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MARK

THE NIV
APPLICATION
COMMENTARY

From biblical text . . . to contemporary life

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In a time of frenetic end time speculation, patience becomes essential. Dahl writes,

To the growth which God gives in the sphere of organic life, in accordance with his own established order, corresponds the series of events by which God leads history toward the end of the world and the beginning of the new aeon, in accordance with his plan of salvation.²⁸

Elijah must come first; the Son of Man must suffer, the gospel must be preached to all nations, the disciples must face suffering, judgment will fall upon Jerusalem. Then we await our Lord's coming, who comes in God's time.

28. Dahl, "The Parables of Growth," 154.

Mark 4:35-41



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?"

³⁹He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Original Meaning

IN A LARGE unit beginning in 4:35 and ending in 6:6a, Jesus continues to spend much of his time by the Sea of Galilee and even ventures across the lake. In the first episode, panicked disciples rouse Jesus from sleep; in the next-to-last episode, he rouses a girl from the sleep of death (5:39). Jesus is shown to possess power to still outward storms that threaten life and to still the inward storms of torment and grief that threaten our souls. We learn in these scenes that Jesus is not only sovereign over the demonic forces and debilitating and defiling illnesses, but he is also sovereign over the potent forces of nature and of death. Despite the mighty works that Jesus performs, this second section (3:7-6:6a) concludes with the report of his rejection in his hometown (6:1-6a), just as the first section (1:14-3:6) concluded with his rejection by the Pharisees and Herodians (3:6). As the parable of the sower made clear, many are unable to hear and bear fruit.

Overview of 4:35-6:6a

SEVERAL THEMES EMERGE in this unit (4:35-6:6a). The motif of death runs through most of the incidents. Jesus does not still an average storm but a "furious squall" that threatens to swamp the boat (4:37). He delivers the disciples

from the peril of death at sea, the place where Jews believed that evil and God clash. In the Gerasene territory across the lake Jesus does not exorcise one who is marginally possessed but one who is victimized by a legion of demons (5:1-20). No one has been able to subdue this ugly customer, so he has been ousted from society and forced to live in the tombs, the realm of death. Back home in more welcoming territory, Jesus "saves" a woman who has had a devitalizing ailment that has stymied physicians for twelve years (5:24-34). She is walking death. He then does not simply cure a child of sickness but raises her from death (5:35-43). The message is clear: Jesus is equal to any threat that may shatter human life.

Compared to the previous miracles, Mark now gives us much more information about the people who are healed by Jesus. Each of the characters is driven by a sense of desperation. The disciples find themselves in dire straits, whirled about by a sudden tempest while Jesus slumbers. The demon-possessed man has been beaten and chained by others and now lashes himself with stones in a desperate attempt to purge himself of his inner turmoil. The legion of unclean spirits causes the possessed man to race toward Jesus and prostrate himself before him (5:6) in a desperate bid to ward off an exorcism. The townsfolk from the Gerasene region are desperate to get Jesus to leave their territory before he destroys any more businesses. The father whose daughter lies at death's door is desperate that she be restored to health and falls before Jesus' feet in a frantic plea for help (5:22). He is no less desperate than the woman who has wasted her living on fruitless remedies for an affliction that cuts her off from normal social functioning. She touches Jesus' garment in the desperate hope of a miracle. Those most open to receiving Jesus' power in their lives are those who recognize their own desperate need of it. Those who are not open to his power are no less desperate but have convinced themselves that they do not need it.

A third common feature that appears in these accounts is the contrast between fear and faith. One might expect that someone with such power would arouse overwhelming joy. Instead, many respond to Jesus with fear. The disciples fail to have faith and panic when threatened by the sea squall. Jesus chides them for their lack of faith, which here means confidence in Jesus' power; but they are dumbfounded by his power to quiet the sea and are "terrified" (4:41). The townsfolk of Gerasa become afraid when they observe the demonized man, whom they have been powerless to control, now in his right mind and sitting at Jesus' feet (5:15). The woman with the flow of blood is petrified when Jesus looks around to see who touched him and when she realizes what has happened to her. She musters enough courage to confess to him (5:33), and Jesus commends her faith, which has saved her (5:34). Jesus tells the ruler of the synagogue not to fear at the news of his

daughter's death, only to continue to have faith (5:36). Finally, the disrespect Jesus receives in Nazareth leads him to marvel because of their lack of faith (6:6a). Faith flings wide the gates to receive his power, and that casts out all fear.

The Storm at Sea (4:35-41)

THE UNIT OPENS with Jesus urging his disciples to set sail for the other side of the lake. Obedience to this command requires leaving the crowd and joining Jesus in the boat (4:36a). The "other boats" with him suggests that the group is not limited only to the Twelve (4:36b). The boat in this section becomes an "image of those who travel in intimate fellowship with Jesus, separated from other followers and the masses who stand on the security of the shore."¹ The disciples take him with them in the boat because the fishermen in the group are presumably the expert mariners. Ironically, they are the ones terrified by the unexpected storm, while Jesus, the carpenter (6:3), sleeps serenely on a sandbag used for ballast (translated "cushion") in the stern. One can imagine that at the close of a hard, full day, preaching to hardened hearts, Jesus is physically exhausted. Those attuned to Scripture, however, catch a deeper significance behind his peaceful repose. Jesus' sleep in the midst a raging storm churning the sea around him and filling the boat with water is a sign of his trust in God (Job 11:18-19; Pss. 3:5; 4:8; 121:3-4; Prov. 3:23-26) and contrasts with the terror of the disciples.

The disciples, however, do not interpret his untroubled sleep as evidence of his trust in God, which will also ensure their welfare. They regard it as a token of his indifference to their safety in their hour of danger.² They awaken Jesus with an indignant wail of complaint, as if he were in some way responsible for their plight. Their question expects the answer yes: "You do care that we are perishing, don't you?" (4:38), but it suggests that they are peeved with his apparent lack of concern. There is bitter irony that these same disciples will go to sleep on him in his hour of terror in Gethsemane, unmoved by his pleas for them to watch and pray with him (14:37, 40-41). They do not doze off then because of their trust in God but, as Mark tells us, because of a bad case of heavy eyes (14:40). Jesus reproaches them, "Are you still sleeping?" in a far more critical hour. Their sleep reveals that they do not care that he is about to perish. The early symptoms of heavy eyes that cannot see appear in this scene as their fear in the face of the storm overwhelms them. It shows that they are like the ones the psalmist

1. James G. Williams, *Gospel Against Parable: Mark's Language of Mystery* (Sheffield: Almond, 1985), 100.

2. Marshall, *Faith As a Theme*, 216-17.

describes in Psalm 107:23-32 as witnesses of the works of the Lord but whose courage melts away, and they reel like drunken men at their wit's end:

Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
and he brought them out of their distress.
He stilled the storm to a whisper;
the waves of the sea were hushed.
They were glad when it grew calm,
and he guided them to their desired haven.
Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for men (vv. 28-32).³

Having to rouse Jesus from his sleep evokes another biblical theme of sleep as a divine prerogative and a symbol of divine rule.⁴ Isaiah 51:9-10 may shed more light on Jesus' sleep.

Awake, awake! Clothe yourself with strength,
O arm of the LORD;
awake, as in days gone by,
as in generations of old.
Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces,
who pierced that monster through?
Was it not you who dried up the sea,
the waters of the great deep,
who made a road in the depths of the sea
so that the redeemed might cross over?⁵

Jesus' rest is another token of his divine sovereignty that the disciples do not yet recognize, and the formidable power of the tempest is promptly overcome when he arises and speaks. He answers their anxious cries by rebuking the wind with a word.⁶ That he is able to transform a great storm (4:37) into a great calm (4:39) with just a word reveals he has power to do what only the God who created the sea can do (see Gen. 8:1; Job 26:12; Pss. 65:7, 74:13-14; 89:9; 93:3-4; 104:5-9; 106:9; 114:3; Isa. 50:2; Nah. 1:4; 2 Macc. 9:8). Jesus has mastery over the sea, the place of chaos and evil, as God does. If the disciples only understood that they had set to sea with one who has

3. See also Ps. 69:1-2.

4. B. F. Batto, "The Sleeping God: An Ancient Near Eastern Motif of Divine Sovereignty," *Bib* 68 (1987): 153-77.

5. See also Ps. 44:23-24.

6. The translation in the KJV, "Peace, be still," hardly captures the forcefulness of Jesus' word. Jesus uses the same rebuke when he tells the demons to shut up (Mark 1:25; 3:12; 9:25). See 2 Enoch 40:9; 43:1-3; 69:22; 4 Ezra 6:41-42; Jub. 2:2.

such power, they would confess that all their fears were groundless. The disciples' faith must continue to grow and become tempered as hardened steel by life's hard circumstances.

After calming the sea, Jesus rebukes the disciples for their hysteria, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Faith here refers to faith in the divine power present in Jesus' person. The incident reveals their utter dependence on Jesus; he is their refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble, their comforter, who can still the fury of the oppressors though they roar like the waves of the sea. Consequently, they should not fear (Ps. 46:1-3; Isa. 51:12-16). Faith is clearly not something that is inborn; it can ebb and flow, depending on circumstances, and is most likely to fizzle in situations of danger. Despite the disciples' fear and lack of faith, Jesus muzzles the storm and preserves their lives. What can he do when people show faith?

The fear of the disciples, however, does not alleviate after the storm quiets down. Instead, their fear intensifies as it shifts to the person with them in the boat, who has just shown his divine control over the sea. Jesus' explanation of his parables did not prepare them for anything as portentous as this miracle. In the Jonah story, which has some parallels with this incident, the sailors become frightened because this prophet serves the God who made the sea and the dry land (Jonah 1:5-6). The disciples' fear stems from Jesus' God-like control of the sea (see Ps. 89:9).⁷ Although they have had the greatest opportunity to see and hear Jesus and have been given the mysteries of the kingdom, they are still haunted by doubt and fear. Now they are eyewitnesses of his divine power that can still both the whirlwind and the sea.

The disciples' awe before the numinous is appropriate, but they still have only the vaguest inkling of who this man is in their midst, who wields such power. The light may be too bright for their eyes to take it all in. One might compare the disciples who have been delivered at sea with the Israelites who were rescued from Egypt. After God saved Israel from their captors through mighty works, "the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant" (Ex. 14:31). The question in Mark's

7. Hooker, *Mark*, 140. Gundry (*Mark*, 245-46) argues that "Mark uses the OT by way of analogy" and points out significant differences between the accounts in Mark and Jonah. Jesus is not fleeing the presence of the Lord, and there is no hint that the Lord sends the storm as some warning (Jonah 1:3-4, 10). Jesus is asleep in the stern, not in the hold (1:5). The disciples do not battle the storm as the sailors did or cast lots to see who caused the calamity (1:5, 7). The calm comes when Jonah is thrown overboard, not when he speaks (1:15). Jesus does not pray to God but addresses the sea directly, and his word creates the great calm. The differences in the stories, when read together, make it clear that something greater than Jonah is here (see Matt. 12:41; Luke 11:32).

Gospel will be whether the fear of the disciples will turn to absolute trust in this new and greater deliverer.

Bridging Contexts

THE CALMING OF the storm is the first so-called nature miracle in the Gospel of Mark. Anderson notes that our modern scientific skepticism makes moderns "less shy of healings and exorcisms," for which "some scientific analogies can be produced" or some psychological explanation can be given, than they are of nature miracles, which are likely to be dismissed as impossible.⁸ There is no shortage of modern scholars who treat these stories as legendary accretions or as exaggerated expansions of normal events. The approach of the nineteenth century still lives today. Scholars at that time assumed that God created immutable laws of nature and, having set them in motion, left them to operate mechanically like the movement of a clock. David Hume, in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, defined a miracle as a violation of natural laws and assumed that it was impossible.

This doctrine of natural laws governing the universe forced interpreters to look for more rational explanations of what really happened in miracles since the suspension of natural physical laws could not happen. H. E. G. Paulus, for example, explained away the miracle by claiming that Jesus did not speak to the sea but only cried out, "What a dreadful storm! It must be over soon." The disciples misunderstood his words as the cause of the sudden calm. One is no less credulous if one believes this kind of natural explanation than if one believes that Jesus calmed the sea with his word, as Mark reports. One should also think twice about the authoritative pronouncements of scholars who say that moderns can no longer believe in the notion of miracles and the supernatural. There are so many exceptions to this imagined "modern person" who does not believe in miracles that it is useless. The assertion may be true of the "Cultured Despisers of Religion" but not of ordinary people, many of whom are no less educated and intelligent.

Most today would concede that in dealing with the miracles of Jesus one should not decide in advance what is or is not possible. We ought never pre-judge that something certainly cannot happen. We miss the point if we swap the miraculous elements with some natural explanation that supposedly will make more sense to the well-educated modern mind. But the modern scientific worldview, which insists on verification through repeated measurements, blinds many to the miraculous and spiritual dimensions of life. For example,

8. Anderson, *Mark*, 142.

one scholar states regarding the issue of unclean spirits: "A conclusive answer has to wait for further scientific developments in order that scientists can arrive at true findings in this field."⁹ Science is useful in debunking fraudulent claims, but it is not the final appeal for the truth of miracles because its basic assumption is that something is not real if it is not replicable and not measurable.

Bonhoeffer has an interesting discussion of those who complain that they find it hard to believe. He argues that they may not simply be wrestling with intellectual issues. Instead, it may be a sign of "deliberate or unconscious disobedience." He imagines a pastor properly responding to the crisis of faith in this way:

"You are disobedient, you are trying to keep some part of your life under your own control. That is what is preventing you from listening to Christ and believing his grace. You cannot hear Christ because you are wilfully disobedient. Somewhere in your heart you are refusing to listen to his call. Your difficulty is your sins. . . . Only those who obey can believe and only those who believe can obey."¹⁰

The modern embarrassment over the miracles because they are contrary to what we know about nature assumes that we know everything about nature even when we know so little about God.

At the same time, one can also miss the point by trying to muster conclusive evidence to prove that the miracles happened as reported in the Gospels. Endless reams of attempted scientific proof can kill the miracle as well. A miracle is a miracle only if God speaks to us through it. Buechner defines a miracle as "an event that strengthens faith."¹¹ Miracles may speak louder than words but not always as clearly, and the miracles in Mark are frequently ambiguous. To the eyes of faith, one thing is seen; to the eyes of the blind, the healing or the exorcism simply proves that Jesus works as the devil's sorcerer (3:22, 28-29).¹²

In Mark's Gospel, the nature miracles offer more profound clues for the disciples to learn Jesus' full identity as the Son of God. Their willingness to be at Jesus' beck and call, to join the little flotilla of boats and go across to the other side at his command, shows their openness to new revelation.

9. Raoul Syx, "Jesus and the Unclean Spirits: The Literary Relation Between Mark and Q in the Beelzebul Controversy (Mark 3:20-30 par)," *Louvain Studies* 17 (1992): 180.

10. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 76.

11. Frederick Buechner, *Listening to Your Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1992), 304.

12. To Jews, the Exodus was a great miracle of deliverance, but Josephus describes one Egyptian explanation of it as "the expulsion of rebellious lepers and criminals who had been expelled and pursued to the frontiers of Syria" (*Ag. Ap.* 1:26-27).

The parables and their explanations do not clarify everything. The miracle on the sea points the disciples further along the way to the truth. Divine power is at work through Jesus. Again, Buechner is on target when he writes: "Faith in God is less apt to proceed from miracles than miracles from faith in God."¹³

Even when they are confronted with a miracle of this magnitude, the disciples are still in a fog and cannot immediately put two and two together. The rescue at sea displays who Jesus is and what he can do for those whose lives are threatened. Jesus has power over the forces of chaos and can rescue them from whatever storms may rampage through their lives, including the storms of persecution. This miracle is not against nature so much as it is against Satan, who would destroy Jesus' followers and their faith. Jesus' dominion over the wind and the sea points to what it will be like when "the rule of Satan is no more."¹⁴ In John's vision of the new heaven and earth, the sea is no more (Rev. 21:1; see 4:6; 15:2; 20:13).

In bridging the contexts in Gospel narratives, we may ask three questions: What does it reveal about Jesus? What does it reveal about the human predicament? What solution does it present for that predicament? The awestruck disciples raise the key issue in this story when they ask, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (4:41). Achtemeier gets to the essence when he comments: "The subduing of the sea and wind was not merely a demonstration of power; it was an epiphany, through which Jesus was unveiled to his disciples as the Savior in the midst of intense peril." The answer to the first question is that Jesus has the power of God to "conquer the powers of darkness arrayed against him."¹⁵

Comparing Isaiah 43:1-10 with the story in Mark illuminates the high Christology of Mark. Jesus is doing in Mark's story what Isaiah proclaims that God promises to do.

Isaiah 43

¹But now, this is what the LORD says—
he who *created* you, O Jacob,
he who *formed* you, O Israel:
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have *summoned you by name*; you are
mine.

Mark

Jesus has created the Twelve (3:12)
and summoned disciples by name
(1:16, 20; 2:14; 3:16-18).

13. Buechner, *Listening to Your Life*, 305.

14. James Kallas, *The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles* (London: SPCK, 1961), 78.

15. Paul J. Achtemeier, "Person and Deed: Jesus and the Storm-Tossed Sea," *Int* 16 (1962): 176.

Isaiah 43

²When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.
³For I am the LORD, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I give Egypt for your *ransom*,
Cush and Seba in your stead.
⁴Since you are precious and honored
in my sight,
and because I love you,
I will give men in exchange for you
and people in exchange for your life.
⁵*Do not be afraid*, for I am with you;
I will bring your children from the
east
and gather you from the west.
⁶Lead out those who have eyes but are
blind,
who have ears but are deaf.
¹⁰"You are my witnesses," declares
the LORD,
"and my servant whom I have
chosen,
so that you know and believe me
and understand that *I am he*.
Before me no god was formed
nor will there be one after me.

Mark

Jesus is with them when they pass
through the waters (4:36) and saves
them from peril at sea. The assur-
ance that they not be harmed by
fire is echoed in 9:49: "Everyone
will be salted with fire."

Jesus announces to the disciples
that he gives his life as a ransom for
many (10:45).

Jesus rebukes the cowardice of the
disciples and tells a synagogue ruler
(5:36) and his disciples not to be
afraid (6:50).

See 4:12; 8:18; Jesus heals two
blind men (8:22-26; 10:46-52)
and heals a deaf man (7:31-37).
When Jesus comes to the disciples
walking on the waves, he
announces, "It is I [or, I am he]!"
(6:50).

The conclusion in Isaiah 43:11-12 proclaims,

"I, even I, am the LORD,
and apart from me there is no savior.
I have revealed and saved and proclaimed—
I, and not some foreign god among you.
You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "that I am God."

Mark would have the readers draw the same conclusion about Jesus. Jesus is
the one who delivers his people, and in his hands they are safe.

The text also reveals something about the human predicament. We live in a fallen world beset by powers of chaos that are out to destroy us. Our faith is weak, and we do not know in what or in whom we can trust. Jesus' power to calm the storm presents the solution to this human plight. Trusting that he has God's power and cares for the community of faith is particularly reassuring in times when the powers of darkness seem to swallow it. Christ's first appearance in Revelation 1:9-20 presents a similar picture. John describes the exalted Son of Man with imagery that characterizes the Ancient of Days in Scripture. The Son of Man announces that he shares the divine title, "the First and the Last," and holds in his hands the keys of death and of Hades. With God's awesome power he is standing in the midst of his churches.



WE CAN EASILY claim to be courageous when everything is calm. We can have faith in God's deliverance when we do not sense any urgent need to be delivered. When we come under extreme pressure, however, the courage and assurance that Jesus even cares for his own, let alone preserves them from ultimate danger, can fade fast. Mark wrote his Gospel for communities facing intense stress and a raging storm of persecution. Marcus correctly argues that the Evangelist intended to lift the community's "eyes from the surging chaos that seems to engulf it and to fix them instead on the vision of the one enthroned in heaven, the monarch omnipotent in every storm." He continues:

In the light of this vision, the wild opposition of demons and human beings is seen not to be the deadly serious thing that it first appears to be, but rather a phenomenon that is worthy only of a disbelieving shake of the head. How do the "rulers" dare to set themselves against the living God? Do they not know who it is they oppose? . . . Mark's depiction of the invincible power of Jesus as he spearheads the battle against the demonized world enables his community not only to conquer its fear of the enemies but even to join in the divine laughter that sounds forth in the psalm [Ps. 2]. Let the enemy forces do their worst, striking even—as they think—unto the death. The joke will be on them . . . ¹⁶

Throughout church history, believers have seized on this account of the disciples assaulted by waves in the boat and applied the image to the church. Tertullian commented in the second century "that little ship is presented as

16. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 76.

a figure of the church, in that she is disquieted in the sea, that is, in the world, by the waves, that is, by persecutions and temptations" (*On Baptism* 12). To apply this to our contemporary situation we need only to name the storms that threaten the community of faith and paralyze it with fear. We must then lift our eyes above the tumult to the one who rules all things so that we may have the same assurance as Paul, who endured literal storms at sea that resulted in at least four shipwrecks (2 Cor. 11:25; also Acts 27:39-44). Faced with persecution's deadly peril, he knew what it was like to feel unbearably crushed and despairing of life itself (2 Cor. 1:8-10). He confesses: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (4:8-9).

This account in Mark touches on the plight of the human situation in a world still under Satan's sway. There will be many times when it looks like the foes are winning and the church is losing. As e. e. cummings expressed this anxiety: "King Christ, this world is all aleak, and life preservers there are none." But Jesus has already saved us, not from the perils of this mortal life, but from ultimate destruction. Confidence in this fact allows us to face all threats with courage and trust. How will we react when our ship feels tossed about and swamped by waves of opposition? Will we need to be rebuked like the disciples for losing our nerve and our faith? What will it take for us to know that Jesus is God and will protect us even through death?

The calming of the storm has to do with Jesus' announcement that God reigns, "that the hostile forces of Satan, wherever they might be, inside man, outside man, are being overthrown by Jesus, the Holy One of God."¹⁷ He restores God's dominion over a chaotic world invaded by forces that wreak havoc. Most people, however, are worried about their own little worlds and the storms that roar in to destroy them. In these personal situations many feel swamped by waves of a quite different sort. Like the disciples, they may feel that their cries for help meet with only a stony silence from heaven. Life is filled with hazards—and not just from the sea.

The desperation of the disciples while Jesus serenely sleeps may seem to parallel the church's sense of Jesus' absence in times of trial or an individual's sense of abandonment. There come times when we feel more acutely that the bridegroom has been taken away (2:20) or that he is not here (16:7). When the hurricanes sweep through our lives, Jesus may seem indifferent to our plight, asleep at the helm, or even absent. Many who lose their jobs, their health, and their friends may feel that Jesus deliberately ignores their fate and shows no concern for them. Fear leads to despair that God does not care. Adoniram Judson, America's first foreign missionary, fell into deep

17. Kallas, *The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles*, 91.

despondency after the death of his baby, Maria, which followed his wife's death by only months. His grief was compounded because he was not with his wife during her illness. Swamped by waves of spiritual despair, he lamented: "God is to me the great Unknown. I believe in him but I find him not."¹⁸

The miracle of the storm does not teach us how to endure adversity patiently because Jesus immediately eliminates the problem. The emphasis in this story is on who Jesus is, not on how he rescues fretful disciples from danger whenever they cry out to him. One cannot expect a miraculous intervention that will calm all the storms in life. Storms are a part of life from which no one escapes. There are no stormless seas, and all sailors must learn to expect the unexpected. Chaos hits our lives, and it can all happen so quickly. One moment all is well; then, in a flash, all is hell. The disciples who were fishermen knew that the sudden squalls were a threat on the lake, but that did not make it any easier to cope when they appeared. C. S. Lewis lectured others about suffering, but it did not make it any easier to endure when it became a reality in his own life. The death of a cherished loved one, the loss of a job, the betrayal of a friend, the onslaught of those bent on destroying everything dear to us churn our lives as if we were a tiny cockleshell facing a hurricane.

Euripides wrote, "Happy is he who has escaped a storm at sea, who has come to harbor. Happy is he who has come up from under his troubles" (*Bacchae* 2.901-2). Euripides did not know the merciful God who saves people from squalls that roar through their lives. He did not know what true happiness (blessedness) is in following this one who can calm any storm in life. Reading Mark helps one learn to trust in a Savior who does not deliver us from storms but through the storms. Christianity is not a refuge from the uncertainties and insecurities of the world. Some may be too cowardly to get into the boat in the first place. Others may wish they never had embarked and want to retreat to the safety of the shore. But then they meet raging demons (5:2). There are no safe places in life, and one can only find security with Jesus and a serenity that this world does not know and cannot give. Christians know that Jesus has done battle with the strong man and has won. He has beaten down the savage storms, and one has no reason to fear anything from nature or the supernatural, from life or death (see Rom. 8:31-39).

18. Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 391.