

Peace, Be Still

There is a moment in the Gospel of Mark that has steadied more frightened souls than perhaps any other. The disciples are in a boat, crossing the Sea of Galilee at the command of Jesus himself, when a great storm descends upon them. The waves break over the sides. The water rises. These are not novices but seasoned fishermen, men who have known that lake all their lives, and yet they are terrified. And where is the Lord? He is asleep in the stern, his head upon a cushion, undisturbed by the chaos that has gripped his friends.

I find that picture extraordinary. The Son of God, sleeping through a storm. It tells us something we are slow to learn: that peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of the One who is Lord over the trouble. Jesus was not asleep because he was indifferent. He was asleep because he was at rest in the perfect will of his Father. The storm did not frighten him, because he knew who held the wind in his fist.

The disciples, however, did what we so often do. They panicked, and then they accused. *"Master, do you not care that we should perish?"* (Mark 4:38). How that question echoes down the centuries. We have all prayed it in one form or another. Do you not care, Lord? Have you forgotten me? Are you asleep while my world falls apart? It is the cry of a heart that has lost sight of the character of God for a moment, swallowed up by the size of its circumstances.

And here is the wonder. Jesus did not rebuke them first. He rebuked the storm. *"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm"* (Mark 4:39). With three words, he silenced what had silenced them. The Greek carries the force of a command to be muzzled, as one might quiet a raging animal. The sea that threatened to swallow them obeyed him instantly, as creation always obeys its Maker.

I want you to notice the order of things. The calm came before the lesson. He stilled the storm, and only then did he turn to them and ask, *"Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"* That is grace. He did not wait for their faith to be strong before he acted. He acted, and then he taught them about the faith they lacked. This is how the Lord deals with us still. He meets us in our fear and our failure, and from that place of rescue, he begins to grow us.

What was the challenge for the disciples? Not that they were in a storm, for the storm was the will of God for them that night. Their challenge was that they reasoned from the storm to the heart of Christ, rather than from the heart of Christ to the storm. They let the circumstance interpret the Saviour, when they ought to have let the Saviour interpret the circumstance. Had they remembered who was in the boat with them, they could have slept as soundly as he did.

That is the secret of peace. It is not a technique to be mastered but a Person to be trusted. The same Jesus who spoke to the wind speaks to you. He is not wringing his hands over your situation. He is not anxious about tomorrow. He is the sovereign Lord who orders all things, and he is *in the boat* with you. The storm that threatens you has already been told what it may and may not do.

So when the waters rise, do not first ask whether he cares. He has settled that question at Calvary. Ask instead that you might have eyes to see him, asleep and unafraid, perfectly at peace in the will of his Father. And let his peace become your own. Hear him speak over the chaos of your heart those three immortal words: *Peace, be still*.

The wind will cease. There will be great calm. There always is, when Jesus speaks.

Questions

1. The disciples let the storm define Christ — "Do you not care?" Where are you reading God's heart through your circumstances instead of your circumstances through his heart? **(Mark 4:38)**
2. Three words silenced the sea. What chaos in you still needs to hear him say, "Peace, be still" — and do you believe he can? **(Mark 4:39)**
3. He calmed the storm before he questioned their faith. How does grace that rescues *first* change the way you face your own failures? **(Mark 4:40)**
4. His peace "passes all understanding." What worry will you finally hand over in prayer, so that peace can stand guard where fear has ruled? **(Philippians 4:7)**
5. "Be still, and know that I am God." In all your noise and motion, what would real stillness cost you this week — and what might it reveal? **(Psalm 46:10)**