

Bible study on Mark 4.35-41

Begin with an opening prayer

Loving and sometimes silent God,
we come into your presence,
thankful to quieten our hearts and to wait for you to speak.
We bring our joys, our challenges, and our questions.
We open our hearts honestly to you,
and we wait in that space beyond questions
to feel you hold us in compassion.
Amen.

Read the passage

Explore and respond to the text

Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.

Bible notes

The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by hills, except for a valley dip at one end, which can act like a funnel for the wind. This means that the water can go from glassy calm to choppy white horses very quickly, as the wind whips up the water. As seasoned fishermen on this large freshwater lake, this will not have been the first time that the disciples have experienced this phenomenon, but this time it was particularly severe. Their complaint to Jesus is about the apparent mismatch between their peril and his continuing nap: they do not cry, 'Help!' or 'Do something!', they question whether he cares. This is not a theoretical argument about whether he could (or should) intervene miraculously; it is not like the moment when the synagogue leaders stand at the sidelines to see whether he will heal someone on the sabbath. This is not a theoretical question about power at all. It is a cry from the heart, an exasperated rebuke from friends who feel abandoned: 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' Perhaps all they expect is another pair of hands to join in bailing out the boat. Instead, Jesus changes the vast space of the inland sea simply by speaking. Jesus' questions to them – 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' – underline that they still only have a sketchy picture of who he is. The miracle affects the disciples more than the storm did.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

'Now is the day of salvation.' The time to engage with life and faith is now. Faith is not theoretical. If we are not to accept the grace of God 'in vain', we need to respond with faith to what we find at this particular moment in our lives. We need to greet the grace of God with an open heart and innovate on our plans with courage. Then we will develop the character to cope with sleepless nights, hard work, afflictions and baseless accusations. We won't escape from suffering and storms, but we will learn to recognise the presence of God in each moment.

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



- When do you struggle to feel 'heard'?
- In what situations is it more difficult to feel able to 'cry out'?
- When/how did you experience 'being heard' during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Prayer

A prayer of adoration

Eternal God,
we praise and adore you for all that you are:
for being bigger than even our biggest questions;
for caring more than we can fully comprehend.
We praise and adore you
for your strength and your silence;
for your power and your peace.
We praise and adore you
for being in control and yet not controlling;
for being in the storms and beyond them.
We praise and adore you,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we praise you for ever.

Amen.

A prayer to end the Bible study

Go in peace.

May the whisper of God's wisdom
go with you today
into all your relationships.

Amen.