

2.12.12 series: the urgent Gospel of Mark

title: Fear, Power, & Faith

text: Mark 4:35-41; 5:21-43

SUMMARY

There are at least two types of fear: the fear of the known, and the fear of the unknown. The fear of the known is the fear of something that may be tangible; we can describe what it is. The fear of the unknown is just the opposite; it's what we don't know about something that frightens us. In the stories that Mark recounts at the end of chapter 4 through chapter 5, there is something tangible that the characters are afraid of. A storm, a sickness, and a dying child. And in each case, Jesus displays a remarkable act of power that ultimately leaves the onlookers *more* frightened than they were initially. The reason? They are confronted with their own ignorance of who Jesus really is; they are frightened by the unknown. The answer, as Jesus tells Jairus in chapter 5, is to "fear not, just believe." But that requires us giving up control. In the end, many people turn away from Jesus because they believe they can control the fear they know, but the fear of the unknown requires something else: it requires faith that what is unknown is also good. The promise of Jesus is that when we have faith, he makes the unknown, known.

my story

Pastor Jeremy said that there are two types of fear. The fear of the known and the fear of the unknown. The fear of the known is like standing in a cage with a lion: you know what it is that you fear. The fear of the unknown is more like walking into a dark basement: it's not what you know about the basement that scares you, but what you don't know. *Have you ever experienced these two types of fears? Describe an instance where you experienced the fear of the known and unknown. How do these fears sometimes overlap? Which fear do you find more difficult to deal with? Why?*

segue

Jesus' words that calmed the storm held the same power as the words that formed the world and made order out of chaos. And the power that Jesus willingly gave up to heal the shame of the hemorrhaging woman was the same power that he gave up to save us from our sin and shame before a holy God. The loving hand that held the little girl's when he spoke, "Honey, it's time to get up now," is the same hand that lovingly holds yours through your deepest fears.

God's story

1) When literary critics consider a historical account, one way that they verify whether it has truly been recounted by an eyewitness is to examine the minute details that don't impact the overall scope of the story. Only an eyewitness would notice these small details and think to tell them as part of the story. One example that Mark records from Peter's testimony is that Jesus was "asleep on a cushion". In his mind's eye, he is envisioning Jesus laying on the stern of the

boat while he is bailing water for his life! *What are some of the other examples of eyewitness testimony in these stories? How do they add to the impact of the story? Does it change your perspective at all to realize that Peter was actually there for these events?*

2) One of the things that we see in these stories is that the onlookers are much more frightened after the miracles of Jesus than they were before. *Why do you think that is? How do you think that you would have reacted following Jesus' miracle had you been on the boat, or been the woman with the discharge (or in the crowd of people surrounding her!) or had you been Jairus or a member of his family? Why would you have reacted that way?*

3) Compare the story in Mark 4:35 with the story in Jonah 1. *What parallels can you see between Jesus and Jonah in these storm-at-sea narratives? Why do you think Mark chose to use similar language to that of the Jonah story in his account of the disciples in the storm?*

4) A central truth to the faith the Scripture teaches is that "faith is the antidote to fear". As we read these stories, as we read the Scripture, God very rarely asks us to follow him with blind faith. (Read Genesis 12. *Do you think this is the exception to that rule?*) More often, God appeals to what he has already done to stir his people on to greater faith and following him more closely.

my life in God's story

1) In the last two stories, Jesus delays the more urgent need of healing a dying child in order to confront the chronically bleeding woman who had touched the hem of his garment. Though to Jairus healing his daughter was top priority, to Jesus it made no difference whether he healed a sick child or raised her from the dead; he had the power to do both. *Why does Jesus take the time to draw this woman into the public eye? How do you respond when it seems that God is delaying an answer to an urgent concern in your life? Do you feel that God is delaying something in your life? What might God be trying to teach you through that delay?*

In *King's Cross* Tim Keller writes:

Jacques Ellul, in his classic *The Technological Society*, argues that in modern Western society we have been taught that nearly everything in life is there to be manipulated for our own needs... We're not God, but we have such delusions of grandeur that our self-righteousness and arrogance sometimes have to be knocked out of our heart by God's delays.[1]

Do you agree? Do you ever feel that you know better how God should resolve a problem in your life? Share an experience. How did the outcome affect your faith? Is it difficult for you to believe that God loves you completely? Why or why not?

2) Read 1 Cor. 12:8-10. Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, not a "virtue". *How might that affect the way you view others when they seem to have less faith than you? Have you ever found yourself asking God to help you believe more? What are some obstacles that make it difficult for you to believe that God is all powerful and good?*

3) *Is there something happening in your life right now that is scaring you? Are you scared that*

God will not bring about the ending that you're hoping for? Are you scared that God isn't paying attention? Has it gotten so overpowering that you're wondering where God even is at this point? Many of us have experienced or will experience trials, sorrows, and fears that leave us wondering if God cares. Please do not walk through these periods alone. Pray even when you doubt, and let others pray for you. God longs to calm our every fear, but sometimes we must take the step of placing our concerns in the loving hands of God and the praying hands of our brothers.

conclusion

We are not in control, and that's good! But the problem is that, like the disciples, we simply want Jesus to bail water when he wants to bring peace to the storm. The good news isn't that Jesus is going to take away all our problems. The good news is that he's going to fix *everything*! But we have to lay our lives down into the hands of the all powerful and loving Saviour, choosing the path of faith and letting him make the unknown, known.

[1] Timothy Keller, *King's Cross: the Story of the World in the Life of Jesus* (New York: Dutton, 2011), p.67.

:) DRAFTING COMMENTS (:

**Last chance! I'm posting this tomorrow after school.
Hey this looks awesome. Post away! - Jeremy
Looks good Laurie. Thank you. Jill**

Posted... too late to change :p