

**THE REAL JESUS**  
**A Series on the Book of Mark**  
**“The Kingdom of God and Storms”**  
**Mark 4:35-41**  
**New City Church of LA**  
**November 9, 2008**  
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**I. Vision of New City**

Welcome to New City. We’re a multi-ethnic, multi-socioeconomic come-as-you-are church in downtown LA. We’re a church where everyone is welcomed. You can come and journey with us. As you journey with us, we hope you will meet the real Jesus and submit your life to him. When Jesus becomes the Lord of your life, things start to change. The Holy Spirit gives you the power to change. And that’s what we’re about.

We’re in the middle of a series called THE REAL JESUS. We’ve been going through the Book of Mark a passage at a time.

**II. The passage**

Let’s read Mark 4:35-41

- Comment: This is packed with details. “In the evening.” “Just as he was” (this is a reference to the beginning of the chapter—he spoke from the boat—it’s saying that he didn’t go back to shore first). “There were other boats with him.” Jesus was sleeping on a cushion in the stern (back part of the boat). Why would Mark tell us all these details? These details don’t really add to the story. A major scholar said he was prone to believe that stories like these were a legion, except for the details. These details show that these are the memories of somebody.
- An average downtowner would say: we don’t know the real Jesus. The Bible is the stuff that the church wants us to believe about Jesus and they’re bunch of legends. But, if you look at the story, it doesn’t fit into the genre of a legend at all.
- Why this could not be a legend:
  1. Mark was written too soon after the event to be a legend.
  2. They are too detailed to be legends.

- The genre of literature of realistic fiction written like history did not exist until about 200-300 years ago. Legends and epics were not written like the way Mark wrote the gospel.
- C.S. Lewis (medieval literature professor at Oxford): “I have been reading poems, romances, vision-literature, legends, myths all my life. I know what they are like. I know that not one of them is like this. Of this text there are only two possible views. Either this is reportage -- .... Or else, some unknown writer in the second century, without known predecessors or successors, suddenly anticipated the whole technique of modern, novelistic, realistic narrative. If it is untrue, it must be narrative of that kind. The reader who doesn't see this has simply not learned to read.”
- I say this because I think it's important to know that Mark's gospel is reliable. It could not reasonably be a realistic fiction (because that genre was not created yet). It's important to know that this really happened. Otherwise, you don't see the real Jesus.

This passage tells us (1) who the real Jesus is; (2) the problem of the human predicament; and (3) how Jesus responds to our predicament.

### **III. First, this passage tells us about the real Jesus.**

At the end of the story, in v. 41, it says: “they were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’” They’ve seen Jesus heal hundreds of people. They’ve seen Jesus teach with authority. He is an incredible teacher. They’ve seen Jesus cast out evil spirits. They were right there! Yet, they didn’t quite know who he was. When they saw him quiet the storm and still the waves, they were terrified! They were scared before because of the storm, but they were “TERRIFIED” after Jesus quieted the storm and the waves.

I think we are often like the disciples. We think we know Jesus. We believe him to be able to bless us, get us a job, make us happier, teach us good morals, and even do a

miracle for us, bring healing in our lives. But, we don't fully see the real Jesus. When we see the power of the real Jesus, it's going to be terrifying.

His power is so huge, that the only logical conclusion is that he is God the creator. He's not just a great teacher. He's not just a great healer. He's is God. He is Yahweh. Who else can actually have the power to calm the storm like the way he did. It was just unadulterated, raw, pure power! It is this infinite, completely untamable, unmanageable, someone way above us, get on your knees and worship kind of power! Jesus didn't call on a higher power. He is essentially saying: I am power. Anyone who has power has it on loan from me. This is an amazing claim. It terrified the disciples. When we see the power of the real Jesus, it actually should terrify us.

If this really happened—and there is a lot of evidence and markers of eye-witnesses, the only rational response we can have to Him is to lay up our lives in front of Jesus and submit to him completely and worship Him. People often say they like this about Jesus but not that. But you have no choice but to lose control of your life! You can't negotiate with your creator or use your creator. You can only lose your life and follow him. You can only make him the Lord of your life.

#### **IV. Second, this passage tells us the problem of human predicament.**

We live in a fallen world where chaos reigns and destruction is rampant. We live in the world of furious squalls and storms. We live in a broken world. But, God didn't create a broken world: in Genesis, it says that after God created the world, after each day of creation, he said it was good. What God created was good. But, humanity rebelled against God, and this broken relationship with God had repercussions in the world at large: God's creation became polluted, twisted and distorted by the principalities and powers of Satan. Death and destruction, which were not part of God's original plan, became a "natural" part of our world.

Romans 8:22 put it this way: "22We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

The suffering in this world is caused by two things:

- By people's decisions—individually or institutionally, people make decisions that hurt other people. Our sins cause so much suffering in the world.

- But how about natural disasters and sicknesses? This is harder to explain. But, what does the passage tell us about this? Jesus rebukes the wind and the waves. In fact, the same word is used for rebuking demons earlier. Jesus treats them in the same way. Jesus is saying that the chaos of nature has the same demonic root. The scripture tells us that since the fall, the creation itself has been frustrated to decay, into bondage and it is groaning in pain. When sin entered into the world, Satan took over the creation and polluted it and distorted it. It is not caused by God! God does not cause natural disasters. God does not cause storms. I have a problem with the phrase “the acts of God.” I don’t believe God is causing all these bad things. Some people get in the habit of saying that God causes bad things to happen. They get in the habit of blaming God or attributing evil to God. Even when we ask questions like: why is God doing this to me, we are indirectly accusing God for what Satan is doing. There are some hateful people out there who call themselves Christians who say things like “AIDS is God’s punishment for gays; or you are suffering because God is punishing you.” None of these things is true! The biblical answer is that the world has been hijacked by Satan and is under the dominion of Satan. In fact, Jesus called Satan the “prince of the world.”

The point I am trying to make is that the world is messed up by directly by Satan and through our sins enticed by Satan. The world is full of storms. People get sick. People get hurt. People suffer. People die. This is a messy world we live in.

The predicament that we find ourselves in is very real to us.

- Some of us are sick. Some of us are crushed. Some of us are in despair, depression. Some of us are or feel abandoned.
- Some of us have been struggling with substance abuse or an addictive behavior and feel like you’re completely out of control.
- Some of us have been struggling with loneliness, feeling like there’s no one who really cares, or understands.
- Some of us have been trying to find a job to no avail and you’re getting disappointed.

- Some of us have been wondering about the economy, how bad it's going to get before it gets better. How difficult it's going to be.
- Some of us have looked into the eyes of an orphan who is desperate for love and acceptance, or a helpless infant going through surgery after surgery hooked up to all kinds of machines in NICU.

And we wonder whether God really cares, whether he's just sleeping through all of these suffering in the world. That's what the disciples did. They came face to face with the power of destruction of the prince of this world, and they wondered if Jesus cared: "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" And we cry out in desperation: God do you care that I die? Do you care that I am lost? Do you care that I am being crushed? Do you care that I am suffering?

**V. Third, this passage tells us how Jesus responds to our predicament.**

Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. When it says that Jesus "rebuked" the wind, that's the same word used when Jesus rebuked the demons, the evil spirit. Jesus has ushered in the Kingdom of God, up there down here, and rebuked the prince of this world!

Jesus told the parables of the seed right before this happened, and in it, he taught us that there are and will be many times where it seems like the prince of this world is winning and God doesn't care. But, God works in the undercurrents. And here's a real life example. Even when there is a storm, even when there is sickness, even when we lose our jobs, house, and money, even when we lose our relationships, even when God looks like he is sleeping, you need to know that the Kingdom of God has broken through this world. God has come. He has the power to rebuke the forces of the kingdom of this world. By calming the storm and the waves, Jesus is announcing that the Kingdom of God is here—that the hostile forces of Satan, wherever they might be, inside of us, or outside of us, are being overthrown by Jesus, the Holy One of God. He restores God's dominion over a chaotic world invaded by forces that wreak havoc.

Ultimately, God will restore all things to perfection, better than it was at the beginning when God called it good.

Colossians 2:15:

“Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

On the cross, Jesus defeated the enemy, the prince of this world.

- That was one of the things that was happening on the cross.
- That’s why there is such power in the name of Jesus.

Well, you might ask: if he has been disarmed, if he’s defeated the demonic powers on the cross, why do we need to worry about it?

- Because we are living in between the times. We are living between the first and the second coming of Jesus.
- And during this period, Satan is disarmed, he’s defeated, but he’s not destroyed. One day he will be destroyed.
  - The decisive moment of the WWII was D Day on June 6, 1944.
  - And theologians often make the point that the decisive moment in history is the Cross;
  - but VE Day wasn’t until May 8, 1945, when the War was over.
  - So, there was a period when they were living between the times.
  - When victory was assured, but it wasn’t complete.
  - And that’s our position now.
  - We’re living between the times.
    - One day, all of evil will be destroyed and removed.
    - And the final result—this is an amazing thing: the final result will be better than it was in the Garden of Eden. That’s how God has made it.
    - Through his grace, God has made something good out of the evil, and the Kingdom of God, the new Heaven and the new Earth, is going to be better than the original creation.

It is when we understand our position, what Jesus has done, that even in the storms of life, we can live with the peace that passes understanding.

## **VI. Conclusion**

I want to conclude by noting the similarities between this story and the story of Jonah. Do you remember the story of the Jonah, the story of the guy who was swallowed up by a big fish for three days?

It's clear that when Mark wrote this, he noted the similarities between Jesus and Jonah. The descriptions are similar: they are on a boat, there is a storm, they are asleep, and sailors come and say they are perishing (they use the same word) and say do something, then there is miraculous intervention; and the sailors are more terrified afterwards. The word for terrified is the same. But you might say: there is one difference: Jonah said, if I perish, you live; Jonah is thrown overboard. But, Mark is trying to say to us the stories are not different at all: in Matt 12:40, Jesus said: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Then he said: "and now one greater than Jonah is here."

When Jesus was crucified, he was thrown into the depth of the earth for three days. The victory over the prince of this world came not by power-over but by the power-under, through the sacrificial love of God in Jesus Christ who came and died for our sins.

Through the cross, Jesus calmed the storm and the wind and waves. Jesus is saying that someday, he will calm all seas; he is going to get rid of all storms. That's where the kingdom of God is going. When he was on the cross, he was thrown into the storm and into the eternal storm for our salvation. If you see him do that, to the extent that that is burned into the center of your being, you know that he cares.

If he didn't abandon you in that ultimate storm, what makes you think that he will not abandon you now?

God will never abandon you in the storms of your life!