

Mark 4 (Part 2) - The Kingdom of God in Power

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As we get into the last half of this chapter, and by the way, we're going to be picking it up in verse 26 for those of you that are wondering. But as we deal with these first, couple, small, little parables that Jesus is going to deal with here, you're going to notice a theme in here of the kingdom of God. The phrase, the kingdom of God is going to come up.

And the kingdom of God is one of those things that as Christians, we're fairly familiar with hearing about. Because it comes up a lot in the gospels. Paul makes reference. Some of the other Bible writers make reference in the New Testament—the kingdom of God. What's interesting though, I think, is how many Christians who might be challenged to give a definition of what it is.

If you had somebody who was starting to become interested in the Bible. And they knew that you're a Christian. And they asked you, "I was reading my the Bible here and I saw this phrase the, kingdom of God. What exactly is the kingdom of God? Is it heaven? And if not, what is it? Think for just a moment about how you would answer that question. What would you say? What would your answer be? What is the kingdom of God?

I think a lot of Christians would be fairly hard pressed, probably at a moment's notice, maybe to give a definition. And the idea... And by the way, the Jews were a little confused about the subject, too. But the idea of a kingdom was something that has been introduced at the beginning of our study in Mark when John the Baptist came on the scene. Because he started saying, prepare the way of the Lord. Let me put actually this up on the screen for you so we can look at it together. It's from chapter 1. You'll remember the Gospel began this way.

John 1:1-3 (ESV)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight,'"

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way. (I have highlighted that for you. And then of course, we're actually given that statement) the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight.'"

And that's what John used to say, prepare the way! "*Prepare the way.*" Well, what you and I may not know is, that's the way they used to herald a coming king. If a king was going through an area, people would actually go before the king and they would say, prepare the way for the king! And that was a way of, I suppose, increasing the pomp and circumstance of the king that was traveling through the land.

When John was making these sorts of statements, "*Prepare the way,*" this immediately put into the hearts and minds of the people who were hearing that, it's a king, there's a king coming!

And then you get to Jesus and He starts talking to the people. And what's the first thing He starts talking about? It's talking about the kingdom. Let me show you also from Mark chapter 1. It says that,

Mark 1:14-15 (ESV)

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Now after John was arrested, (we're told that) Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, (to the people) "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; (He said,) repent and believe (the good news or) ...the gospel."

You can see the people had good reason for anticipating a kingdom. John was saying, "*Prepare the way.*" That's what you said when kings were coming. Jesus starts immediately talking about the kingdom. He says, it's here, the time is fulfilled, and so forth.

Now, what you need to remember is that the Jews had very specific ideas about what that kingdom was going to be like. And they saw it, for the most part, as a military kingdom. They expected it to come in power. They expected it to liberate them from their captors, who at the moment were the Romans. The Roman army was in control right now in Israel. And they believe that the Messiah, was going to lead the fight to oust their captors, exalt Israel to the

highest place of any other nation upon the earth. And they were just going to be after that time be the blessed of the Lord.

Well, not only did Jesus not live up to their expectations of what Messiah was supposed to be and do in this coming kingdom, but He would speak to them about the kingdom in ways that would leave them scratching their heads and wondering, hmm, I'm curious if we're talking about the same kingdom. Because from their earliest days, they were made to understand what the kingdom of God coming on earth would be like. And this was not it.

I mean, they were excited and all about all the miracles going on and the things that Jesus was doing. But it was a situation where it wasn't going the way they thought it should go. And you'll remember that there were times that the religious leaders and other people, would ask Jesus about the kingdom of God. because they were curious. This wasn't happening the way they thought it should. Let me show you one example from Luke chapter 17. It says,

Luke 17:20-21 ESV)

Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!'"

Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, (Oh) 'Look, here it is!' or (over) 'There!'" There it is.

Now you have to remember something that Jesus also said to Pilate about His kingdom. You'll remember that it is not of this world. (John 18:36) What that means is, and what we're seeing here is, that it's not an earthly kingdom. It doesn't show up in the ways that earthly kingdoms show up. How do earthly kingdoms show up? Well, they come through election processes. They come through military coups sometimes. Or they come through a coronation if there's a king, or a queen, or both involved.

But Jesus made it very clear here, that the kingdom of God doesn't show up like man's kingdoms show up. And what He begins to do in these parables that we're going to be looking at here this morning, is He begins to talk about the characteristics of the kingdom of God to help you and I, to understand what it is, and how it is made up, and so forth. And He didn't do it by giving a lecture on theology.

Jesus talked about the kingdom by simply painting pictures with words. And He used simple words and simple pictures to describe, frankly, very common ideas that spoke of the kingdom.

One such parable begins in verse 26. Look in your Bible there, *"And he said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. 27 He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. 28 The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.'"* (ESV)

Now, it's interesting that this parable here is given to us right on the heels of the parable of the sower, which we looked at last week. But you'll remember that parable, which also dealt with scattering seed had more to do with the condition of the ground on which that seed fell. And how that applied to people hearing the Word of God, and the various conditions that people can have related to their heart.

The emphasis, however, here is not on the condition of soil. It is rather on the mystery of growth. Now, we may have learned a great deal since the time of Jesus. I'm not really sure what they knew and didn't know about botany and growing things. And I don't know, maybe we've, through our scientific methods, maybe we know a lot about this. And the mystery isn't quite as great as it was back then. But the point of this parable here, is to basically convey, that the kingdom of God grows according to the purpose and plan of God. Which is why it grows in a mysterious way.

Notice again in verse 27, He says about the farmer, *"...the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how."* *"...he knows not how;"* that's a very interesting statement. But keep in mind, it was made to a people who believed they knew how the kingdom of God was going to grow. They had very clear expectations, and they thought the kingdom should advance in a very specific way. And Jesus tells them in no uncertain terms that the kingdom of God comes in ways they know not how. And that's an important thing for us to remember. The kingdom of God moves and grows mysteriously.

He talks about the farmer here and He says, the farmer plants the seed and then he goes to bed; and he gets up and he goes to bed; and he gets up and he goes to bed over a period of days. And he doesn't sit and stress about it. And frankly, without his intervention, the seed that's in the ground begins to sprout and it begins to grow. And pretty soon it bears fruit. And it's an it's rather a mystery how it all takes place.

But the point of the parable is to convey the idea that it takes place by the hand of God, by the will of God, and according to the purpose of God. And what that means is, it's not man's will that brings it about. It's not man's purpose that brings it about. Right? It is the purpose of God.

Here's why that's important. You see, there were people in Jesus's day who got all excited about what they were seeing in His earthly ministry. Because they were seeing pretty incredible miracles. And they were seeing crowds flocking to this Man by the hundreds and thousands. And these people, zealots by name, thought that, wow, this is exactly what we need. We need somebody who we can rally behind. And we can proclaim Him king. And we can throw off, the yoke of Rome.

And Jesus knew that was what they were thinking from time to time. Let me show you a passage here from John chapter 6. It says,

John 6:15 (ESV)

Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Why did Jesus do that? Because He knew what was going on. This was man at work. And the kingdom of God does not get built by man. God will allow men to be involved. But they are not the impetus, the strength, the power behind that kingdom.

And boy, let me tell you something, as a Pastor, I can tell you that I was never so liberated, except the day that I made recognition of this basic truth: That it's not my kingdom and it's not my church. And He is the one behind it. And He is the one who's going to make it grow.

And the reason that was such a revelation to me, in a very, a very welcome revelation, is because I... When my earlier, younger, stupider years of being a pastor, I was influenced pretty heavily by the church growth movement that was very popular at that time—in the eighties, early nineties, even. And I remember going to church growth seminars.

And everybody had an opinion on how to grow a church. And I got really sucked into all that stuff thinking, gee, I got to do this... They'd have guys get up who had these mega churches and they talk about what they did. And we're all

sitting there feverishly taking notes. Do we want to emulate what they're doing and stuff. And it places a huge amount of stress on an individual just to match up to some expectations that are in his mind, or whatever about: How big a church needs to get. How big is big? When is it big enough? Usually big is never big enough. That's the American way.

But it's just a huge pressure. And when I came to realize, this is His church and all I need to do is be faithful. And I want to encourage you in the same way. Whatever ministry the Lord has laid before you. Whatever that is, just remember something, it is God who gives the increase. It is God who oversees the process. It's His kingdom. It's His church. It's His ministry. You just be faithful and forget about the numbers.

Once in a while, we'll get a small group going around here. And we'll put a couple of people, or whatever, in charge of a small group. And we exhort them, hey, it's not about size. It's about faithfulness. But inevitably they'll come back after a period of time and be all kind of upset because, gee, we only got two people come into our group. And we're like, so? Well, you know...

But we have these American inbred ideas about what success looks like. And it's all about numbers. We're so fixated on that sort of a thing. And we have to remember that God gives the increase. Listen, you just be faithful. Just be faithful.

If God wants you to be faithful with one person, who are you to say, that's not the right ministry for me. Or, that isn't the ministry God has for me. Maybe you'll spend your entire life ministering to one person. So be it. I would rather be faithful with one person, than faithless with a million. Right?

Have hundreds and hundreds of people come here, and yet not be able to stand before God one day and hear Him say, well done, good and faithful servant. What good will that would that do? Right? Let's just be faithful. It's God's kingdom. And that's the point of what He's saying here.

But He's also saying that this kingdom age that we're in right now, is going to come to an end. Now, that doesn't mean that the kingdom rule of Jesus ever comes to an end. In fact, it's going to increase from here.

But this kingdom age that we're in right now, you'll notice in verse 29, the part of this parable that talks about the end says, *"But when the grain is ripe, ... he puts the sickle to it (Which is the instrument of harvesting of in the day) "because the harvest has come."*

There's going to come a time when the harvest comes in. It's the end of the age. Right? The end of the kingdom age. And we're going to go into another age after that. We're going to go into the "Millennial Age. But there is going to come, a time when this is going to come to an end. And it will have to do with that final harvest and judgment.

All right, another parable that's given here begins in verse 30, which says, "*And he said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?'*" I want you to notice that word compare. Highlight that word in your thoughts. Because Jesus is telling us here, I want to compare...

In other words, I want to use the language of similarity to talk about the kingdom of God. But I'm going to use examples of things that you would readily understand.

And He begins to say, "*30 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of... seeds on earth, 32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.*"

All right. This is a parable again of comparison between the smallness of the mustard seed and the largeness of the plant.

Now you and I, we're hearing this parable 2,000 years down the road. And for us, we're living in the midst of the mustard seed plant. The plant is big. It's mature. And we've seen for a couple of thousand years, this mature plant—Christianity, has literally gone around the world. But keep in mind, when Jesus was speaking these words, He was just a humble teacher traveling around in this very small sliver of land, on the world, on the earth. And had these disciples that were following. There were 12 of His closest. And then the other crowds that followed along.

But who was to say this was going to continue. You guys got realize, Jesus, wasn't the only traveling preacher, or prophet, or leader. This was not uncommon in His day to see people rise up and even garner some kind of a following. A couple of guys we're told even gathered, a few hundred followers. And they had different usually goals or, whatever. But these guys would rise up and they would kind of peter out. And they'd rise up and they'd peter out.

And people were probably wondering, What about the kingdom of God? Is this thing that Jesus is talking about—is this thing going to do the same thing? Jesus talks about the fact here that this, Listen, the day of small things—it's a good

thing. Don't look down on it. This thing is going to grow. And we've seen it. We've seen it grow. But has it always been good growth? Has it been a good thing that the church has grown—the kingdom of God has grown?

Well, we need to look at this reference here to the birds in verse 32. Look with me again in that verse. You'll notice that he says, *"when (the seed is) sown,... it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make their nests in its shade."*

Now, you'll remember last week when we dealt with the parable of the sower, birds were used in that parable as well. And they were not a positive symbol. You'll remember it was the work of the enemy that snatched the seed off the hardened path, which we likened to the hardened human heart, when the individual has no understanding because they don't desire it. And the enemy comes and steals that seed away.

Well, the birds were a bad image in that parable. And if we're going to follow what we call expositional constancy, then we're going to say that birds ought to always have a negative connotation in stories and parables.

And that is... There's many Bible teachers and scholars who believe that what Jesus is actually warning about is, not just the fact... Not only is He promising that the kingdom of God is going to start small and grow large, but it's also going to be influenced, and even infested at some point with worldly, and even satanic influences from time to time.

Well, you and I have the benefit of 2,000 years of history and we can ask ourselves the question: Is that what has happened? And the answer is: Absolutely, that is what has happened. I don't know if you know your history. History is an incredible subject. And church history is super interesting. But we've had about 2,000 years of history in the church.

Are you aware that half of that, half of that, is what we, during a period of time, that we call the Dark Ages? Do you know why we call that period of time, the Dark Ages? What made it dark?

What made it dark was frankly, the rule of Roman Catholicism in Christianity at that time. And I'm not... If you're a Roman Catholic, or you have a Roman Catholic background, I'm not dissing Catholicism. I'm telling you what is historical fact. All right? I'm telling you that when around 312, when Christianity became the Roman state religion, it became a popular... It became popular to be a Christian. It became politically popular to be a Christian.

About the time around 500 AD, we were plunged into what we refer to as the beginning of the Dark Ages that went to about 1500 AD, give or take. And what brought us out of the Dark Ages, was a Catholic monk, who just happened to get saved—genuinely born again. And his name was, Martin Luther. And he started what we know now as the Reformation. And he started telling people that the way the Roman Catholic Church had interpreted the kingdom of God, was absolutely unbiblical. It had become horrendously corrupt. And it had thrust the church into a thousand years of darkness.

Now, it doesn't mean God doesn't always have a remnant because He always does. But I'm saying the larger expression of Christianity, which was ruled at that time by the Roman Catholic church—and I mean ruled, was incredibly corrupt and incredibly dark. Have we seen birds perch in the branches? Oh yes. Oh, absolutely we have. And it has been bad. Praise God! He has had mercy upon us, to bring us, during those times, back to a biblical sort of a view. And that's basically, what we call revival. When the church gets revived.

We've had those periods of time over the centuries. And over the history when we've come out of our complacency, and darkness, and laziness and we become revived again. But what are we revived to? A biblical picture of: What is the kingdom of God? What is it? It's the kingdom of His rule in our hearts. It is not the kingdom of man. It is not man calling the shots. It's God calling the shots. And anyway, it's an interesting sort of a deal.

But I found a great quote that I thought you might be interested in. It's by a guy. I don't even know who he is. Maybe you do, Vance Havner. Anybody know the Havner boys? Never heard of the guy. Anyway, he wrote

As long as the Church wore scars, they made headway. When they began to wear medals, the cause languished.

— Vance Havner

As long as the Church wore scars, they made headway. (In other words, they progressed, but) When we as a Church began to wear medals, (our) the cause (began to languish) languished.

Which is the cause of Christ and sharing the Gospel. And what happened when the church became the state religion in Rome in the early—300 A.D. period, is we began to wear medals. It became politically advantageous to confess faith in Jesus Christ. And when that happens, we're heading down the tubes fast.

Do you know when the church grows the best and does the best? When we're in hot water, when we're in trouble. When we are being persecuted, the church grows and thrives more than any other time. I wish it wasn't so, but that's the way it is.

Mark goes on, look at verse 33 in your Bible, to say, *"With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴ He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything."* And we talked last week about that private illumination.

Now we come to the last narrative of the chapter, which is going to establish, by the way, a springboard for the coming chapters. But it says, *"³⁵ On that day, (or on) when evening had come, he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.'³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. (And) ⁴⁰ He said to them, 'Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?' ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him.'"*

What a great story. Now, what's interesting about this, we forget that this story is not just an isolated instance. We like to read it all by itself; talk about it all by itself. But the fact of the matter is, Mark tells us, it came at the end of a very busy day of ministry. Jesus had been teaching all day. And we know from other gospel accounts that people were constantly pressing in to try to touch Him and to get Him to heal them.

They brought sick people who had demonic possession, all kinds of physical deformities and infirmities. And they brought them to Jesus. And were told that Jesus healed them all. This was no doubt. One of those kind of days; very busy and so forth.

You're hearing Jesus... I'm putting you in the place of a disciple now for a moment, if I can. You're hearing Jesus talk all day long. You've seen Him do incredible things all day long. And now you get to the end of the day and you're presented with an opportunity to apply everything you've heard. It's called a test. For the next 60 seconds, God will conduct a test of the Emergency Faith Broadcasting System. This is only a test. Doooooooo. (Pastor Paul imitates the

emergency broadcast test sound) You guys remember those? Yeah, those were so much fun.

I hated tests in school. I used to...Boy, a teacher would ruin my day, when I walked into class. I'd be happy. And I'd sit down. And the teacher would say, put your books down, get out a piece of paper and a pencil. We're having a pop quiz. Ugh. I hated pop quizzes. Yeah, enough about me.

The point is, I think this is a test. Did Jesus know this storm was going to be coming? I believe He did. What was the point of the storm? They are going to be—they the disciples—presented with an opportunity now, to begin to apply everything that they've heard, and to put, by faith, all that they have seen.

And there's a statement here that's very interesting that Jesus, makes to the disciples. Did you catch it? In verse 40 where He simply asks them the question: "*Why are you so afraid?*" And do you know that in the Greek, the word afraid means cowardly fear? It's kind of interesting, isn't it? In other words, why are you guys such big fat cowards? That's what He's saying, in essence, there.

Now, I remember the first time I read that statement when I was a younger Christian. And I thought, how could Jesus ask such a question? Why are you afraid? I would have said, let me count the ways! Sit down for a minute, I'll explain it to you. Usually when I'm afraid, I'm pretty well in touch with why I'm afraid. I mean, very rarely do I get afraid and I'm like, I don't know what I'm afraid of.

And in this situation, these guys knew why they were afraid. Some of these guys were fishermen—experienced fishermen. They knew how to handle a boat. And they knew that they were rapidly getting to that place in this storm, where the boat was no longer handleable.

And they knew the danger. And most certainly had heard about these very, frequent storms that came rushing down upon the Sea of Galilee. They knew how dangerous these storms could be. And they knew that people lost their lives in these very storms. Why are you afraid? Are you joking? Let me tell you why I'm afraid. Let me tell you exactly why I'm freaking out here.

But what we forget, once again, is that they had been not only listening to Jesus teach all day long, they had been watching the power of God, manifest over, and over, and over again, as people brought their sick and infirm to Jesus. They

watched as He miraculously healed them on the spot. And I have to ask, how many times do you have to see that before you start to get it?

I mean, how many lepers do you have to see who walk up to Jesus—missing parts of their body, skin flaky, ugly, white, deathly looking? And walking away with healthy, refreshed skin. Right? How many cripples do you have to see, who need help to get to Jesus? But walk away dancing a jig all on their own?

How many people do you have to see with withered limbs, walking to Jesus, hobbling up to Jesus? And then seeing Him, restore those limbs to their normal, natural health. How many mute people do you have to hear praising God? How many blind people do you have to see whose sight has been restored, before you realize, wait a minute! I am in the midst of the power of God! It is all around me. That's the part that we forget.

And these guys had been exposed to it all day long. And now at the first sign of danger, they freak out and start screaming, don't you care that we're going to die? It's an interesting thing about danger and scary stuff. It has a way of exposing what we really believe about Jesus, and the power of God, doesn't it? I mean, all these men who got into the boat that night, if they'd have been asked various questions about the power of God, they probably could have gotten all of them correct. Their pop quiz that if it would have been on paper.

And we could too, a lot of us Christians. We know things. We know the promises of God. In many cases, we've memorized various verses of God's Word. We know what they say. And if somebody were to come up and ask us, is this that. Or, is this a promise of God's Word? And is this true?

We would say to them, yeah, 100 percent that is true. But boy, then put us in the hot seat. Put us in a situation where we're frightened. Put us in a situation where there's a crisis or panic. And all of it goes out the window. Suddenly, all bets are off. Everything is thrown up in the air. And we're not sure God even cares. We're not even sure He's there. Is God even there?

It's interesting. This whole story is a living parable all by itself. I mean, when you think about the different elements that go into the story. You've got a boat—that's a symbol of our lives. The water—it's a symbol of the unstable world that we live in. The wind and the waves—obvious, that's trouble. And the trials that come our way living in this world.

Jesus asleep in the boat—that has a symbolic sort of a reference too. Doesn't it? That's often the sense that we have of God being distant, or maybe even

indifferent, to our pain and the things that we go through. And scary times—storms, they come upon us, whether we like it or not.

And you know what? It's possible for some storms to come into our lives, just as a result of bad decisions we've made. Poor choices, sure. But you guys do know that storms come into our lives just because we live in this world. Right? We live in a fallen world where storms happen.

I don't know if you've ever sat through a tornado. I have, several times. It's exciting and frightening all at the same time. Which is probably what draws people to be like storm chasers. I love watching storm chaser videos. But when I lived in the Midwest, it was kind of fun. But there were a couple of times when I was alone—by myself in the house. And a tornado was like just down the road. And it was scary. It was frightening.

And those storms, they come into our lives. They terrify us, like the disciples in the boat. They knock us around. And it seems that all of the stability and security in our life is just breaking apart and sinking to the bottom of the sea. And honestly, we wonder if we're going to be able to survive. We wonder if we're going to be able to make it.

Well, when we look at this passage, we find that there are some obvious lessons. If we're going to take it like it's a parable and learn from what is being given us in this passage, there are some fairly obvious lessons that come to the forefront. Such as, Jesus has power over the storms of life. We know that.

You've probably heard this passage taught several times. And somebody... Or, you've read a devotion from it. And you know the connection has been made. Jesus has the power over the storms that are in your life. We know that.

We know also that He experiences them right along with us. That's something this story also shows that where was Jesus during the storm? He was right there. He was right there in the boat with them. We know that He loves us. And that He saves us out of storms. And we know that He wants us to trust Him more than we obviously do. Well, those are lessons that, I mean, pretty basic.

What I want to advance for you here this morning, is maybe a couple of lessons that may not be quite so obvious from this story. And the first one is this: Storms don't worry Jesus. It's one of those things that comes out of this thing that's not necessarily obvious, but it is comforting nonetheless. In fact, we see in this story, Jesus was downright calm in the midst of this storm. And it was the

disciples who were freaking out. Jesus is never freaking out in the course of this story.

And I have to believe that's a picture of when the storms rage in our lives, I don't believe Jesus is wringing His hands in anxiety. I don't believe He's upset. I don't believe He's caught off guard. And I don't believe He's discouraged. In fact, compared to our level of fear, He might very well seem to be asleep. Which, by the way, just compounds our own feelings of fear when we perceive that He's not necessarily attending to our pain. This is nothing new.

Let me show you an interesting Psalm. This has been going on for a long time. The psalmist wrote,

Psalm 44:23-24 (ESV)

Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever! Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?

Awake! Why are you sleeping, (He's talking to the Lord here. Why are you sleeping?) O Lord? Rouse yourself! (He says) Do not reject us forever! Why do you hide your face? (Have you ever felt like God was hiding His face?) Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?

Have you ever felt like God forgot? I think it's a fairly common sort of a response. But I am so comforted in my heart to know that during those times of the raging storm in our lives, Jesus is not upset.

And the other not so obvious lesson from this story is that the disciples were just as safe while Jesus was sleeping, as they were when He was awake. Even though the time while He was sleeping, the wind and the waves were tossing that boat around on the Sea of Galilee, they were just as safe then, as when Jesus woke up and calmed the seas. And that is such a tough one for us to get through our hearts and minds.

But I really believe the great challenge of living the Christian life and walking with Jesus day-by-day, is learning to look beyond our circumstances and trust in the power of Jesus with the eyes of faith, even when we don't see the answer.

There's a great story that Corrie ten Boom used to tell. She wrote about it in her book, *Tramp for the Lord*. When she was traveling, and this was back in the fifties after the war ended. She was traveling by plane. Which was still an up and coming thing as far as massive public transportation was concerned. It

wasn't something everybody did like we do today. And frankly, the safety of some of those airplanes was fairly suspect.

Well, one time she was flying; and I believe she was flying over the ocean. And she tells about how the cabin began to fill up with smoke. Which is a fairly, frightening sort of a thing to happen in an airplane. And finally, an announcement.

And somebody came out into the cabin and told them that there was a fire somewhere in the plane. And that they were going to need to land early and so forth. Which they did. But you can imagine the level of tension in that plane probably rose to new heights.

Anyway, one of the businessmen who happened to be on that flight, grabbed Corrie after they got down onto the ground and were safely landed. And he said, I was looking at you when the smoke was filling the cabin. And they made the announcement about the fire. And you didn't seem to have a care in the world. What is the deal?

And of course, Corey got the opportunity... And here's a woman who had lived through a German concentration camp. But still, she had the opportunity to share with this man that, her God was actually the one who was in control of that plane, not the pilot. And she believed it with all of her heart.

She believed God was in control of her life. And it wasn't a fire, or a storm, or mechanical failure... That was not going to dictate her life. Her life was in the hands of God. And there it would remain. And she believed it. And she was comforted and given peace because of her faith in that very idea.

Frankly, one of the most comforting things about this story, is that Jesus wants me to learn how to be peaceful in times of difficulty. He doesn't just acknowledge that I'm an idiot and I get all flustered and scared. He wants me to understand His peace. And He wants me to grow in my ability to lay hold of it. Let me show you here as we close a passage from John chapter 14, where Jesus said,

John 14:27 (ESV)

"Peace I leave with you; my peace, I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you peace. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

"Peace I leave with you; (He says) my peace, I give to you. (And by the way, just so you know, my peace is) Not... (like the way) the world gives... (peace.

It's actually nothing like it. Therefore, He says this) *Let not your hearts be troubled*, (Wow. Easier to say than do, huh? And He says) *neither let them be afraid.*"

And the exhortation to you and I, is to understand the power of God is in control in our lives. Even when everything around us is raging, and being tossed and turned. And looks, by the human eye, as if it's all about to go out the window.

And I want you to know that I haven't even, when I think about this, I haven't begun to attain to where I need to be. And I'm assuming you're probably right there with me. We struggle don't we? And frankly, the older I get, I see the more potential there is in my life to be afraid. You know why? I know more than I did when I was younger. And I know that I'm more aware of the threats in life than I was back...

I'm glad I didn't know when I was raising small children, what I know today. I probably would have said, I'm not going to do this. Because I'm... I was, I'm more aware now of the dangers of life than I was even when I was in my twenties and thirties. The longer you live, the more you experience danger. Right? And the more you experience danger, the more you know. And the more that knowledge drives your fear. People, understand something, we are fearful because we know things. We know too much and it causes us fear.

Now, some fear is good. You tell a small child, don't put your hand on that hot stove top, because you're going to get burned. They don't know, experientially, that feeling of that heat and that burn. So what do they do? (Pastor Paul makes a sound imitating zooming in) Yeah, they put their hand right on it. And you know what happens. Now, once they've learned that lesson, I guarantee you, they're not going back there again. Why? Because now they've got a healthy fear.

Well, some things aren't healthy. Some fears are very unhealthy. Because we just sit and think about them. And they become the guideline. We literally allow our intellect to guide and drive our fear. Right? What does God say to you and I? Proverbs chapter 3. You all know this.

Proverbs 3:5 (ESV)

Trust in the LORD with all of your heart; and do not lean on your own understanding.

Trust in the LORD with all of your heart, and do not... (be guided by the experiential knowledge of what you know is dangerous. That's what He's saying here, *do not*) *lean on...*

What you know. Lean on Me. Lean on My power. Therein lies the challenge. Right? That's the difficulty. The longer we live, the more we know, the more afraid we have the potential of becoming. But the more we need to center ourselves on the power of God. And say, listen, my life is being controlled by the Lord my God.

Whatever I am doing, wherever I may be, whatever storm I happen to find myself in the midst of, it's God who has control of my life. And so I'm keeping Him in the boat at all times.

Trust in the Lord with all of your heart. Don't lean on what you know. Lean on Him.