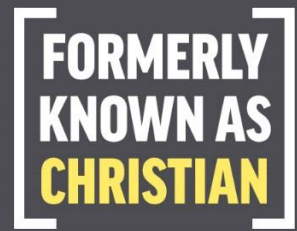


Week 3 - Mark 4:35-41



“Who is this man?”

This is, perhaps, one of the most important questions anyone could ask. Who is this man who speaks with authority? Who is this man who heals the sick and casts out demons? Who is this man who has command over the wind and the waves? Who is this Jesus?

The overwhelming testimony of the Church is that Jesus is God; the very same God who is revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures;ⁱ the very same God who is Lord of all creation. And these few verses in Mark testify to this.

Many aspects of this story in Mark are reminiscent of the story of the OT prophet Jonah (especially Jonah 1:4-16). After boarding a *ship* to Tarshish to flee from God’s call to preach to Nineveh,ⁱⁱ Jonah’s ship was caught in a *violent storm*. All the sailors were *afraid* and were busy praying to their own gods, except for Jonah, who was *sleeping*. He is then awoken and rebuked for sleeping. They beg him to wake up and call upon his God to save them.

Aside from the obvious differences between the character of Jonah and that of Jesus, these stories sound a lot alike. But Jesus responds very differently than Jonah as well as differently than his disciples expected. Instead of rising to help bail water or to call on God to save them, he rises to rebuke the wind and still the waves with his own words. *And they listen!*

The disciples’ terror at Jesus and his power is all the more understandable when we realize that, in the minds of the disciples, the power to directly command nature belongs only to God.ⁱⁱⁱ To see a man with the authority to bring chaos into order in the same manner as God must have been an absolute shock to both their experience of the world and their theology. Their response is appropriate: they were *absolutely terrified!*^{iv} They were filled with an awe and wonder that totally eclipsed the fear brought on by the storm.^v They were beginning to realize just how incredible Jesus is and how much he would change their lives and the life of the world.

So we come back to the question, “Who is this man?” Many of us, not unlike the first disciples, started following Jesus without knowing the full answer to this question. It took the Church centuries to decide the best way to answer this question. This question continues to be relevant for us today. One thing that we can learn from this passage is that Jesus is the Lord of the storm.^{vi}

Questions for discussion/reflection:

1. Have you ever been in the middle of a “storm” and felt like Jesus must be asleep or apathetic to your distress? How did this affect your relationship with Jesus?
2. When, in your life or the lives of those you know, has Jesus stood up and quieted the storm? Was your response similar or different from the first disciples?
3. Find some time this week to sit in silence and ask Jesus, “Who are you?” Then give the Holy Spirit some time to respond. Finally, journal about this time and share your thoughts with a trusted friend or small group.

ⁱ The 39 books of the Christian Old Testament; also called the “Hebrew Bible” or “Tanakh” [Torah (law) + Nevi’im (prophets) + Ketuvim (writings)]

ⁱⁱ Nineveh was one of the largest cities in Assyria, who had conquered and oppressed Israel. Tarshish was in the direct opposite direction from Nineveh. There are several theories as to where Tarshish was located. Some scholars think it was in Cyprus; others think it was in Sicily; and some even think it was all the way in Spain. If Jonah was headed to Spain, that would have been considered almost beyond the edge of the world. He couldn’t have gone any farther away!

ⁱⁱⁱ Check out Job 38, Psalm 107, and Psalm 89 for examples of God’s control over creation, especially the sea.

^{iv} Or, as Dave pointed out in his sermon, they were *terrified with a great terror*.

^v The word Jesus uses when he asks, “Why are you afraid?” is the Greek word *deilos*, which has implications of timidity or faithlessness. However, the word Mark uses to describe the disciples’ terror after Jesus quiets the storm is *phobeō*, which is a much stronger, almost paralyzing fear (think “-phobia”). *Phobeō* can also refer to a deep reverence, much like the “fear of the Lord” described throughout the Old Testament (ex. Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 1:7, 9:10)

^{vi} For more on how Mark portrays Jesus as God, see: Geddert, Timothy J. “The implied YHWH Christology of Mark’s gospel: Mark’s challenge to the reader to ‘connect the dots.’” *Bulletin For Biblical Research* 25, no. 3 (2015): 325-340.