**Sermon- December 5 2021**

**Looking for Jesus Series**

**Mark 4:35-41**

**ADVENT- PEACE**

Good morning! Isn’t it great having all these student preachers? Such short sermons!!

Anyway, I’d like to start with a disclaimer, if I may.

It’s been an interesting journey so far, studying preaching, and I’ve learned so much already, though you may disagree!

And I have to say, I’ve really wrestled with this passage.

The first thing I ever learned about preaching was that one of the most important things, is that I love those listening.

Well, at first, I thought that’s easy, it’s easy for me to love you, because you’re my church family,

but I’m about to preach about a furious storm.

And I know that some of you have experienced terrible storms and are even going through them right now.

And if I don’t take great care, I could come across as insensitive or dismissive of your pain. And I would never want to do that. So, rightly, a lot of prayer has gone into this sermon.

Now, John and the youth are staying in to listen to the sermon today, so I thought we’d have a bit of fun. There’s a movie reference in this sermon, and if anyone guesses it right, come to me at the end. I have chocolate for them!

Anyway, let’s begin...

**Mark 4:35-41**

New International Version

Jesus Calms the Storm

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!”

**Prayer**

Heavenley Father, creator of everything, the one who controls even the weather, yet is gentle enough to love everyone of us; open our minds and our hearts; speak to our very souls and help us to hear what you want to reveal to us today. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray, AMEN.

What do you mean Jesus is asleep?!! How can he be asleep?

Hands up of you’ve ever been in a real-life storm?

Growing up in Scotland, there was a time when I used to go to school by boat, often it was a bit choppy but if it was especially stormy the boat didn’t sail.

Then there were times I would travel on the big boat to the mainland. There was seldom a time that boat wouldn’t sail! And I remember, one super stormy day, lying down trying desperately hard to sleep but the boat was rocking so hard I was almost rolling off the seats!

I remember looking out staring out the porthole and one minute all I could see was sea, and the next minute all I could see was sky. And that’s how the journey home continued. Fortunately, I didn’t suffer from seasickness, but with all the creaking and crashing the boat was making, I was scared for my life.

And then there are the metaphorical storms. We’ve all experienced them! When life feels out of control, and you don’t think you’ll make it out the other side.

Perhaps you were left in an empty hole by the sudden loss of someone you love;

or you experienced a housefire and lost everything you own,

or the loss of employment leaving you with increasing debt,

or you feel like your kids have gone off the rails and you can see them ruining their life but there’s not a thing you can do about it, because they’re the ones making the choices not you.

Everything is out of your control.

In this storm, I wonder how the disciples felt, some of them fishermen, and certainly they were used to travelling by boat, used to storms even.

But this was a furious storm! With waves crashing over the boat, and the boat filling with water! And these seasoned sailors were terrified. They thought they were going to die.

And then they look to Jesus, and what is he doing? He’s sound asleep! On a cushion no less!

And these men are his disciples, he is their leader. The one they look to for instruction. The one with all the answers. And he’s asleep??!!! Doesn’t he care about them? Afterall they’ve been through together? And they’ve followed him so faithfully.

Does that sound familiar? Don’t we do that? When life is hard, we wonder where Jesus is? If Jesus is asleep; or maybe he doesn’t exist? I mean, if God was real and he really loved me, wouldn’t He do something? Wouldn’t he help, make all our pain and trouble go away?

Why do we assume that Jesus’ silence or inaction means he doesn’t care?

Have you noticed, this story’s very similar to the story of Jonah, the guy swallowed by a big fish?

Jonah also slept in a boat. He’d taken a boat bound for Tarshish, trying to run away from God.

An unexpected storm comes up and it’s so fierce it’s tearing the boat apart. The sailors are convinced they’re going to die because one of them has upset one of the gods, and well, it’s not them, so it must be the passenger who is now asleep below!

“What have you done?” They said waking him up.

Jonah had already told them he was running form God.

And as much as they didn’t want the guilt of his death on their hands, or Jonah’s God after them, they eventually agreed,

if they wanted live, the only solution was to throw him overboard,

and when they did, the storm immediately stopped.

First they were afraid the storm was going to kill them. Now they have a new fear!

How powerful is Jonah’s God that he controls the sea and the weather?

In the bible, the New International Version says, “The men feared the Lord GREATLY”, because of what they’d seen him do,

the English Standard Version says they now fear him EXCEEDINGLY,

the Contemporary English Version says they were TERRIFIED,

and the New Living Translation says they were AWESTRUCK by the Lord’s GREAT POWER.

In our story, Jesus sleeps and the disciples wake him fearing for their lives, and JESUS calms the storm.

Jesus is to the storm in our story, what God is to the storm in Jonah’s story.

(repeat)Jesus calms the storm in our story, God calmed the storm in Jonah’s story.

Is this how Jesus was able to sleep during such a furious storm; he knew he had the power of God?

He knew if he told the wind and waves to be still, they would obey him, and everything would be calm? And everyone would be safe and at peace again?

The second thing to think about is, Jesus is fully God and fully human. Not 50/50, but 100/100.

Hands up if it irritates you when someone says “110 percent!”? Oh “110%!” “I gave it 110%!” Don’t you just hate that? There is only 100% in 100%. There is no more! It’s out of 100!

(Chuckles)

Unless you are God.

Matthew 1:23- “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which mean’s God with us).

Phil 2:5-11- “…though he was in the form of God…made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself…”

Fully God. Fully human. 100/100.

So how’s this relevant?

Well, it was evening. Jesus had spent all day teaching. He taught the people using all kinds of parables, stories, and he was teaching his disciples as well.

Spending all day teaching and explaining must be exhausting. I’m sure the teachers here would agree!

Fully human, Jesus was tired and needed to sleep. I know I get tired! Jesus got tired too! Jesus experienced all the same things we do. He got hungry, sad, happy, tired. He understands how we feel because he felt it too; we know he cares, because he knows how we feel!

And fully God? How amazing to have God in the boat with you?

Creator of the universe. What could harm God?

He slept because he had nothing to fear.

Jesus knew who he was. And therefore, knew his purpose.

Today was not his day to die.

No, this was No Time To Die.

But more than that, he had no need to fear death.

Jesus was there in the beginning with God, and he was God,

he knew before he was ever born as that baby to Mary and Joseph,

that his destiny was to die a painful, humiliating, rejected death on a lonely cross,

to then come back to life victorious, because of his deep love for his creation, all of humanity, including his friends in the boat with him, and including you and me.

He knew who he was and what his purpose is. He had nothing to fear.

So how do we find peace?

Do we realise that Jesus is in the boat with us? What does it mean for us to know that Jesus is in the boat with us?

Well, the disciples never drowned that day. But they did go through the storm. And in that storm, they saw the power of God, the power of Jesus. They learned that Jesus was in control.

We panic, and allow fear to get the better of us, because it feels as if Jesus is asleep. Then he wakes and we see his power and we’re even more afraid! Like the disciples “who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him?”

Which would you rather? A sleeping Jesus, one who is silent and inactive, or one that is awake and in control?

I know which one I’d rather!

What about you?

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not come into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

What matters is not whether there is a storm. But whether we know Jesus – Jesus who is with us in the boat, and in control!

Phil 4:6-7 says- Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Transcends all understanding- goes beyond anything we can understand or imagine. That's the peace of God.

I remember a time, the hardest storm I ever went through: when my marriage fell apart.

I had 5 young children, the youngest only a year old, and I remember, standing in the bathroom, sobbing.

The pain of rejection, and fear as I thought “what am I going to do?”, “How could I possibly bring up these beautiful kids on my own?”

I didn’t even have the words to articulate what I was feeling,

I just cried out to God “help me”.

And I remember hearing what I was convinced was an audible voice, say “I am”.

And this incredible sense of peace came over me. I felt calm.

Now, my circumstances didn’t change. As many of you know, I am still divorced. But I'm not on my own.

I have worth. I have purpose. I am loved. And I am forgiven.

God is the boat. God is in control; we have never been in control.

We think we are, we try to be, but we’re not. He always was, even before we realise it, as terrifying as it might be when we first see that, what a relief.

So, what does it mean to know that God is in the boat with us?

We have nothing to fear.

Will there be storms?

Yep! But we have nothing to fear.

If you have never made the decision to ask Jesus into your life, why wait a moment longer?

It may feel like Jesus is asleep, but he wants you to go to him.

Let’s go to Jesus together, right now.

**Let’s pray.**

Lord Jesus, wake up! We don’t want to keep going a moment longer without you in our lives.

It doesn’t all make sense yet, in fact it’s a little scary, but we can see that you have incredible power, and that you are in control.

We know that God sent you to live as a human, so that we can see there is a better way to live;

and you died so that we can be made right with our creator, God.

I’m sorry I’ve tried to steam ahead and sort out my own mess.

I’m sorry I’ve tried to live life without you in it and make myself God;

there are times I’ve made a terrible mess and hurt people; people you love, that’s not what I was created for.

Thank you that you didn’t come to condemn me.

Thank you that because of you I am forgiven.

Thank you for bringing your peace into my life.

In the name of Jesus, our saviour, Amen.

**Questions for further reflection:**

1. What movie was referenced in the sermon? :)

2. Have you accepted Jesus into your life? If so, how did you come to make that decision? And what difference has it made in your life? If not, what is stopping you?

3. Think of a time you’ve been in a storm, what got you through it? Did things turn out the way you hoped or expected?

4. Have you ever experienced the peace of God? Tell us about it.

5. If someone was thinking about accepting Jesus into their life, what