

JUNE 17, 2015

# The Sweetness of a Storm – Mark 4:35-41

## ROMAN CATHOLIC SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

*“Rejoice that you have escaped the manifold perils and shipwrecks of this storm-tossed world.” -*  
St. Bruno

Mark 4:35-41: With the coming of evening that same day, he said to them, ‘Let us cross over to the other side’. And leaving the crowd behind they took him, just as he was, in the boat; and there were other boats with him. Then it began to blow a gale and the waves were breaking into the boat so that it was almost swamped. But he was in the stern, his head on the cushion, asleep. They woke him and said to him, ‘Master, do you not care? We are going down!’ And he woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Quiet now! Be calm!’ And the wind dropped, and all was calm again. Then he said to them, ‘Why are you so frightened? How is it that you have no faith?’ They were filled with awe and said to one another, ‘Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him.’

**Christ the Lord** To grasp the awesome power Christ displays in this scene, we need to activate our imagination. Few situations leave men so helpless as storms at sea. The Lake of Galilee, where the disciples were sailing in this case, is still known for the violence of its squalls, which arise and subside rapidly and unpredictably due to its peculiar geographical situation. In the midst of these gales, the forces of nature unleash their full, terrifying force, and human fragility is nakedly exposed.

St. Mark makes it quite clear that the disciples feared for their lives, so we can safely infer that this storm was no minor agitation. That a mere word from the Lord reins in nature’s primeval brawn shocks the helpless fishermen even more than the stormy lake had frightened them just moments before. They had seen his miracles, they had heard his wisdom, they had witnessed his power over the human heart, but to see the most unruly powers that flow through the bowels of the universe submit like a well-trained golden retriever – this was a Lordship they had not yet even conceived of; this is Christ our Lord.

**Christ the Teacher** “Why are you so frightened? How is it that you have no faith?” What is the lesson here? Was it unreasonable for the disciples to be afraid? Was it cowardly for them to wake up their leader when it seemed like they were going to perish? It wasn’t unreasonable, nor was it cowardly, but it showed a lack of faith. They did not trust in him completely. They still thought it would be possible to sink, even though Christ himself was in their boat; they still thought that something (in this case, the forces of nature) was more powerful than the love of God.

We still doubt too: when we hesitate to follow a particular Church teaching; when we hesitate to obey the voice of conscience or look for expert advice to clarify a foggy moral issue; when we delay going to confession; when we make excuses to avoid the duties of our state in life or the commitments of our Christian discipleship; when we let frustration and anxiety carry us away in the face of difficulties... In these ways and in many others, we show that we don’t know Christ as well as

we should, that we don't trust him as we ought to.

Each Sunday we profess our belief in the Creed, which begins: "We believe in one God, the Father all-powerful..." If we truly believe that God is our Father (that we are his beloved children), and that he is all-powerful, why would we ever give in to fear? Why would we ever doubt that following his will, as difficult as it may sometimes be, is the surest path to happiness and fulfillment? If we truly believed that, no storm would shake our confidence. Unfortunately, we, like the apostles, often become anxious, nervous, doubtful, and even just plain scared. And sometimes, unlike the apostles, this fear and doubt lead us to abandon ship, to put our trust in someone else (usually ourselves). The lesson Christ teaches here, both with his words and with his actions, is simple: when he is with us, we are safe.

**Christ the Friend** *James: He was in our boat. He was with us when we encountered a storm. He came to our rescue when we had nowhere else to turn... How often I remembered this experience in the years that followed. It always spoke to me so powerfully – and it always made such an impression on people who were hearing about the Lord for the first time! It was an image for me of the life of every Christian. Christ is always with each one of us, and he has the power to protect us from every evil, to bring us safely through the most trying of times. Although sometimes he seems to be asleep in our boat while our lives are swirling in a hurricane of struggles and confusion, he is truly there. And when we go to him, when we put our faith in him, he will always come through for us – always. His only hope is that we too will come through for him, that we will not abandon him (the way I did a little while later in the Garden of Gethsemane) when he asks us to stay by his side.*

**Christ in My Life** Your power and majesty come across so vividly in the Gospels, Lord. Why don't I think more often about your greatness? You are the Creator and Lord of the entire universe; you gave the proton its weight and the electron its charge; you inspire every artist and strengthen every saint. Blest be your name throughout the earth! Thank you for calling me to follow you...

Even the wind and sea obey you, Lord. How foolish I am to resist you! I want to want what you want, because you want it, in the way you want it, for however long you want it. With the will of your heart, govern my heart...

You are in my boat; you are in my heart. As I stumble through life, trying to live out my responsibilities as you would have me, trying to discover your will in every storm, you are with me. I believe it, Lord, but help my weak faith! I won't say "Don't you care?" because I know you do care. But I will say: Convince my heart that you care, so I can be free to love as you love...

*PS: This is just one of 303 units of Fr. John's fantastic book **The Better Part**. [To learn more about The Better Part or to purchase in print, Kindle or iPhone editions, click here.](http://rcspiritualdirection.com/blog/2010/01/24/the-better-part-a-christ-centered-resource-for-personal-prayer) (<http://rcspiritualdirection.com/blog/2010/01/24/the-better-part-a-christ-centered-resource-for-personal-prayer>) Also, please help us get these resources to people who do not have the funds or ability to acquire them by clicking [here \(http://rcspiritualdirection.com/blog/donate\)](http://rcspiritualdirection.com/blog/donate).*

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