

**[1]**  
**He Still Calms Storms**  
**Mark 4:35-41**  
**May 22, 2016, Jeff Germo**

Over the last few years we've talked a lot about what it takes to grow in maturity. We've seen that real growth does not happen inside our comfort zone, that in order to grow we need to stretch ourselves and step out into uncharted territory trusting that God is faithful even when our way doesn't seem clear. The hardest part of stepping out is the first step.

Today we are going to take a look at another encounter Jesus had with his disciples. Jesus took his apprentices way out of their comfort zones for the very purpose of building their faith muscles. They would forever be changed by this encounter and see Jesus in a different way than they had previously experienced him.

**[2]**

Perhaps **the number one goal of the follower of Jesus is to grow in our trust of him.** That's actually what it means to be a disciple. A disciple is a **follower/learner.**

**[3]**

**1 John 2:6 (NLT)**

***6 Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.***

A disciple follows her teacher in order to become like him, just like an apprentice electrician would shadow a master electrician in hopes that he would learn everything the master knows about the electrical trade, so **[4] an apprentice of Jesus shadows Jesus in order to become like him.**

And that means that we follow where he goes. We do what he does. We trust that he knows what he is doing even when it doesn't seem to make sense, even when the way seems scary. The thing about Jesus is that he doesn't always lead us into places that seem safe to us.

**[5]**

**He takes us places where we will be stretched so our faith muscles can be exercised.** In the physical realm, if we stay on the couch all day long every day watching TV and eating potato chips, our muscles will atrophy and we will become flabby couch potatoes. We will become what we eat! Or, more precisely, we are the sum total of the decisions we make, and if we choose to stay in our comfort zone instead of following Jesus into the unknown we will become flabby Christians.

Let's read this passage where we find Jesus and his disciples in one of those faith stretching places.

**[6]**

**Mark 4:35-41 (NLT)** (cf. Matt. 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25)

***35 As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." 36 So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). 37 But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water.***

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***38 Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re going to drown?” 39 When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Silence! Be still!” Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. 40 Then he asked them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”***

**[8]**

***41 The disciples were absolutely terrified. “Who is this man?” they asked each other. “Even the wind and waves obey him!”***

I want you to notice a few things here.

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First of all, notice that **Jesus led his apprentices into the storm**. He is the one who suggested they go to the other side of the lake. He didn’t tag along with them. It wasn’t their idea. Jesus actually led them into the middle of a storm. He took them to the gym, so to speak, to help them build their faith muscles.

This passage is in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. And in the Matthew narrative in chapter 8 what preceded this was very interesting.

**[10]**

**Matthew 8:18–23 (NLT)**

***18 When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he instructed his disciples to cross to the other side of the lake. 19 Then one of the teachers of religious law said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”***

**[11]**

***20 But Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head.” 21 Another of his disciples said, “Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.” 22 But Jesus told him, “Follow me now. Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead.”***

**[12]**

**Will you really follow me wherever I go?** Would you follow me if you knew that in following, your life would become uncomfortable? Would you follow me if you knew there was danger ahead? Would you follow me if you knew you were going to be persecuted? Would you follow me if the way was unclear and you could only see one step ahead, and even the steps you could see looked unsafe? Would you follow me if you knew that would be spat upon? Would you follow me if you knew it would mean the cross for you? What will you do when the going gets tough?

I think it’s probably a good thing that God does not fill us in on the specifics of our future. Would Ruthie and I have gone to Japan as missionaries if he had told us ahead of time that our house would burn down and we would lose all our wedding pictures and Ruthie’s wedding rings. I don’t know. Would we have gone to Japan if God had told us ahead of time that Ruthie would come home with some kind of autoimmune disease that the doctors couldn’t figure out and for years would not have enough energy to get out of bed much of the time. I don’t know.

Would I have become a pastor if I knew what it was really like? I don’t know.

There are so many things in our lives that, I'm sure, if we were told ahead of time what the cost would be for moving forward, I'm not sure we would do it.

But, it was immediately after Jesus challenged these people who said they would follow him that he led the disciples into the storm in.

**[13]**

***23 Then Jesus got into the boat and started across the lake with his disciples.***

He gives them an opportunity to learn that he is trustworthy. They get a chance to build their faith muscles.

This is really important, because sometimes we think when we become Christians we sign up for a life in which Jesus will make everything go smoothly for us. We may not say that out loud. We may not even consciously think it. But, we live like it. If you have ever asked the question, "Why is this happening to me?," that is indicative of a mindset that thinks that if something bad happens to me it means that God is mad at me, or that there is some deep meaning in any adversity we might have. But that's not true.

**[14]**

Jesus said in **Matthew 5:45** that God ***"gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike."***

In other words I can't say that just because God is pleased with me things will automatically go well for me. And conversely, just because your neighbour may be living a life that is diametrically opposed to what would honour God, it doesn't mean that he is going to necessarily have a difficult life.

I had a friend many years ago who lived a very selfish life and it seemed like he was Teflon coated. Everything he did worked for him. If there is such a thing as luck, he was the luckiest guy alive. And yet his life didn't honour God or people at all. And it used to make me so angry because I tried really hard to live my life in such a way that God would be honoured and things seemed to rarely go well for me. I didn't think it was fair. I had this sort of mathematical theology that said if I am living better than you, then that should reflect in how I am blessed by God.

We don't have time to read the whole passage, but **Psalms 37** speaks very poignantly to this. Verse 7 says,

**[15]**

***7 Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes.***

One of the things that can be quite bothersome to Christians is that sometimes doing the right thing means we lose. We honour God with our honesty and we pay more taxes than the person who hides the truth. We tell the truth and sometimes we pay for it. And then we look at others who don't live their lives that way, and they seem to profit from their lies, and we wonder if it's worth it.

But God, through the Psalmist, says, "Don't worry about others who prosper when they don't deserve it. Wait patiently for the Lord to act. Let *him* be the judge.

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You just **do the next right thing and leave the rest to God.**

So, sometimes following Jesus actually means that life is going to get difficult. And as we see in Matthew 8 and Mark 4, Jesus actually leads us into the storm sometimes.

Now, if He was just doing this to play with us that would be pretty mean, wouldn't it?

[17]

Sort of like a guy I knew when I was a kid that would torment flies by catching them and tying a thread around one of their legs and then flying it like a kite. After he got tired of doing that he would pull it in and yank off its legs. That's a terribly cruel thing to do even if it is just a bug.

But some people actually have that kind of view of God. He's the Big-Guy-in-the-Sky who rains on our parade just for the fun of it. Just because he's bigger than we are. But, that's not what God is like. When we are led into a storm, he says he will use it for our good (Romans 8:28). And so instead of seeing the storm as a disaster, we can see it as an opportunity to grow.

[18]

**He leads us out of our comfort zones, and into the storm, so we can exercise our faith muscles and learn to trust him more.**

The second thing I'd like to draw to your attention is that **the storm didn't concern Jesus one bit.**

[19]

He wasn't the least bit bothered by it. It didn't faze him. In Matthew's narrative it simply says, "**But Jesus was sleeping.**" They are going across the lake in an open fishing boat and a serious storm blows in with waves crashing over top of the boat, filling it up so they are in very real danger. And Jesus is sleeping — seemingly oblivious to the danger.

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Luke's Gospel says "**As they sailed across, Jesus settled down for a nap.**" And then it says, "**The boat was filling up with water, and they were in real danger.**" It wasn't just a perceived danger. They weren't afraid of the imaginary boogey man. There was real danger. And Jesus settled down for a nap. I love that. Isn't that a great picture?

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In Mark's version of the story he says this. <sup>38</sup> **Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion.** Not a care in the world — sleeping in the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. I love that.

Just imagine this scenario. It's really quite funny. Jesus and his apprentices are out in the middle of the Sea of Galilee in the middle of the night - in a fierce storm, waves crashing over the boat - and Jesus is sleeping soundly, "**with his head on a cushion.**"

It's kind of funny that Mark adds this bit of information. Matthew and Luke just say that Jesus was sleeping. Mark says he was sleeping with his head on a cushion. I think the implication is that he was settled in for a long restful nap. He was probably in the middle of his REM sleep.

Have you ever been awoken from a nap when you are in the middle of that deep kind of sleep? I used to take Sunday afternoon naps. I haven't done that for a long time. But I remember how blissful it was. It was so good to lay down on the couch after a long day of ministry and let

myself sink into the cushions of the couch. There is sort of a sweet spot with naps. If the nap is too long it's no longer a cat nap. Fifteen to twenty minutes is usually good for me. When Ruthie would wake me up after that long it was easy for me to wake up. Any longer and I felt terrible for a while.

Jesus was having that kind of nap. He was out cold. Before Jesus and his apprentices headed out in the boat, Jesus had been working hard teaching, healing the sick, casting out demons, debating with religious people and now he was exhausted and sound asleep when the storm arose. The disciples, on the other hand, were wide awake fearing for their lives. Now, we could conclude that Jesus didn't care.

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And actually if you look at the passage that is exactly what the disciples assumed. ***“Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?”***

Sometimes we jump to the same conclusion, don't we? Because God doesn't rescue us in our timing, in a way we would define as good, we presume he doesn't care. But, he does. It's just that our big problems are little to God. He can handle them. They don't faze him one bit. They don't throw him off his stride. And he **does** care about them.

Ruthie and I went to a wedding in Saskatchewan where I had a part in marrying my cousin. On the way, we stayed over night at some friends in Tsawwassen. When we arrived we noticed that they had For Sale signs on their lawn. They own both sides of a duplex and live in one side and rent out the other. We found out that they have listed it for a million dollars a side. Just two years ago we sold our place, for half of half of that. If we had waited about a year and a half we would be mortgage free with no debt at all and money in the bank. That is typically how we roll. We buy high, sell low.

My temptation is to worry and fret. We are going to be very old before we have our mortgage paid off. Is God big enough? What if it never happens? Is God still big enough? Does God actually care? Here's what Peter says.

[23]

**1 Peter 5:6-7 (NLT)**

***6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. 7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.***

Give **all** your worries and cares to God. Give them to Jesus. When it says “give them to him” it means give them to him. You will need to have a change of mind so the things that would normally cause you anxiety no longer do because you have surrendered them to him, because we know he's trustworthy.

Now, I know this is easy to say, and hard to actually do. It takes practice, just like everything. But, that's why Jesus leads us out into the storm, so we have plenty of chance to practice trusting him. Each time we step out of our comfort zone we see that God is faithful. Even if we fail miserably, God does not cease to be faithful. He is always good. He always does the right thing. He can always be trusted.

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The last thing I want to show is that **Jesus is big enough to handle your storm.**

When the disciples finally roused Jesus from his peaceful slumber he simply spoke directly to the wind and told it to be still.

[25]

***39 When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Silence! Be still!” Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm.***

In the middle of the storm, way outside their comfort zone, Jesus gave them calm. And, he can do the same thing for each of us. It is outside our comfort zones that we see the power of the risen Jesus, and each time we move out and see him work, our faith in him grows. We learn to trust him no matter what the road ahead looks like.

What’s going on in your life right now that is stretching you? I would imagine most of us here have things like that going on? How are you doing with it? I know that some of you are experiencing some very trying times.

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This may sound trite, but **no matter what you are going through right now, Jesus wins.** It's important to front load that at all times. Jesus wins!

Think about the change in the disciples’ faith after having experienced this time with Jesus. Do you think they would have learned the same thing about Jesus as effectively if Jesus hadn’t taken them out in the storm? If they had just gone out for a little fishing trip on a calm day they would have missed the chance to grow.

The storm was necessary for their growth. Look at how they responded to Jesus calming the storm.

[27]

***41 The disciples were absolutely terrified. “Who is this man?” they asked each other. “Even the wind and waves obey him!”***

Their eyes were opened a little bit more to who Jesus actually was. He was no ordinary man. I would imagine they would have known a little better that he could handle the big stuff in their lives. The next time they would come up against an obstacle don’t you think their faith muscles would have grown some? When we open ourselves up to Jesus’ influence in our lives, he will lead us into places where we can build our faith muscles and become stronger followers, better able to trust him in the storms of life. We will experience him and get to know that he is trustworthy.

Here are some encouraging words from the Apostle Paul.

[28]

**Philippians 4:4–9 (NLT)**

***4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! 5 Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. 6 Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.***

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***<sup>7</sup> Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable.***

**[30]**

***Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. <sup>9</sup> Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.***

When we are in the middle of the storm it is difficult to have peace isn't it? It's the same for me. I am just like you. However, it is in the middle of the storm that we have an opportunity to stretch our faith muscles and grow in maturity.

We get to make courageous choices now. We can choose the easy way and stay flabby, or we can choose the right way and receive the grace and sufficiency of Jesus to face our stuff and grow in maturity. The choice is ours.

Don't quit. Don't give up. Don't let fear or your insecurities keep you from doing the right thing. Let Jesus take you to the gym so your faith muscles can be built. Cling to Jesus and he will lift you up in due time, the Bible says.

Let me close with these words from Paul.

**[31]**

**Romans 8:31–39 (NLT)**

***<sup>31</sup> What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? <sup>32</sup> Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? <sup>33</sup> Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself.***

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***<sup>34</sup> Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us. <sup>35</sup> Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?***

**[33]**

***<sup>36</sup> (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") <sup>37</sup> No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. <sup>38</sup> And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.***

**[34]**

***<sup>39</sup> No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

When you are in the middle of the storm marinate on these words.



**Encounters with Jesus**  
***He Still Calms the Storm***  
**Mark 4:35-41**  
**Week of May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016**

**Objective of this study:** To gain a bigger picture of who Jesus is and learn to trust him more by allowing him to take us outside our comfort zones.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

**Worship (5 – 10 minutes)**

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 37:1-7** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you.

**Welcome**

Describe a time when you were afraid, or anxious. What did you fear? What worried you?

**Word (30 - 45 minutes)**

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read Mark 4:35-41 and Matthew 8:14–23.
  1. What do you notice about the context from Matthew's narrative?
  2. Why did a crowd gather, and why did they want to follow Jesus?
  3. What was Jesus' response to the people when they said they would follow him? Why do you think he responded in that way?
  4. Describe everything in the Mark passage; the setting, the characters, the conflict, the resolution, the change in the characters from their encounter with Jesus.

**Work (30 - 45 minutes)**

Read the following quotes:

1. **Sermon Quotes:** A. "The number one goal of the Christ-follower is to grow in our trust of him."  
B. "He takes us places where we will be stretched so our faith muscles can be exercised."  
C. "Jesus led his apprentices into the storm."  
D. "Do the next right thing and leave the rest to God."  
E. "Jesus is big enough to handle your storm."  
F. "No matter what you are going through right now, Jesus wins."  
G. "Jesus leads us out of our comfort zones, and into the storm, so we can exercise our faith muscles and learn to trust Him more."
  2. Break up into smaller groups and describe how Jesus is doing this with you. Is he "taking you to the gym?" Is he showing you bigger things about himself? Is he showing you things about yourself that might be getting in the way of your growth? Make sure each person has a chance to share.

On your own at home, choose a passage from the sermon to marinate in: Philippians 4:4-9; Romans 8:31-39; 1 Peter 5:6-7. Allow the Holy Spirit to use his Word to build your faith.