

# Sermon Study

"Does God Really Care?"

Mark 4:35-41

35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."  
36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

*Does God really care? Does he? What with horrible diseases that ravage the body; poverty, famine, war. It's tempting to look at this apparent "evidence" and come to the conclusion that the answer is no; that he doesn't care.*

•*What are would some of the symptoms be of a person who inwardly suspects that God does not care?*

•*Have you ever felt like God didn't care? (Sharing optional)*

*Jesus disciples did just that. The text for my message is the Gospel lesson: Mark 4:35-41 which was read just a moment before. And in that lesson we join the disciples in a boat as they endure one of the wind storms for which the sea Galilee is famous. It is 600 feet below sea level and next to mountains. Cool air from the mountains collides with the hot, moist air from the sea and wham! Before you know it, you've got a storm. And that's what the disciples had on their hands: a storm.....a fierce storm. The waves were so high that they they were breaking over the boat and it looked like all was about to be lost.*

*And while the disciples were out of their minds with fright, Jesus was in the back of boat sleeping. People always kept him so busy that I'm sure it was difficult for him to find any time to rest. The secluded nature of a boat ride was the perfect time to catch up on his sleep.*

*His disciples woke him by shouting "teacher don't you care if we drown?" Without pause, Jesus stood up and spoke to the wind and the sea: "Hush! Be Still!" Immediately, the wind died down, and the sea became calm.*

*Now you would think that at this point, the disciples would have collapsed in post-adreniline relief, but no, now they were even more afraid! The fierce storm scared them to pieces. But now it hit them that they were in the presence of one who had power that exceeded the storm. They were beginning to figure out who he was; that he was God. Fear of him is the natural reaction of sinful human beings. When you find yourself in his presence, you immediately feel exposed, embarrassed and frightened. These feelings are fueled by the deep-set understanding that you you are unworthy, unprepared, and unholy. Every human being, deep down, knows that he is truly inadequate when it comes to the Lord. This is why the disciples were so afraid. And this is why you would be afraid if you found yourself in the same position.*

- ***They were more afraid once the storm was calmed! Modern folks don't really get this because in these times God has been portrayed as the grinning greeting grampa at walmart. God is portrayed the guy that thinks our sinful antics are cute and just keeps forgiving us no matter what. But here we learn that there is a fear element (as Luther correctly pointed out in his definitions of the ten commandments) What does it mean to Fear God and why is it healthy to be God-fearing?***

*But let's get back to that burning question that the disciples asked Jesus. For that is where our interests lie today. The winds were howling, the waves rising over the deck, and what did they say? "Teacher don't you care?" Ever said that? Ever thought that? Ever felt that? In the midst of a storm, have you not also questioned the goodness of God? Maybe you've had troubles with your health, or with the health of a loved one. Or maybe it's financial troubles. Or maybe you've bottomed out emotionally. In times like that it is awfully easy to look up to the Lord and accuse him of not caring.*

*You may not come out and say it; you may not even consciously think it. But the attitude against him is there, just beneath the surface. Let me ask you a diagnostic question: Do you find it difficult to pray? Are you praying much from day to day? If not, why not? Could it be, that inwardly you've come to the conclusion that it doesn't work that well, that God does not really listen, and hence doesn't really care. You don't have to say it, like the disciples said it to the sleeping Jesus, your trouble with prayer says the exact same thing.*

- ***When a person says "I quit praying because prayer doesn't work." What does he really mean?***

*Whether you made this conclusion outwardly or only inwardly, It comes from a serious misunderstanding. Pick up your bible for once, read it a little bit, and you will see that God has never stopped caring for the people of the earth. He hates disaster, illness, and suffering. He hates to see people die.*

*But if God hates these things, why do we have them? Well we didn't at first. When God created the world it was not the stormy place we know today. We cannot blame God for the bad things that happen in this world. For the blame falls squarely on the shoulders of the human race. It was our disobedience and sin which brought about this brokenness in the world.*

*Perhaps an illustration would help. Imagine if a man went down to the hardware store and bought himself a hammer. And as long as he used it for the purpose it was designed it worked great. He could pound nails and also pull nails. But suppose this fellow as a willful character; suppose he used it improperly. Suppose he used it for a flyswatter. Windows would be broken, tables would be dented; plaster crumbled.. Could he then go back to where he got the hammer and blame the storekeeper for all the damage? Could he blame the hammer manufacturer? While yeah, in this age when nobody seems to be held accountable for their own stupidity I guess he would and could do that, but I'm speaking in the strange thinking of our day, I'm speaking in terms of ultimate truth. Honestly, would it be right for him to blame the one who made the hammer? No. Of course not.*

- ***Remember this. Or remember other disgusting lawsuits like the "McDonalds has hot coffee" lawsuit and you will always be able to counter those who seek to blame God for the evil in the world. The Evil and suffering in the world are not his fault.***

*In a similar way, God gave us human beings the earth and all it contains. He set up our relationship with him and all other things and he told us how things should work. But Adam and Eve were willful and chose to disobey God and misuse what they were given. Can we now blame God for all the damage? Of course not. This world has been so tainted by human sin that bad stuff now happens and often bring people to the brink of despair. And we are all in the same boat. We will suffer tragedies, we will get sick, we will have major set backs. We will die. The waves will get big and they will swamp us.*

*But here's how we know that God really does care. He joined us in the boat. He actually became a human being in Christ Jesus; a human being who would suffer with us. In the English language there's a word that expresses this perfectly: Sympathy. If you break that word down into its parts (Sym & Pathos) it means, "to suffer with". That's what God did in Jesus.....he came to us in human form so that it was possible for him to "suffer with" us. So here was Jesus, the one who was God, yet became a man for the express purpose of suffering with us and what do the disciples say? "Don't you care?" They didn't get it. They didn't understand that this Man in their boat had become a man BECAUSE he cared so very deeply!*

**•God could have saved us in other ways. He could have simply snapped his divine fingers and said, your sins are forgiven. But he really wanted to bust through our thick headedness and SHOW us how serious he was so he sent his Son. Thus the Story of Jesus is at the heart and center of all preaching and teaching.**

*But he did more than suffer WITH us, he also suffered FOR us. When he died on the cross, and carried our sins, he knew more despair and suffering than we can imagine. Can we really say that he doesn't care? We can't. We'd have to ignore who he is was and what he came to do.*

*But maybe that's what we do sometimes. Our relationship with God begins and ends with Jesus. If we ignore the meaning of Jesus' life and death for our own lives we are not going to get it. Jesus said "I am the way" he said "I am the door" "He also said, no one comes to the father except by me." Understanding that God's cares for you begins with knowing what Jesus did for you personally Start there and then stay there and you will experience the ever-increasing Joy of knowing that your life firmly rests in the hands of a God who loves you more than anyone else. AMEN*

**•What relationship is there between having your sins forgiven and knowing God cares? How does living in your sins prevent you from knowing God cares?**