

**“Teacher, Don't You Care?”
(Finding Faith In Difficult Times)**

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Mark 4:35-41

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All Bible references in this sermon are taken from the New International Version (NIV)

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!”**

Grace to you from Jesus Christ our Lord. Just when you thought that it was safe to come back to church, you discover that I am preaching again. The cat came back. Thanks for the opportunity to talk about Jesus. I am excited about Jesus. Jesus puts the smile on my face and the hope in my heart.

If your excitement about Jesus is running low, try watching “The Chosen” on TBN, YOUTUBE or CW. It’s the life of Jesus; wonderfully done. The Jesus we meet there is warm, caring and has a twinkle in his eyes. He is very much like the Jesus that I fell in love with long ago. The man who plays Nicodemus in season 1 is amazing.

Many Messiah members are struggling with health issues and family problems. Our church attendance has never bounced back after Covid and our giving is not meeting our budget. It’s easy to give up on God when we get discouraged. Today’s sermon offers us hope.

Our sermon title: “Teacher, Don't You Care?” (Finding Faith In Difficult Times).

In Mark's gospel we read of a frightening event. It was evening. It had been a long day. Jesus and his disciples were in a sailboat. They were crossing the Sea of Galilee to find a place to rest. Suddenly a storm came up. Strong winds blew. The waves washed over the sides of the boat.

Several years ago Karen and I stood by the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum. It was exciting to walk where Jesus walked. The Sea is a big, long lake. You could see how a strong wind might bring dangerous waves. The disciples panicked. The boat was going down. Where was Jesus? Jesus was sleeping on a cushion in the back of the boat. **Here's trivia about Jesus. He could sleep anywhere.**

The disciples asked, **“Teacher, don't you care... if we drown?”** What a question. They knew Jesus and his sermons. The disciples witnessed his miracles. The Lord helped everyone. **But in their fear they felt very alone.** They knew the reason: Jesus didn't care about them. **There are three reasons why we might question if Jesus cares. #1) We question Jesus' care if we are alone and helpless.**

When have you felt helpless and alone? When have you wondered “Jesus, don't you care about me?” Maybe there's a bully at school? Maybe a relationship fell apart? Perhaps your bad choices caught up with you? These words came to your lips, “Teacher, don't you care?”

I read a news report about loneliness. A boy, three and a half year old, was staying overnight with his babysitter. I think that it happened in Chicago. Sometime in the morning the babysitter left the child alone. Maybe he thought that the parents were coming for him. The sitter was wrong.

Unsupervised, the little boy left the house and wandered off. He wore only a diaper. No shoes. He walked alone until 11:00 at night. No one knew he was missing. No one on the street asked if he was lost. No one offered food. The toddler could have been kidnapped, hit by a car or attacked by dogs. When the police found him he was dirty, hungry and had blood on his face. When the officers called his parents they had no idea that he was missing. They were home asleep with the rest of the family.

Talk about being alone. Talk about being helpless. Did the child know his

address or the names of his parents? Did he wonder “Does anybody care?” I've

prayed for him and his family every night for two years.

How did he find his way home? I have a theory. Jesus described his relationship with people of faith and innocent children. **Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me..." (John 10:11, 27)**

I think that Jesus called to the boy like a shepherd calling to his sheep. The boy knew his voice. Jesus kept telling him, "Follow me. You aren't alone. I'll lead you home." I can't prove it. But how else did the child get home safely? How many times have you been in a horrible situation that you thought would never end? Then one day you realize that the trouble has passed, and you are in a better place. Maybe your good shepherd led you home?

Here's how Jesus responded to the disciples. He said to the storm **"Quiet. Be still"**. Suddenly the storm was over. Jesus asked them **"Where is your faith?"** The disciples wondered **"Who is this who calms the storm?"** Ask yourself, "Who is this Jesus who calms my storms?"

The Bible is full of individuals who questioned if God cared about them. Consider Job in the Old Testament.

#2) Job questioned God because his life had no meaning. Job cried out to God and his friends, **"I despise my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone; my days have no meaning."** (Job 7:16) What made Job question God? His life had no meaning. Job despised his life. Why? He grieved the deaths of everyone he loved.

Maybe you know his struggle? When a loved one dies it hurts like a punishment. They were the reason we got up in the morning. We depended on each other. If we don't believe that because Jesus lives, we will live also, then the separation of death seems forever.

Life loses its meaning if we seek after things that have little meaning. Hobbies are great, but they can't take the place of building strong relationships. Earning a living is necessary. Being popular is important. But neither goal makes us into nice, caring people. Going to the gym improves our health but it doesn't enable us to forgive others or to be forgiven. When have you thought, **“I despise my life... My days have no meaning?”** We might ask “Jesus, don't you care?” But Jesus is not the problem.

Psalm 73 is one of my favorite psalms. The writer of Psalm 73 doubted God. **#3) He questioned if God cared about him because of jealousy.**

The psalmist writes, **“But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills.” (Psalm 73:3-5)**

He was jealous. He saw people who cursed God but they were rich. The writer knew individuals who were liars and stole from others but they were never sick or had worries. The Psalmist loved God, and tried to serve the Lord, but he was often sick and overcome by trouble. It wasn't fair. What was God thinking?

Here's the problem: the Psalm writer had misinformation. Everyone, even the rich and famous have problems, sadness and loss. Just think of how many movie stars, rock stars and sports heroes take their lives or die from an overdose.

God never promised anyone an easy life, but he does promise to share our troubles, and bring good from them. The psalmist realized that godless people are on a slippery slope. Their blessings are temporary. They still have to answer to God. Don't envy them.

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The psalmist counted his blessings. There had never been a day when God didn't cause the sun to shine on him or provide for him. He tells God, **“Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with**

your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory (heaven)... earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart..." (Psalm 73:23-26) People of faith are richer than they realize.

All of us have wondered, "Jesus, don't you care?" When it comes to faith we are all beginners. **Let me share four Biblical steps to finding faith in difficult times.** We don't do these things to win God's love. He loves us already. We do them because we want to love Jesus back. We want to be the people that God created us to be.

Here's how to find faith. Step 1) Be honest with God about your sins and failures. Don't make excuses. Don't blame others. The psalmist said, **"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."** (Psalm 66:18) If we hide our sins or deny them before God, they build walls between us. There is nothing that you can tell God that he hasn't heard before. There's nothing in your heart, that God doesn't know. There is no sin that Jesus' death on the cross can't wash away. Be honest with God about your sins and failures.

Step 2) Sometime, every day be quiet before God. Turn off your TV. Silence your phone. Go for a walk. Sit in your chair. Don't pray. Don't complain. Just listen. God tells us **"Be still and know that I am God."** (Psalm 46:10) If we don't hear God, maybe we aren't really listening.

It's okay to be silent before God. Let your mind go blank and listen. What often happens when we are quiet before God, is that the things that bother us the most pop to the surface. We might be angry or hurt, thankful or afraid. Tell God exactly what it is. Pour out your heart. When you run out of words, God will say "It's ok. I love you. The best is yet to be." He might use words or speak through our emotions.

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Step 3) Ask God for wisdom. Wisdom is knowing the best, most loving, thing to do next. James writes, **"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."** (James 1:5)

The secret to receiving wisdom is that we pray as if we know someone is listening. We need to pray as if God is willing to answer us. It helps to believe that he is the parent and we are the child.

Step 4) Pray often for others. Life isn't just about us. It's good to bring our needs to God. Often we just complain. Our faith deepens when we pray for our family, friends and people in crisis.

One of the best places to talk with God is in bed when we can't sleep. One Psalm writer tells God, **“On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, ... I cling to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:7-8)**

We cry less about our problems when we realize that other people have problems. My Mom (when she was alive), my brother Jim and I often woke up during the night, at 4 A.M. Mom taught us to pray for others. It was such a blessing to feel their prayers hundreds of miles away.

We can ask God to intervene in the lives of our co-workers, church members, neighbors and people in the news. I told you I pray for that little boy who wandered the Chicago streets. I pray for his parents and babysitter to become more responsible. I pray that the boy will always hear the voice of his good shepherd guiding him home. I hope that someone prays the same thing for my children and grandchildren.

Why do we have hope? Jesus cares about us. Christians have problems. But we have a church full of people ready to help. Our attendance is down. But many churches would love to have our attendance. Our giving is down but most churches would celebrate your generosity. God isn't done with us. **Did you know that there is only one thing that God can't do? I preach again September 8th. Come to that service and I'll tell what it is. Amen.**