

## Jesus' Power

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At *Alpha*, on Tuesday evening, I was asking Nick Tobin about his experiences of rough weather at sea during his career as a Royal Navy Sea Captain, and surprisingly to me it wasn't his voyages and travels across the Atlantic or the Pacific that stuck in his memory, but rather some freak weather that occurred just locally in the Bristol Channel. HMS Antelope was the ship that he was commanding at the time, and she was making her way up to Swansea in the Channel. And the Welsh harbour master had said (in a lovely, reassuring Welsh accent): "Come on in! You'll be fine, it's just a little bit blowy."

So, storms can come out of nowhere and take us all by surprise. Wouldn't you be surprised by the Bristol Channel - enough wind and weather in there to smash up a Navy frigate?

We all experience shocks to the system at both a personal level, but also at a corporate level too. Who would have predicted that within the first month of 2026, we would see America taking over Venezuela, wanting to control parts of Greenland, belittling the UK and NATO, and actually inviting Putin onto a board of peace? It seems crazy, doesn't it? - Who hasn't felt buffeted by the winds of change over these last few weeks?

We're in a stormy season. And as it says in Psalm 11:3 –

**Psalm 11:3 | "when the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?"**

And as a church, we need to consider carefully our response to all this shaking. And how can we bring hope to our community and our world when so many are plagued with anxiety and fear? We need somehow to learn to echo the way King David responded in Psalm 11 –

**Psalm 11:1 | “In the Lord I take refuge.”**

Because he loves justice and the upright will see his face.

And during this past week, a number of people from our church family here have been going through the mill. They've faced operations; they're dealing with various trauma; family situations; health issues; financial problems. There's a lot facing members of our congregation around us.

There are lots of changes happening: there's changes happening to the staff team (you may have read in our news sheet this week); there's societal changes; challenges in our personal lives with how we're feeling.

Storms come from all sorts of directions, and they affect us in lots and lots of different ways. The question is how we react to them: do we let fears overwhelm us, or do we stand firm in the faith? Do we let that peace of Christ rule as captain of our hearts?

Now I would be lying to you if I told you I never let fears sneak in and cause carnage in the rather ramshackle wheelhouse of my soul. Sometimes I get caught unawares. And I have that horrid sinking feeling (I've experienced a bit of that just this week). But actually, for a Christian, the battlefield of the mind is the site of numerous victories as well as inevitable defeats and failures. And the key thing is not to quit, because we are reassured that we will reach the other side - we will reach our destination - if we keep the Lord firmly in his rightful place as the captain of our souls - the captain in charge of this ship. We need him firmly on board.

And Mark Chapter 4 is the first time we see Jesus' disciples facing a serious threat to their personal safety since they began their apprenticeship with Jesus. We started with the first few chapters of Mark over the last few weeks, but this is the first time that they've actually experienced fear up close and personal. They'd left their nets; they'd left their security of their livelihoods; they had faced criticism from the religious leadership.

Jesus asked to be put out in a boat away from shore, because there were so many people pressing in to get a piece of Jesus' healing ministry. So, they had to learn to crowd-manage.

And just when they thought they were able to have some time off to head out onto the lake for a few hours of peaceful escape all hell broke loose

Mark tells us it had been an exhausting day. Jesus had been teaching from morning until dusk, and he had to manage enormous crowds wanting to get close to him. The disciples were just trying to keep up with all that was happening. It would have been mentally exhausting. Then Jesus gave the instruction:

**Mark 4:35 | “Let us go over to the other side.”**

Phew! In other words, he was also saying “I'm tired, I'm exhausted. I need to get away.”

And it's reassuring for us, isn't it? That, in his humanity, Jesus needed to rest too. He needed to step away from the ongoing, never-ending needs of the people all around him in order to recharge and recuperate. And so, the disciples learned through that the importance of operating from a place of rest. And we need that, don't we? We need to operate out of a place of rest the value of getting away and being recharged. Jesus was modelling helpful boundaries in ministry.

And the journey across Galilee is something like seven or eight miles. It would have been a few hours sailing and rowing on a good day. But this wasn't turning out to be a normal day for the disciples in any way.

Now the feeling amongst locals was that sometimes demonic forces assaulted the quiet waters of the lake and turned it into a hellish, stormy cauldron. And yet, Jesus remains sleeping in the back of the boat.

**Mark 4:38 | "Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion."**

It says he had his head on a pillow. That's a nice little touch, isn't it? 'What sort of pillow is that?' - I wonder. Anyway...

He was tired from ministry, but he was also secure enough to go to sleep and leave himself in the care of the disciples. That's interesting, isn't it? He didn't have to be in charge all the time. He didn't worry about them captaining the ship whilst they made the crossing.

I think that's an interesting thing for us to learn. **Jesus was quite happy to trust his disciples to get on with it.** And so, he does sometimes refuse to micromanage every aspect of our lives. He will set the general direction - we just need to go over to the other side. "Now you get on with" - he left the details up to the disciples. I think we need to understand that privilege - that the Lord trusts us to work out the details (as long as we're following in his general direction).

But what happened? They ended up right in the thick of the storm facing trauma and hassle. And yet while they were still within Jesus' will, they were still heading over in the right direction. **Following God's will, doesn't mean we won't always avoid storm and hassle.**

I don't know if you're like me, but I really sympathize with the way the disciples reacted. I love the disciples, they're so like me: 'Hang on a minute...Jesus,don't you care? We're gonna drown here, and you're asleep?! What are you doing in the back of the boat?!'

First century Galilee fishing boats were quite shallow. They were shallow drafted enough to allow the men to haul up the catch of fish in the net over the side. And so, waves could easily swamp this boat. It was only wooden. You can see an example of a first century boat near Galilee today. And so, we read:

**Mark 4:37 | “The disciples woke him and said to him, ‘Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?’”**

They thought they were going to die if something didn’t change.

But what was really confusing to them, was that Jesus was able to remain sleeping. But then...

**Mark 4:39-40 | “He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’”**

It’s quite a tough kind of rebuke, isn’t it? What would we feel if Jesus had said that to us?

And the big question from this passage is: **how should the disciples have reacted?**

- What *should* they have done when they were facing the storm?
- What would have been a *faith-filled* response?

They’d seen Jesus heal a paralyzed man and a leper. We heard last week about the man with the withered arm. They’d also seen him contend with evil spirits.

But it does seem to me that there were a few alternative options open to them for a faith-filled response.

- 1) They could have let Jesus just stay asleep, whilst they hung on, riding it out, holding on for dear life trusting that they were going to get there eventually.
- 2) They could have been a little bit more fatalistic, perhaps? They could have entrusted themselves into the Lord's hands thinking 'Well, whether we drown or survive, Jesus is with us.'
- 3) They could have woken him up and just asked him, 'If you don't mind, would you rather kindly...please...just, sort out the storm. That feels a bit like Mary, Jesus' mother, at the wedding: 'if you don't mind, just sort out some wine out of this water.' That was a legit, faithful response.
- 4) Could they have calmed the storm themselves?

These are all faithful responses in some way. And, actually, for a measure of faith given to each of us, **we will have a response to any given storm that comes up.**

But one thing is certain: **Jesus was rebuking them for doubting that he cared.**

- 1) *He cared for them.* | And (as we learned last year in our *Tenets* series) the absolute fundamental basis of effective faith is knowing that God cares for us. God is good. We have to get that into our guts and our souls.

**Psalm 136:1 | "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good. His love endures for ever."**

He is good. His love endures forever.

- 2) *Nothing is impossible for him.* | The one who created the stars can sort out whatever it is that is affecting us.
- 3) *Jesus' blood paid for everything* | On the cross, Jesus paid for everything. As we turn to him, he covers it all.
- 4) *Every person is significant* | Every person is known and loved by him.

These four principles allow us to face whatever storm it is, with that certainty of his goodness and his care. He cares even in the midst of a storm. **Even if it appears that he's asleep, he still cares.**

And our faith grows as we deliberately hold on to those principles: recite them, sing them, let them go in deep into our souls. Hold on to his promises.

*But what about those four approaches?*

Now, some pastors will suggest that the faithful approach in a storm is to ride it out, just trusting that Jesus is in the boat.

Ray Stedman tells a lovely story of a pastor from South America, whose wife was struggling with an illness. He prayed that in this trial the pastor would be reassured that the Lord was with them both. He was in the boat, and therefore the boat will not sink, and the storm would not last forever. And that's what they prayed repeatedly: 'The boat would not sink. The storm would not last forever.'

And yet, when he met the pastor some months later and his wife was in a worsening state they had to pray again: 'The boat would not sink. The storm would not last forever. Come on, Lord. We're holding on.'

And, finally, a few weeks later, when there actually seemed to be no hope, out of the blue, his wife received a diagnosis: she had a very unusual allergy. And so, by changing her diet, within a few weeks she was fine again. So, the storm ended for them.

But we know that, for some of us, the storm endures and it goes on and on. And sometimes, yes, we can ride it out. But at other times we want to know more. So there is that approach of acceptance. We all know that death is the only certainty in life, and the important thing is to know that Jesus is with us in the boat, even at this time.

**Romans 14:8 | “If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.”**

So, there is that acceptance.

But we have to know the right time to encourage one another with that truth.

When we took a youth group to Ukraine some years ago, some of the girls in the youth group had never flown before. And they were terrified and freaking out about take-off. And Andy, our youth pastor, said, ‘Don't worry, if we crash, you just get to be with Jesus.’

It just wasn't the moment to say that.

They freaked out all the more.

However, for someone facing a terminal illness, right in a storm, that can be what they need to hear: ‘The Lord is with us, and you will be with Jesus.’

**We need to know that he is with us, there in the boat, facing up to it, with us.**

“‘Whether we live or die, we are with the Lord.’

Horatio Spafford wrote a hymn that you may know called, *It is well with my soul*. They're beautiful words.

But he wrote that on board a ship as they were passing the very point in the ocean where his daughters had perished in a storm. He'd learned to trust that they were with the Lord: he'd learned acceptance. He'd learned that the Lord was in the boat with them. Nevertheless, I will trust the Lord.

So, that is a faithful response: 'Nevertheless, the Lord is with us.'

But then there is another response. It's about having faith in the moment to deal with the storm. Jesus allowed his disciples to sail right into the thick of it. And he had been teaching and demonstrating the kingdom of God. But now he was showing the disciples the kingdom of God in a way that was upfront and personal to them. They were observing, as third-party observers, all that he was doing. But now he brought it home to them as they were experiencing this trauma themselves.

You can't remain an objective minister of the kingdom of God. At some point the storm will come to you. It will come to each and every one of us and we need to learn how to deal with it. We can't stay objective all our lives, and Mark is uncompromising in his clarity that everything is spiritual.

As Paul put it:

**Ephesians 6:12 | “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”**

We are in a battle zone, and that will come to challenge us at times.

And so, when we face struggles and storms, we are to learn the power of authoritative prayer as well. We have that at our disposal. As well as the other faithful responses that we have, we can tap into authoritative prayer because we learn in Mark 3:13-15 it says:

**Mark 3:13-15 | “Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”**

Mark is very clear that they were given authority right from the off. And that this is something that Jesus wanted to instil in them: he was setting them up with authority (and this was before Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit).

So, he gave his followers spiritual authority to deal with the storms of life and spiritual oppression.

The words Jesus spoke to the storm are significant. The NIV puts it in quite an Anglican way: “he rebuked the wind and said to the waves ‘Quiet!

Be still!’” But, actually, if you look at the Greek behind it, it's much more powerful. It's more authoritative. It's more like “he spoke to the wind and the waves and he said **‘Silence! Be muzzled!’**”

That's quite different. Jesus showed his total authority over the spiritual forces that had whipped up this particular storm.

And remember also how the biblical audience would have received this message. In a world where food depended on the weather and a good crop, a world where people were living hand to mouth, authority over the weather was a big deal. And it's becoming a bigger deal for us, isn't it? Even in our day and age.

And so, Jesus wanted his disciples to know just how far kingdom authority can extend. And his authority extends throughout the universe, even such that the wind and waves obey him.

We need faith for different things.

I have a friend who is brilliant at praying for weather. It's amazing. I just watched the weather predictions and the weather charts. He prays, and he's much more effective than I am, to be honest.

I'm an engineer, and so when it comes to cars and things, I know what's gone wrong. I just want to get it fixed. But I have a friend called Adele who has faith to pray about mechanical things. And one time when our car failed, and I knew it was an oil seal that was going, and it was really bad. I couldn't afford to get it fixed right away. So, I called Adele. I had to take a step back. She did come and laid hands on it, and she said 'Lord, you know all things. This car needs healing in Jesus' name.'

And it survived for another six months.

I couldn't pray for that because my faith was compromised, but she did have faith for it. So, we need to call on each other sometimes where we're gifted in a different level of faith. When we get sick, call upon those who have experienced healing, and that gives them the higher authority to pray for these things. You see, **the Lord gives us gifts of faith according to the level he wants to give us. And so, call on those folks in the church family to pray.** And that's what we need to do according to the level and the gift of faith given to us

But never doubt that Jesus cares for us. That is level one. We must hold on to that. He does care about the storm.

And faith in his care for us is the key to overcoming fear.

**Romans 8:31 | "If God is for us, who can be against us."**

If God cares for us, if God is for us, then who can be against us?

### **If God cares for us, nothing can worry us.**

And when it comes to authority, we don't just yell at the top of our voices and beat our fists in the air like we're mustering up authority. No, actually, authoritative prayer is kind of quiet, calm authority. Trusting that God is good and he wants to bring something to bear. And to bring his peace into our hearts.

And so, the voice of faith is assured and calm. It *adds* to peace. It doesn't just add to the chaos and the maelstrom of the storm around us. It comes as we allow the peace of Christ to reign in our hearts from within. We're not just pulling peace in. We're allowing his peace to go out from our inner being. And that comes only as we abide in Christ. Just remember the story about the vine and the branches: we abide in Christ. Let his peace dwell right central in our hearts. And that allows us to bring peace to bear on every situation.

So, what does it start with? It starts with knowing that God is good and he cares for each of us. Whatever storm we are in, he cares. And then he allows us to use the measure of faith we've been given. To face the storm and find our response.

And if we find ourselves beginning to live out of fear again, what should we do?

### **Repent.**

Repent and allow the Lord to change our thinking, so that we can declare 'No. God is good. He cares. And we will see this storm out.'  
Repent and regain your peace and then obey and regain your authority, the authority that he's given you.



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