

Asleep at the Keel

Waking to a Greater Reality

April 14, 2013

Paul says to fix our eyes on the greater reality, of the unseen eternal, (2 Cor 4:18) and realize that we live in a lesser reality, a poor reflection of the true reality found only in Christ. But, our reality seems so ... *real*. And Jesus seems so ... *ethereal*. It's hard to think of him being as real as *Walmart*. Do you like the snow? Do you like to ski? Have you ever tried snowboarding?



This is about 30 miles from where Jesus lived. Mount Hermon. At the base was the city of Caesarea Philippi. It's on the slopes of Mount Hermon that Peter finally saw the greater reality.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven." – Matthew 16:13-17 NIV



Peter lived about 30 miles away, in Capernaum, a fishing village on the Sea of Galilee. (Mat 4:13) Jesus had His main office here. He taught in the synagogue, and healed many, like, the Centurion's servant, Peter's mother-in-law, the demon possessed man, and the paralytic who was lowered through the roof. (Mark 1:21-2:12; Luke 7:1-10) Jesus was demonstrating through those who were overwhelmed, and burdened by the weight of this lesser reality, that a greater reality had come.



My favorite line in the Easter message was when I said, "The disciples *did* see a *ghost*, but it *wasn't* Jesus ... it was the *door!*" (For context, check out the Easter sermon: "Shuteye") They'd made the same mistake near Capernaum, when He walked on the Sea of Galilee (Mat 14:22-34) which is actually a *huge lake*.¹ And when the crowds came, Jesus would teach from a boat.

¹ The Sea of Galilee is 13 miles long, 8 miles wide, and 140 feet at its deepest.



That's Mount Hermon's snowy summit; it's like from here to Mount Baker, as the crow flies. This is the day Jesus would calm the storm.

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. – Mark 4:1 NIV



The Sea of Galilee is 700' *below* sea level; Mount Hermon is 9,232' *above* sea level.

At night, the cold mountain air hits the warm sea air, creating impressive, sudden storms. 12' waves were recorded breaking on shore in a 1992 storm!²



Both Luke and Matthew record the calming the sea, but neither was an eyewitness. Mark's Gospel is Peter's firsthand, eyewitness account, and it includes some incredible little details.



That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." [to get away] Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. – Mark 4:35-38a NIV

That cushion is one of my favorite details. You just know it was *calling* to Jesus *all afternoon!*

And Peter can't tell this story without picturing Jesus, on that cushion, asleep at the keel!

The disciples [at this point there's just a few, and they're experienced fishermen who know the Sea of Galilee well] woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" [Which was only moments away; so, they wake Him and say, "Help us bail ourselves out!" But, that's not how Jesus works] He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" – Mark 4:38b-39a NIV

Every holy man who ever performed a miracle had to call on God. Except Jesus. No rolling up of the sleeves. No formulating an incantation. **He speaks as though the storm is a misbehaving child.** And it immediately obeys. Both commands. Have you ever noticed He performs *two* miracles? He stops the wind – impressive, but maybe a coincidence – and (*this* is the big one!) stills the waves.

Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. – Mark 4:39 NIV

² From BiblePlaces.com, Todd Bolen, Editor and Assoc. Professor, The Master's College, Israel

It would take hours for those waves to dissipate. But, they become like glass, so fast, that the boat's still bobbin'! He woke. Groggy. And said to a *hurricane*: "Hush, now. Settle down!" Not since the Red Sea had *anything* like this happened; and even then, God had used an east wind, over an entire night! (Exodus 14:21)

On Easter, I made the point, that Jesus is saying, "**I'm not just someone who has power; I am power itself. Anyone and anything, that has any power, has it on loan from me** ... and that includes the wind and the waves ... *unruly brats ain't they!*" It's like when we dream. We speak a world into existence, and populate it with self-willed beings made in our image. And enter it, to interact, even as we rest outside of it, and sustain it. And every bit of it, beginning to end, is an expression of *our power*. God has so wired us, to intuitively understand His divine nature, as Creator Father, sustaining Spirit, and loving Savior.

He [Jesus] said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"
[Faith in what, exactly?] – Mark 4:39-41 NIV

First, in His timing. He's saying, "When you said, 'Don't you care if we drown?' it was a false premise. **I do allow the people I love to face the storms and sometimes drown.**" He rarely does anything according to *my* plan. **He lets things happen that I don't like, and don't understand.** I usually just want Him to help me bail myself out. But, that's not how He works.

Follow me on this: if God is powerful enough for you to be mad at Him, for not calming your storm, then He's powerful enough to have reasons that are beyond you. You can't have it both ways! Therefore, **the only cushion from the storm is His will.** But, you can rest in Him only to the degree that you trust His love. And that's His second point when He says, "Do you still have no faith?"

Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" – Mark 4:39-41 NIV

They were more terrified of Jesus than the storm! And, what do frightened people do? Fight or flight! And after Jesus' display, they're not fighting! They're crowding the bow. Tipping the boat. **They had more control over the storm than over Jesus.** But, a storm doesn't love you. "Do you still have no faith?" **Jesus is filled with immeasurable wisdom, unlimited power, and untamable love for you.** Before Jesus calms the storm, they're afraid — but after Jesus calms the storm, they're terrified! Why? **They couldn't imagine how someone so powerful could love someone so powerless.** But, that's just it. They're *so* powerless, *so* vulnerable, *so* helpless; and *that* makes 'em *so* lovable to One *so* loving. **It's the ultimate best and raging fierceness of a mother's and father's loving instinct to protect their child at any cost.**



Peter saw something Luke and Matthew didn't see. Mark purposely, almost identically, parallels Peter's account to ... *Jonah*. Jonah. In a boat. On the sea. To get away. Great wind. Violent storm. Impending doom. Frightened sailors. Crying out. And all while Jonah ... *soundly* ... *slept*. Until they woke him ...

"How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish." – Jonah 1:6b NIV



Only God has the power to calm a sea. And, Peter saw in Jesus something profoundly foreshadowed in Jonah.

[Jonah said] “Pick me up and throw me into the sea ... and it will become calm.” – Jonah 1:12a NIV

Because of his rebellion against God, Jonah knew he had to *offer himself* and *willingly die*, so that others could live; but, God did something *inexplicable!* Jonah *was* swallowed up, but *not* consumed.

[In the dark belly of that great fish, Jonah prayed to God] “You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, ‘I have been banished from your sight ... But you brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God.’” – Jonah 2:3-6 NIV

[Jesus said] For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ... and now one greater than Jonah is here. – Matthew 12:40-41 NIV

Once you see that the One with the power to calm the storm, willingly came to take *your* place in the raging sea, of eternal justice, and calmed the waves of sin and death, forever, it gets harder and harder to ever say, “Lord, don’t you care if we drown?” Because your eyes will become more and more fixed on the unseen eternal, greater reality. And you’ll live by faith, not by sight. And you’ll be empowered to walk in the reality of the greater, even in the midst of the winds and the waves of the lesser, because you’ll embrace the answer to the question in the boat: “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” (Mark 4:41b)

But, the depths Jesus went to, to lift you up, will be for naught if you fail to see, what Peter saw, at the foot of Mount Hermon.

“But what about you?” [Jesus] asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah ...” – Matthew 16:15-17a NIV

And the disciples weren’t the only ones who saw Him calm the sea.

Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. – Mark 4:35-38 NIV

And, those observing from the seashore, who saw Him heal the sick, and watched Him cast out demons, must’ve been abuzz with the sights they’d seen. But, seeing isn’t always believing, *is it*. Jesus would later say, regarding His favorite fishing village ...

“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.” – Matthew 11:23-24 NIV

Better to have never opened your eyes, than to close ‘em again. Though they’d witnessed the greater reality of the unseen eternal, they chose to fix their eyes and place their faith in the seeable, lesser reality of the here and now ... there and then.