

HAVING FAITH

Mark 4:35-41 Text vs. 40 *"He said to His disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"*

How many of you are constant worriers? That's okay. You don't need to raise your hand! You would probably say, *"I never worry. I just suffer from anxiety."* But some of you do worry. All the time! And if you don't have anything to worry about, you invent something to worry about. These are very troubled times in which we are living. It's hard not to be anxious about your future, your family, your finances, your country.

And our lesson this morning speaks to how we should manage our fear with faith in Jesus. The disciples set out in a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee with Jesus. A violent storm came up catching the disciples off guard because it came up so quickly. (v. 37) Just as storms come up quickly out here on the Gulf of Mexico. The Sea of Galilee is well known for sudden windstorms. Frigid air comes down from the hills surrounding that huge body of water and collides with the warmer air on top of it and becomes a sudden storm that can hit you without any warning. That storm threatened to overturn them. Now, the disciples were experienced fishermen. They had weathered many storms. But they had never experienced a storm like that! They were filled with terror. Yet, during all the chaos, Jesus remained asleep. Undisturbed by the storm. And when they woke Him up, they asked, *"Don't you care if we drown?"*

It's amazing! Jesus didn't answer their question. He simply got up and quieted the storm. Which is remarkably like the story of a man named Job who had suffered so much. In a single afternoon, Job lost all his wealth and livelihood. He suffered from painful sores that covered his entire body for months. He lost seven sons and three daughters. No mother on earth would ever again give her son Job's name. Despite these hardships, his faith in God remained steadfast. And his story serves as a model of faithfulness in the face of suffering.

But, by no means have we forgotten Job. In fact, the way Job dealt with his suffering has been a source of strength ever since. God's reply to Job, when Job demanded an answer from God about the difficulty he was going through, brings on a deep searching of faith and suffering. Job was a man who received great respect, yet he faced immense personal loss and physical sickness. His friends suggested his suffering must have been punishment for his sin. But Job maintained his innocence. In his agony, he asked for an audience with God so he could demand an explanation of the unjust hardships he was enduring. God responded to Job's suffering by speaking directly to him. Read the book of Job, chapters 38 to 42 which contain God's powerful and humbling reply. God reminded Job of His sovereignty and wisdom by asking a series of questions about the natural world, such as the creation of the earth, the sea, and the constellations. These questions highlighted God's vast knowledge and power which challenged Job's understanding by emphasizing that human wisdom is limited compared to divine wisdom. Job realized his smallness in the grand scheme of things. So, after Job's repentance and acknowledgment of God's greatness, God restored his fortunes. Job received double the wealth he had lost, and his family blessed him. And God blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part. And through this experience, Job gained a deeper trust in God, recognizing that suffering can lead to spiritual growth and a more profound relationship with the Creator.

So, this story of Job's response to God leaves us with an important question: How will you respond, when your world caves in? Will you choose faith? Because if you do make the choice of faith, the battle with suffering is far from over. The book of Job doesn't provide easy answers. What it does is it invites readers to trust in God's wisdom and justice, even in the absence of clear explanations. And in that storm-tossed boat, Jesus just got up and used His authority over nature. He rebuked the storm. He commanded the wind and the sea to be still, which showed His authority over nature.

And that can be a powerful reminder of the peace Jesus can bring into the storms in your life. Upsets challenge you as to your own faith. Do you trust in Jesus' power to calm the storms you face? The disciples' plea, *"Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"* is the same cry for help many make who struggle with life's turbulent waves. A serious illness. A marital problem. Finances. You name it! Yet, Jesus' response was, *"Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"* That should invite each of you to consider how deep is your trust in Jesus?

Our lesson this morning encourages believers to recognize Jesus' authority. To rest in the promise that no matter how fierce the storm in your life may be, His command can bring peace and calm to your storm. It's called faith! And it goes beyond fear. It should remind you that with Jesus you can weather any storm! Faith in Jesus can provide strength and bring comfort during tough times. It's a reminder that you can find comfort in your spiritual beliefs. They will give you a sense of hope and strength.

On their first visit to Philippi, Paul and Silas were wrongly accused before the judges. The charges were twofold: As Roman citizens, they were compelling others to follow customs that were considered unlawful. However, that was partly false, as their worship and teaching had been calm and orderly. The second part of the indictment accused them of disturbing the city, which came from an incident where Paul had cast out an evil spirit from a slave girl which upset her ability to earn profits for her master. As a result, they were stripped, beaten, and ultimately ended up in prison. But Paul and Silas remained steadfast in their faith. According to Acts 16, at midnight they were singing songs of praise to the same God who'd let them go through a Job-like day. During their midnight song service, a miraculous earthquake came with enough power to free the men from prison, but not kill them. That single day of suffering, together with the way two faith-driven men had reacted to

their suffering, brought forth a church in Philippi that would help change the world. It was one of the greatest gifts either man ever gave their Savior. Had they missed that opportunity, they would never have had such a great spiritual harvest in that community. The ultimate gift of worship came from suffering.

And Jesus struggled with suffering. The weight of the cross on the way to Golgatha. The unspeakable pain of the crucifixion. Through it all, Jesus was committed to the will of His Father, and He never let His Spirit be committed anywhere else. The road of suffering was the road that led Him closer to God.

Unfortunately, not every person comes closer to God on the road of suffering. Some use the road to go in the opposite direction, going even further away from God than ever before. Pharaoh destroyed his entire country when he refused to acknowledge God during the Jews suffering in Egypt. Most of the kings who would rule the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah couldn't find faith during many hardships. Both kingdoms fell because of their faithlessness. A rich man, afraid to suffer the loss of his material wealth, refused to follow the Jesus. Judas missed the resurrection, because he took his own life out of deep remorse and regret over betraying Jesus.

Listen, if you're suffering, you have an incredible opportunity. Despite being blind and deaf, Helen Keller refused to be identified by her disabilities. By sheer determination and perseverance, she learned how to communicate with others. When she was 6 years old, she began working with Anne Sullivan, her teacher, who taught her to associate words with objects using finger signals. She learned Braille and lip-reading. Eventually, she attended Radcliffe College where she graduated *cum laude*, with honor, in 1904. She composed around five hundred essays and speeches during her lifetime. And she became an influential author, educator, and activist. Her remarkable journey from isolation being blind and deaf, continues to inspire those facing their own challenges today. She lectured on behalf of the American Foundation for the Blind and established a \$2 million endowment fund for it.

Nelson Mandela's journey from imprisonment to presidency is a testament to the strong human spirit. As an anti-apartheid leader in South Africa, Mandela endured twenty-seven long years of confinement for his unwavering activism against the oppressive segregation regime. Despite attempts to silence him, Mandela's spirit remained unbreakable, serving as a beacon of hope and justice for South Africans and people worldwide. His release from prison in 1990 was a turning point in the fight against apartheid and brought in a new era of democracy in Africa and inspired generations to stand up against injustice.

Abraham Lincoln's journey from poverty to becoming the 16th President of the United States is an inspiring tale of strength and determination. Despite facing hardships and a limited education, Lincoln's unwavering spirit and intelligence drove him to greatness. He faced countless challenges throughout his climb to power. Yet, his strong moral compass guided him through the darkest moments in American history. Lincoln's remarkable story serves as a reminder that with determination and honesty, he was known as "Honest Abe" anyone can overcome any obstacle and achieve extraordinary success.

Now, what about you? Have you ever heard the phrase *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me?"* It comes from Philippians 4:13 and expresses the belief that faith in Jesus Christ will provide strength, and help overcome challenges in achieving goals. It's often quoted as a source of inspiration and faith for many and speaks to the spiritual support and inner strength that can be found in one's faith and relationship with God. It has been a cornerstone for countless individuals who rely on their faith as a foundation for overcoming challenges and achieving personal goals. It's a reminder that there is a higher power that provides support and guidance through life's journey.

But applying this Bible verse to your life will require both faith and action on your part, and here are some ways you can do it: Believe in God's strength. Recognize your abilities are not limited just to your own strength. God empowers you to face challenges, and He will help you achieve your goals. Regularly pray for guidance, wisdom, and strength. Surrender your worries and fears to God knowing that He is in control of your life. And have a positive mindset. When you're faced with difficulties, remind yourself of Philippians 4:13, and tell yourself you can overcome with God's help.

And when things get tough, don't give up! Trust that God's strength will sustain you. Stick to your plan knowing that your setbacks are temporary. And before you make any decisions, seek God's guidance through prayer and reflection. Trust that He will guide you toward the right path. Remember, this verse encourages you to rely on God's strength so you can live with confidence knowing that you are not alone in your faith journey. Remember Jesus said to His disciples in that storm tossed boat? *"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"* AMEN.