

Sermon Title: Facing the Realities of our Fears

Sermon by Dr. Michael Quicke

Week of August 8, 2010

Sermon Based Small Group Discussion Guide

Big Idea: The way we react to circumstances tells us a lot about ourselves, what we really believe and where we place our trust. The miraculous account of Jesus calming the storm reveals truths about Jesus' disciples while holding up a mirror to our inner selves.

Icebreaker

Sermon Text: " ³⁵That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." ³⁶Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

³⁹He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" ⁴¹They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" Mark 4:35-41 (New International Version)

A. The disciples' reaction:

1. Why couldn't the disciples believe in the power of God in this situation?

2. What adjectives does the Gospel writer use to describe the disciples' reaction to Jesus' miraculous act of calming the storm?

B. Jesus' response:

3. What makes a person able to sleep in a tossing boat in the middle of a storm? Think of various explanations.

Jesus first rebuked the wind and waves, and then he rebuked his disciples for their lack of faith.

4. How does Jesus' response to the disciples strike you:
- Bewildering
 - Lacking compassion
 - Completely understandable
 - Too gentle

The Context:

To better understand Jesus' probing questions, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" it is helpful to understand the situation in context of what preceded it. At first glance, the events on the sea seem disconnected from Jesus' teachings as recorded earlier in the chapter. Mark 4 contains largest single collection of Jesus' sayings in this Gospel. These sayings were taught primarily in parables.

A parable is a story used to illustrate a point by comparison. It is a word picture, common to the audience's experience, that concretely communicates an abstract concept.

On the stormy sea:

Perhaps Jesus' rebuke of the disciples' lack of faith stemmed from their accusatory tone when requesting his help, or it could have been their complete lack of comprehension about his teaching that day, or, perhaps their inability to remember all of the miracles he had already done in their presence.

Share:

Dr. Quicke referred to our Lord as a “side-by side Jesus,” someone who asks “questions that lead into truth about ourselves.”

5. When troubled, to whom do you first call out? Upon what do you rely for relief when difficulties arise?
6. Please share a story of a real-life storm through which you have come or are currently struggling. How did you respond?
7. Walking in faith means discovering truth about our self and about God. What attributes of God’s character have you discovered in the midst of your life storms?
8. Has a particular Bible verse served to remind you of this truth in bleak times?

Additional Study: A Significant Metaphor

The historical circumstances surrounding the Early Church helped secure the image of the storm-tossed boat as a meaningful symbol for the persecuted believers. Images of boats can be found scratched into the walls of the Catacombs under the streets of **Rome**, today.

8. How is the account of Jesus calming the storm relevant to our circumstances today? To our country? To our world?

Dr. Quicke quoted Charles Jefferson, a noted preacher of the early 20th (read aloud as a group):

God seems to be asleep – see the world
In places of hunger, violence in our cities, God seems to be asleep
The criticism against the church is ferocious, God seems to be asleep

The attack on Christianity is violent and venomous, God seems to be asleep
They say advanced thinkers have given up on Christianity.
God seems to be asleep
BUT *don’t you know the boat has not gone down?*
Don’t you know that brilliant men have written about the end of the church in every generation but *the boat has not gone down?*
The waves are breaking into the boat *but the boat has not gone down?*
It’s not going down because Jesus is in the boat.

Prayer and Praises