

Jesus Said: Where is Your Faith?

November 13, 2016

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Lead me to the Cross by Brooke Fraser

(Here is a song to help your group as you worship. You can go through it together or in groups in meditation and/or in prayer).

Savior I come	You were as I
Quiet my soul, remember	Tempted and tried
Redemption's hill	Human
Where your blood was spilled	The word became flesh
For my ransom	Bore my sin and death
Everything I once held dear	Now you're risen
I count it all as loss	
<i>{Chorus}</i>	Everything I once held dear
Lead me to the cross	I count it all as loss
Where Your love poured out	
Bring me to my knees	<i>{Chorus}</i>
Lord I lay me down	To your heart
Rid me of myself	To your heart
I belong to you	Lead me to your heart
Lead me, lead me to the cross	Lead me to your heart
	<i>{Chorus}</i>

Icebreaker

Option 1: Have you ever experienced a natural disaster? What happened?

Option 2: Who is your favorite celebrity that you would be incredibly excited to meet? What draws you to them?

Text for Discussion: Mark 4:35-41

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Whether or not we're willing to acknowledge it, deep down we all know that conflict, trial, and pain will envelop us at various times in our lives. Fear can overwhelm us as we find ourselves unable to navigate these storms. We cry out, asking where God is in the midst of them. Fortunately, the story of Jesus and His disciples in Mark 4 can help guide us through these hardships:

(1) **Realize we have no control.**

Several disciples were fishermen; being in a boat was no big deal as they had mastery over it. But when this tempest arose, they were terrified – not simply from the storm itself, but because they had lost control and were at the mercy of its chaos. God knows that we have no control over these hardships. But Jesus acknowledges the legitimacy of our fears, meaning our fear isn't due to a lack of faith. The storms in our lives are real.

Following Jesus does not make us immune to life's hardships. Sometimes God will actually lead us into a storm. This truth can be frustrating. But knowing this protects us from the religious response that a lack of faith is the reason for hardship as well as from the secular response that hardship is just bad luck which we must deal with. Sometimes it is faith that brought us there, and neither our competency nor our friendships will be sufficient to weather it.

(2) **Jesus can calm the storm.**

In ancient literature, the sea represented chaos, destruction, and evil. Only God had the power to calm it (as in Genesis 1). And here Jesus does just that. He *shows* us that He is the Creator of all things. This enormous power terrifies the disciples, and rightly so. But what does Jesus do with this immeasurable power? He – who is full of sympathy because He too went through these very same storms – heals chaos. Jesus is full of pity, joined with power. He is the One who can handle the storm and will be in the boat with us as we experience it.

(3) **“God, where are you?”**

Mark 4 gives us confidence that our God will always meet us in the middle of the storm and never leave us on our own. He will quiet the storms by placing Himself in them. But if God can handle these hardships, then why do they still happen? Because He is seeking to calm an ever greater storm. Jesus addresses our question with a question: “Where is your faith?” If He simply solved our circumstantial hardships, we would never have the opportunity to confront the deeper, internal issue – the storm within.

The power of faith is not in how much we have but in Whom we place it. What does God think of the storm within us? We find His answer when we look to the cross. God has not abandoned us. God loves us so completely that Jesus our Deliverer entered directly into the greatest of storms so that all storms would be calmed. If we could only realize who is in the boat with us, we would smile at the storms of life. If we want this, we can answer the question of where our faith is by looking straight back at the One who asks us. As the disciples realize, the only one in our world with power worth fearing is Jesus. He is our loving God who will never leave us and will use that power to heal.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How do we navigate the storms of life?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- 1) After reading Mark 4:35-41, what stood out to you?
 - Can you relate to the disciples being afraid in the storm? If so, in what ways?
- 2) What storms in life do you fear losing control of?
 - What do you fear more: the unknown or having no control?
 - How does God respond to each of these fears?
- 3) How do you respond to Jesus when He seems asleep during a difficult time in your life?
 - What does it look like to have faith in the middle of the storm?
- 4) **Guiding Question: How do we navigate the storms of life?**
 - What is a hard (maybe the worst) personal “storm” you have faced? How did Jesus meet you in that storm?
- 5) How can we, as a community, help each other as we go through the storms of life?
 - How can we know and experience the power of God in our lives (Col 1:27, Eph 3:14-20, 2 Peter 1:3)?
 - What does it mean that Jesus is with us in the storm? What sort of hope or solace does that provide?

Praying for One Another

(Here are some ideas from the study to help focus your time in prayer as a group. Use by themselves or along with other prayer requests.)

- Thank God that He still loves us, we are not alone, and we are free and hopeful.
- Take some time to share some of the storms and challenges that your group members are currently facing. Pray that we could trust God in our respective storms.

End the prayer time with this prayer (by Teilhard de Chardin)

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are quite naturally impatient in everything – to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown – something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress

That is made by passing through some stages of instability, and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you.

Your ideas mature gradually – let them grow; let them shape themselves without undue haste. Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow.

Only God can say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be.

Give our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.