

Focus on Mark 4:35–41

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Efraín Agosto

Once the storm abates, Jesus turns to his disciples and asks two fundamental questions that lie at the heart of this pericope: “Why are you afraid? Do you not yet have faith?” (v. 40). Questions about faith and fear plague the disciples throughout Mark’s narrative (see 5:36; 6:50; 10:32; 16:8). The Gospel of Mark ends with a note of fearfulness in the heretofore faithful women at the tomb (16:8). Such an ending challenges Mark’s readers with the question of where their faith will take them—to paralysis or to action. Here in Mark 4:40, the question lies before the disciples on the boat after they have witnessed a horrific storm becalmed by the command of Jesus, their teacher: Will you exercise faith or fear?

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Mark D. W. Edington

The bruising storm is a recasting of the watery chaos from which creation is brought forth by God. It is the prerogative of the divine Creator to bring order out of the water’s chaos. Further, unrestrained water is death-dealing; water contained within its limits is life-giving. Thus Jesus is to be seen through the lens of this account as *doing things reserved to God*—ordering chaos, conquering the force of death, assuring the endurance of life. “Jesus has shown godlike superiority over the elements,” and from this we are meant to surmise the plain answer to the disciples’ reply: “Who then is this?”

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,”

Michael L. Lindvall

Although we often confuse them, saying, “there’s nothing to be afraid of” is a very different thing from saying, “do not be afraid.” The hard truth is that fearsome things are very real: isolation, pain, illness, meaninglessness, rejection, losing one’s job, money problems, failure, illness, and death. As we grow in faith, we come to understand that even though such fearsome things are very real, they do not have the last word. They do not have ultimate power over us, because reigning over this world of fearsome things is a God who is mightier than they. Time and again in Scripture the word is, “Do not be afraid.” It is, you might say, the first and the last word of the gospel.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”

Beverly Zink-Sawyer

It is easy to forget that God’s all-powerful word is still spoken amid the noise and chaos of our lives and world. And like Jesus’ word of peace spoken over the raging storm, God’s word still destroys the forces that threaten to do us harm and still calms our deepest fears. “One little word,” the word “above all earthly powers,” as Martin Luther’s great hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” puts it so well, can “fell” whatever darkness threatens to undo us.