

# The Lord of the Storm

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**Bible Text:** Mark 4:35-41

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## **Covenant Of Grace Protestant Reformed**

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Let's open the Scriptures to the gospel of Mark 4 and we'll read from verse 35 to the end of the chapter, 35-41 and that will also be the text for the sermon this morning. Mark 4:35-41.

“And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

We read this far in God's holy and inspired Word.

In this life, beloved, every one of us and sometimes all of us together in the same boat, will go through storms. There is no promise in the Bible to the Christian that he will not. Jesus does not say when he comes to us, “Now that because I am with you, your life will be easy and without trouble,” that there won't be storms. And that's because when Jesus saves us, his goal is to bring us to heaven but he doesn't immediately take us to the other side but, rather, takes us through storms, sometimes very intense, before we come to glory.

Jesus doesn't save us from the storms but he saves us through the storms of life. Every storm that comes is deliberately sent by our Savior. The one of whom it says in Hebrews 1, “He upholds all things by the word of his power, the one in whose hands and under whose feet are all things.” He also determines when the storms of life will come, to whom they will come, what they will be, how long they will last, how great they will be and when they will subside. He's the sovereign of the storms.

And in the storms, our Savior remains in control. Through the storms, our Savior remains with us and as we are tossed about by the storms, he cares for us. And he has a purpose in the storms. He puts us through the storms to test us. In the storms of life, control, everything is taken out of our hands and our hearts are exposed, our faith is revealed and he causes us to grow in our dependence on him.

Today, we go through a storm. Jesus has sent the storm and he's going to use it to test us. He's going to be with us through it and he'll lead us through it to the other side. He won't fail us. His promise is, "I will never, never, leave you nor forsake you." He's dedicated to the care of his church and he won't forsake her. He's dedicated to each of his own. Not one of them shall perish. He's the Lord of the storm, every storm. Not just this one, but whatever storms come in your life. Jesus is the Lord of the storm.

We want to look at this passage under the theme "Lord of the Storm." Let's notice three things: the storm, first of all; then second, the test; and then third, the promise. In the first two verses here, you have really an introduction to this miracle that Jesus performs and the first verse, verse 35, shows to us the dedication of Jesus to his work, to his church, to saving his people. The same day, we read, what day was that? This was a day that Jesus spent on the western shores of the Sea of Galilee with the multitudes, healing, casting out demons, teaching the people and enduring the opposition of the Pharisees. And you see, as you turn back a couple of pages, how extreme the work of Jesus was here. In chapter 3:20, "And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread." They had no time, no space, nowhere to eat bread. And Jesus' acquaintances, his close acquaintances were concerned. His friends, 3:21, "when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself."

But Jesus persevered in chapter 4:1. Because of the press of the multitudes, he enters into a ship or a small boat and uses that as his pulpit from the water to speak to the thronging multitudes. That same day, we read, at the end of that day, when Jesus with his disciples was exhausted and this shows to us the heart of Jesus, the dedication of Jesus, that Jesus has a servant's heart for his people. We read in Hebrews that he "saves to the uttermost." That's what you see here. Jesus clinging like a shepherd to his sheep.

At the end of the day, verse 35, he says to his disciples, "Let us pass over to the other side." Now, you say, why? Why does he say that to his disciples? Well, it's because he and they needed rest. This was a planned escape from the press of the multitudes. The Sea of Galilee was about eight miles wide and on the other side there were no large cities, no big crowds and so they would be able to get some respite and some rest there.

Verse 36, we read that "they took him even as he was in the ship." Notice, it doesn't say that Jesus went with them in the ship, they took him. You get the idea almost that they had to carry him into the ship, not to get him away from his work, but because he was so exhausted. This is how he was as he went into the ship with them. "Even as he was, they took him." We see here, the real humanity of Jesus Christ and this becomes very evident and powerful in this passage that though Jesus in his person is the divine eternal second person of the Trinity invested with all power in heaven and earth, here during his

ministry, he's a man. A real man, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, tired, exhausted from his work doing the Father's will. Haven't you felt that way before, mothers? You work and you work doing God's will with your family in your position and you come to the end of the day and you can barely stand. Or men, you go out to work and you labor to support your families and the work of God's Kingdom. And you weary children, you come to the end of the day, maybe you've been playing hard, maybe you've been studying hard and working hard and you're exhausted. We need rest sometimes. Isn't this the way God has created not just us, but this world? Six days he created for work, one day for rest. "That man might rest from his labors."

So, Jesus goes with his disciples and you see even as he goes, the throng of the multitudes at the end of verse 36, "there were also with him other little ships." They couldn't escape. Anybody who could find something that would float, followed to be with Jesus, to hear his teaching.

Jesus' command to the disciples in verse 35 is, "Let us pass over unto the other side," and they obey the command of Jesus. They get in the boat to go to the other side for rest. They are rowing and, maybe, sailing while Jesus is sleeping in the back part of the boat. And then we read in verse 37, "there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full." Now, on the Sea of Galilee, such storms were quite common, especially in the evening. The Sea of Galilee is surrounded on one side by mountains and on the other side by high cliffs and a plateau that leads up to those high cliffs. And during the day, the hot air would accumulate and then as night fell, there would be a sudden drop in temperature and the wind would rush down into the Sea of Galilee, below sea level 700 feet. It was like a wind tunnel.

But this storm wasn't a typical storm on the Sea of Galilee. We know that because these men, Jesus' disciples, were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. They were familiar with the weather and the storms here but their reaction here shows how extreme, how extraordinary this storm was. Look at how it's described for us in verse 37, "there arose," that is, suddenly there came on them a storm. What was this storm? "A great storm of wind." That's a word used in the Bible for a whirlwind or a tornado; an intense storm, repeated violent gusts of wind that churned up the water. Matthew describes it as a great shaking, a seaquake.

And then we read as well, that the waves "beat into the ship," and the idea is that they kept doing this continually; they pummeled the ship. They pounded on it like a boxer and he's pounding and pounding and you say, "Stop! You're going to hurt somebody!" And the waves pounded on the ship and you want to say, "Stop! It's going to break!" It was at the point of breaking. And the ship was full, that is, it was overwhelmed in the water; it was ready to sink; they were going down in the storm. They're going to drown.

Now, the storms of life come very often just like that. Everything is going along fine and suddenly a storm comes and all control is taken from your hands. You're tossed around. There is nothing you can do. Here the disciples were obeying Jesus, following him, with him, not running like Jonah from the command of God but in close proximity spiritually

to Jesus. They clung to his every word, they obeyed his command. Here they were exhausted and tired at the end of the day. Here they were thinking that they were retreating for rest and suddenly this storm comes upon them. That's how life is. God hasn't promised in this world external peace and ease just because we're Christians or just because we're his people or his church. That's a modern lie, the lie of the health and wealth prosperity gospel. If you just believe in Jesus, you won't have to worry about anything. All your finances will be good. All your health will go well. Your marriage won't have any problems. Your children will obey. Your boss will be nice to you and if he's not, we're told, you just don't have enough faith. If you believe in Jesus, this false teaching says, everything will go your way. God hasn't promised such a thing. Yes, he's promised peace. "Peace I leave with you," but what's that peace? "Let not your heart be troubled." Peace inside.

Jesus says in John 16:33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace." That is, not troubled hearts, but restful, quiet hearts of trust and peace. But he continues, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." There will be storms for God's people and the proof of that, the largest proof of that in the Bible is this: that Jesus, himself, who walked in obedience to the will of God, who walked close to God, there was no one with such intimacy with God, where did it lead him? It lead him to the cross, to the storm of the suffering and reproach of sin in the way of obedience.

There will be storms. They'll come suddenly. They'll be intense. All control will be out of our hands. But then we must remember: God sends such storms. That's true of this storm. This extraordinary, we could say, miraculous storm was particularly and especially prepared by God for this occasion. And the storm combined with the fact that Jesus was sleeping in the rear of the boat while the disciples were trying to save themselves from this storm and from death, those two things, the storm and the sleeping Jesus were a test of the disciples. What was the test? The test was where is your faith in the midst of the storm?

Jesus is really putting before them this question: how does what you've heard of me, he'd been teaching them for days, how does what you've heard, how does what you've believed, how does it grip your heart, how does it impact your life? The storms will expose that and in our storms in life, we face the same question: where do you look when the storms come? Where is your eye? Do you look on the storm like Peter walking on the water, looking at the waves, or do you look at the Lord of the storm, Jesus? Where do you turn? That's the test. Now, it's important with regard to this storm that we go through, that we ask that question this morning. Will you ask yourself this question? And we can get anxious, we can get focused on these things, we can get focused on the people involved, that's the storm. Don't look at the storm but look to Jesus who sent the storm. That's the test as we go through the storms of life.

Now, this test is not a pass/fail test but it's a test to make us stronger. You don't, as a believer, go through these tests and say, "Well, I failed the test, therefore, I mustn't be a child of God." No, it's a test like the test of Abraham's faith when God called him to offer his son, Isaac. Through the tests that come to us, the child of God learns. I'm sure

that was true for the disciples here. Later, Jesus wouldn't be with them in the boat or in the storms that came. Yes, he was with them, that was his promise but he wasn't physically with them and they would have to learn what it meant that Jesus went away and that he sent the Spirit. And don't you think as they went through the persecution and the troubles and the opposition that came in the early church, that they looked back and they said, "Remember? The Lord of the storm, Jesus, with us. That's his promise."

But now, in this storm, in this test, we see that the disciples did very poorly. And you see that first of all in their questioning of Jesus' care in verse 38, at the end of the verse. Jesus is sleeping in the ship "and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? Don't you care about us?" That's the question they ask. Now, not all questions that we ask when we go through storms are wrong. You can ask God to show you through the storms, your sins and your weaknesses. You can ask him to direct you in the way of sanctification and spiritual growth. You can ask, "How can I glorify God in this? Lord, show me. Show me from your Word and show me through the admonition of other believers."

But the question of the disciples here is a question of doubt. They woke Jesus up and they said, "Don't you see what's going on and you don't care, do you?" That's the force of their question to Jesus, but the truth is, he does care. He always cares, even when we don't understand his care, even when we don't understand what the storm is and why we have to go through this storm or why it's come. Jesus' care never fails. The problem with us is, that we go through life and we base our trust on experience and we base it on how we feel rather than on truth, biblical truth. And so, when things are going well for us and we feel happy, we say, "Well, God must care for me. God is blessing me." And when things go poorly for us, there's a health scare or a job loss and we begin to feel like God doesn't care and we begin to say, "If he did care, this wouldn't be happening to me." We're basing it on our experience and how we feel rather than on truth.

God does care. Jesus does care. The word "care" here is the same word that you find in John 10:12-13 where Jesus is speaking of the parable of the sheepfold and of himself as the Good Shepherd and then he compares himself to the hireling or the hired servant, the hired aide, somebody who is paid to take care of the sheep when the shepherd is absent. And Jesus says he's an hireling and not the shepherd, whose sheep these were not and when he sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and flees and the wolf catches them and scatters the sheep and Jesus explains why: "the hireling flees because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep." It's the same word.

When we say, "Lord, what's going on? You don't care for me." We're saying, "Jesus, you're like the hired servant who is just doing it for money, doing it for his own advantage. The storms come and you abandon me, you take off." No, he cares. That's not true about Jesus. He always cares. The proof of that we have in Calvary, in the cross and that's where we have to keep our eyes, when I say, "Look to Jesus. Look to the cross." In John 10:11 right before Jesus speaks of the hireling, he says, "I lay down my life for my sheep." And if you go to Romans 8:32, you read this: "that God who spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all." That's what we have to look at; that's where our

faith is. God gave his own Son. “Won’t this God,” Paul says, “with him also freely give us all things.” That is: he’ll always care.

And Paul goes on to talk about it. Nothing, life, death, principalities, powers, nothing can separate us from the loving care of God. The cross of Jesus Christ should be so prominent in our thinking, so central in our minds, that when we go through the storms of life and through the rough and difficult times of life and when we begin to feel like, or to think to ourselves, or to ask God, “Do you care?” The cross won’t let us believe it because we see in the cross that he does care. He gave himself to the cross to deliver us from hell and the one who did that will also freely give us all things. Care, love, unfailing. That’s the truth here. That’s what the disciples doubted, “Don’t you care?” But that’s the truth: he does care. And faith tested clings to that. He does care. I believe it.

The second evidence here that the disciples didn’t do so well in this test is that they were afraid, they feared. You see that in verse 40 when Jesus says to them, “Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?” Now, fear here is terror. They were simply terrified. They were paralyzed by the storm. They had nowhere to turn. They didn’t know what to do. They were sure that they would drown, that they would perish. And Jesus asks them why? “Why are you so terrified? Why are you so fearful?” Now, I think they would have answered: “The storm, of course. Don’t we have every reason to be fearful? Look at this storm? We’re going to die. We’re going to drown.”

But that wasn’t the reason for their fear. Jesus tells them the reason for their fear in the second question: “Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? You still don’t believe,” is what he’s saying. Now, he’s not saying to them that they’re unbelievers, but he’s speaking of a lack of faith in his promises and his word and his power. Things that they knew in their head weren’t making connections with their life. That’s why they were fearful. It wasn’t the storm, but it was their hearts, their lack of faith.

Now, the word “faith” here is a noun but the verb is “to believe” and we should ask the question: what is it that they weren’t believing? They weren’t believing the words of Jesus right here, “Let us go to the other side. We’re going to the other side.” They forgot that Jesus said, “We’re going to the other side.” They didn’t trust the presence of Jesus; they forgot who it was that was with them in the ship. In the end, they didn’t trust the power of Christ; they didn’t trust Christ himself. They interpreted his sleeping as an indifference towards the storm and to them when, in fact, it was a calm because he was in absolute control of what was going on.

And their fear was because they didn’t believe, they didn’t trust. And the fact is that all of us, when we go through the storms of life, struggle with the same lack of faith. You’re a believer. You not only believe that the Bible is true, but you trust, you depend on Jesus Christ for all your righteousness and salvation and forgiveness and you live and you walk with him day-by-day, but when a storm comes, suddenly you’re overtaken by fear. You let your mind project into the unknown future. You think of the worst case scenarios. You went to the doctor and the doctor expressed a concern about something quite minor in your child’s health and you’ve let your mind go all the way to the grave, your child is

going to die and you're overwhelmed with fear. Why do we become fearful like that? It's because we have trouble practically believing what we believe. We have trouble practically believing what we know. Is God sovereign? You say, "Yes, he is." Does God love you? "Yes, he does." Do you love him? "Yes, I do." Has God given his Son for you and for your sin? You say, "Yes, he has." Well then, this is the conclusion, isn't it? "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose, to them whom he foreknew, to them whom he loves eternally." All things work together for good, right? And you say, "But I can't answer that." You let your feelings and your experiences, like the disciples here, become the thing that you use to judge God's care. The problem, you see, isn't the storms, the storms will come. The problem is our lack of faith. The bump in the road exposes where our heart is.

And then what does Jesus do? He puts us through the storms to teach us. Verse 40 is really quite a sharp rebuke to teach the disciples something about themselves in the way that they responded to the storm. "Why are ye so fearful?" In other words, you shouldn't be, you have no reason to be. "Why are you so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" Why do you continue to not believe in the storms? And God sends us the storms. Jesus sends us through the storms. Jesus leads us through the storms to teach us and I think we do learn. You think of a storm you've gone through and then you get through it and you reflect and you say to yourself, "You know, next time, I'm going to approach that differently. I'm going to let the Word of God and biblical truth control my thinking. I'm going to memorize Scripture and I'm going to speak it. I'm going to preach it to myself when I go through the storms." What's God done? He's taught you your weakness so that you're stronger.

Here in the passage, Jesus gives to his disciples a great reason to trust him in the storms of life. He is the Lord of the storm. He controls the storm and he shows that by calming the storm in verse 39. Now understand, Jesus controlled the storm even when it was raging, even when he was sleeping. He controlled it when his disciples were paralyzed by fear, when they were pounded by the waves, when they thought they would drown. Already then, he controlled the storm but now in verse 39, "he arose," that is, without saying a word to his disciples, "and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still." The word "rebuke" is the same one that's used in Mark 1 where Jesus casts out a demon who's raging against him, "And Jesus rebuked him saying, Hold thy peace and come out of him." The same Lord who rebukes the demons, rebukes the storm.

"Peace," he says, that is "hush, quiet, shh, be still." Literally "be muzzled." When a dog is muzzled, even if it wants to bark or bite, it can't. Jesus has a muzzling power over storms. And how quickly we see the wind and the seas obeyed him, immediately the winds stopped and in a split second the waves stopped their pounding and they were gone, "and there was a great calm." In an instant. You see the sovereign authority of Jesus over all things. He's the one that made the heavens and the earth. He's the one who calms the raging sea. He's the one who has all things in his hand. He speaks and it's done. He commands and it stands fast. What a comfort to know that this is the Lord, this is the Savior that we have, who is with us when we go through such storms.

Look at the response of the disciples in verse 41, “they feared exceedingly.” Now, this is not the fear of terror but this is the fear of worship. They stood in awe exceedingly. They were absolutely overcome and wowed and humbled and filled with worship before the King of kings and the Lord of lords who they saw now was the Lord of the storm. They knew who he was before this, but they didn’t understand the capacity and the extent of his power. And you don’t either and I don’t either and we never will because he has all power in heaven and in earth. Illimitable, omnipotent power and we should stand with exceeding fear before him. Too often we’re comfortable in the presence of Christ, we’re casual in our approach to him in worship and in prayer. They feared exceedingly. They were stunned, dumbfounded, silenced in his presence.

I think of Psalm 139 which speaks of the inescapable presence of God. “Whither shall I go from thy presence? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there, to hell, thou art there.” Not only the inescapable presence, but the inescapable power and knowledge of God. There is not a word in my mouth that thou knowest it altogether. You cannot escape the powerful presence of the Savior. They were filled with fear exceedingly.

This is the one who is the Lord of the storm and this passage leaves us with promises, great promises, as we go through, as we approach, as we come out of, wherever it is that we’re at in the great storms or the small storms that come to us in life. The first promise is this: that Jesus promises to get us through the storm to the other side. There is no trial, there is no trouble in life that will overwhelm us to destroy us. He will save us to the uttermost. That’s his promise.

The second promise here is: “I’m with you through the storms.” When we go through the storms of life, we find out that it’s important to have someone to be with us to depend on. You have your wife, you have family, you have fellow believers. But what about when all of them fail and are gone? How terrifying to be all alone. The child of God is never alone. In Psalm 27, “When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.” The disciples thought they had nowhere to turn but they had the Lord with them in the storm in the boat. And just like that, Jesus is with us, with his church to preserve, to build, to remain the powerful presence who guides through and has power over the storms.

The third promise here: he’s always in control. So, don’t be afraid. Don’t panic. There is never panic in heaven. He has all things under his feet. Jesus knows what is happening. He governs it for our good. He guides to lead us to glory. So, trust in him. Trust in him with all your heart and lean not on your own strength, understanding. Keep your eye on him.

The fourth promise here is: he does care. “Carest thou not?” He does care. When he leads us through the storms, he does care. He knows the way that you take. He’s the sympathetic Savior. He will never allow you to be tried or tempted above what you are able. His grace will always be sufficient. Depend on him. Keep your eye on him. Look to the cross. Jesus went through the storm of the cross and gave himself for us there. He suffered hell there in our place and that means he will save us to the uttermost. Keep your

eye on Christ and stay in his Word. Stay with his promises. He'll be with you through the storm. We look to Jesus as we run. We look to Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. Amen.