is the King who stripped off His royal robes and took on the form of a servant. He is the King who laid down His sword and willingly took up His cross. He is the king who - in order to bring peace in the storm of this world, plunged himself into the storm of God’s wrath.

The story in Mark 4 is meant to remind us of **the story of Jonah**. Remember that prophet who was sent inland to Assyria but instead got on a ship and sailed the opposite way? A storm came suddenly on his ship too and all aboard freaked out and knew they were going to die. Jonah woke up from his sleep and knew immediately how to calm the storm. He told them to throw him over the side. They tried everything else but when nothing else worked, they finally tossed him over - and immediately the storm stopped and there was a “great calm.”

The Sea in the Bible represents chaos and evil - JUDGMENT from God. Jonah, the rebellious prophet was thrown into the turbulent judgment of the ocean because of His disobedience.

In the same situation, Jesus did not need to be thrown overboard because He had obeyed the Father’s orders and went to His “Nineveh” assignment. So all Jesus had to do in that storm was to shush it: “Peace! Be Still!” But there was a much bigger storm coming and there was only one way for Jesus to silence that one.

That storm was called **the JUST WRATH of God**. And as Jesus knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane it was like the wind and waves were whipping up all around Him. He felt the wrath of God coming. He could see the dark clouds brewing on the horizon like a terrifying and overwhelming storm.

That was when he was most like Jonah. He knew that in order to save the rest of us on this ship called Earth ***He had to be thrown directly into that Tsunami, that typhoon of God’s Just Wrath***. And so Jesus allowed Himself to be thrown in. That’s what the cross was. It was Jesus plunging into the judgment of God. It was Jesus being **SWALLOWED BY DEATH** and held in the tomb for three days.

So here is the ultimate proof that God cares for us - Jesus died for us. He died for the sin of the world. He gave Himself up into death for us all. What greater evidence could we ask for? What greater love is there than to lay down your life for the one you love?

Who is this that speaks to the storm and silences it? This is Jesus Christ our Lord. He reigns supreme in knowledge, supreme in compassion, supreme in power and supreme in grace. He knows everything, He cares for everyone, He directs everything and He died for everyone. Jesus is the Lord of all. He is SOVEREIGN.

So TRUST HIM. Whatever storm you are in - Jesus knows all about it. He is with you in it. He does have a plan for it. He is the Lord of all. He entered death in order to defeat death. And He is coming back soon to restore all things in Himself. Let's pray and then sing about this wondrous mystery!