Hope in the Dark

# (Mark 4.35-41)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. I want to share a message with you today that I’ve entitled “Hope in the Dark”. And so, if you have your Bible and you’d like to follow along we’re going to be reading from Mark chapter 4. Now, Mark’s gospel (gospel meaning good news) is one of my favorites because everything happens so quickly, and so it’s a very powerful gospel in that way, and there are two main themes that weave their way through his account of Jesus life, death, and resurrection.

The first is that his intention is to demonstrates that Jesus Christ is in fact the Son of God. In fact, he doesn’t leave any room for neutrality because he gives example after example of the blind receiving their sight, the lame walking, those with leprosy being healed, the deaf hearing, the dead being raised, and the good news preached to all people. And so, first of all, Mark reveals Jesus to be the Son of God with power.

The second theme that we find in Mark’s gospel is that Jesus gathered his followers around him with the intention that they wouldn’t just be enthusiasts, believers, or supporters, but that they would be instruments of his kingdom, servants passionately involved in the work of the kingdom. And so, in order to raise them up to be men of great faith, Jesus invests three years in them, encouraging them, building them up in their faith, revealing his glory to them with signs and wonders, and sometimes he would do that by bringing them through some kind of great difficulty.

This is one of those instances that we’re going to read about today and there may be those of you who will be able to identify with the disciples of Jesus, because maybe you can see dark storm clouds up ahead, maybe there’s a storm raging around you, there’s a trial or some type of hardship that’s paralyzed you. And so, here in Mark chapter 4 we’re going to see Jesus seizing a teaching opportunity as he purposefully goes with his disciples in a boat, into the dark, where they’ll be overcome by a storm.

In fact, that’s how this passage begins in verse 35, Mark begins by saying, “That day when evening came…” And so, as the sun was setting, as darkness settled over lake, when it became impossible to see to the other side, “Jesus said to his disciples…”

"Let us go over to the other side." 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. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" (Mark 4.35-38).

“He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" 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).

And then, the very next verse, in chapter 5, verse one, Mark says, “They went across the lake” or in other words, they made it to the other side, “to the region of the Gerasenes.”

In this passage of Scripture, there are two phrases that I want to draw your attention to; the first is in verse 35, “When evening came” and the second in chapter 5, verse one, “Across the lake” because I believe there’s Hope in the Dark for each person listening today. There’s a miracle brewing, a breakthrough coming, and God’s going to take you through whatever you’re enduring; whatever you’re struggling with, number one, he’s going to take you to the other side of whatever it is.

## 1. The Other Side

The disciples began rowing across the lake in the dark, quite some time had passed because Jesus had fallen asleep in the back of the boat, when suddenly a furious squall came up with such intensity that it caused them to fear for their lives. The boat was taking on so much water that it was nearly swamped and so they awakened Jesus who was sleeping in the stern. He got up, wiping sleep from his eyes, rebuked the wind and said to the waves,

“Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm” (Mark 4:39).

Recognizing that Jesus was their only hope, the disciples called on him, and their circumstances changed immediately.

What we often forget in the storms of life is that Jesus is with us too. You see, when you’re walking in the will of God there’s nothing that can take you out of the presence of God. And so, we need to remember that just because we’re in a storm doesn’t mean that God is not with us. In fact, Pastor Craig Groeschel said it this way,

“Don’t ever let the presence of a storm cause you to doubt the presence of God.”

And that’s what David said in Psalm 23, he said, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me.” And so, no matter what storm, what valley you’re in, on the other side of that whatever it is that you’re going through today, there’s breakthrough, but it’s always on the other side.

Maybe for you this morning, you know that you’re not where you were, but you’re not where you want to be, and now you can’t even see where you’re going. It’s evening, it’s dark, and so today I want to remind you that there’s Hope in the Dark.

I imagine that most of you have been on a trip in the car where maybe you’re going to visit family or you’re taking a vacation, but wherever it is that you’re going, you’ve just settled down, you’ve got the cruise control on, maybe a movie playing, when from the back seat Junior pops the classic question, “Are we there yet?” Now, obviously, everyone knows that it’s going to be a long trip, it’s not a surprise, because you packed food, drinks, different forms of entertainment, and so there’s this silence from the front seat.

You know, we’re still driving 55 miles an hour, the car hasn’t stopped, the doors haven’t opened, and so, of course we’re not there yet. The question doesn’t even justify an answer, but the truth is Junior knew that you weren’t there yet, because he can see out the window, you’re traveling south on Route 15, and you haven’t even passed the sign for Cunningham Falls. And so, obviously, “Are we there yet?” was more of a statement than it was a question. In other words, “I’m discontent, I don’t want to count anymore Volkswagen beetles, I don’t want to watch that movie for the 15th time, I’m bored,” and so he asked, “Are we there yet?”

Now, you and I could chalk that up for immaturity, but I wonder how many times you’ve asked God that same question? You know, “God are we there yet?” And the thing is that wherever there is, we know that we’re not there yet. Some of us have been following Jesus for a long time, we know that God has plans for us, because he told Jeremiah,

“I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11).

And so, we know that God is taking us somewhere, that we’re on the way, that he’s got a good plan, but we just want to know the details.

Maybe for you this morning, you’re in that place, where you’ve done everything you know to do, you’ve been praying, reading your Bible, inviting people to church, but you’re just wondering, “Shouldn’t I be there by now?” And so, what do you do in between, when the evening comes, you’re on the lake, you’re not where you used to be, but you haven’t arrived, you’re not across the lake. Number two, what do you do in the meantime?

## 2. In the Meantime

You see, here’s the thing about meantime, meantime doesn’t make headlines. In fact, here in this passage Mark doesn’t include much of the meantime. They started across the lake, Jesus fell asleep, a storm came up, he calms the storm, and they arrived at the other side. You know, even Jesus went from the age of 12 to the age of 30 in meantime and in the same way that’s where so much of our lives are lived.

That’s why these two phrases caught my attention, “when evening came” and “they went across”. There’s no timeframe, we don’t know exactly how long it took for Jesus to go from teaching to sleeping, the boat to go from one side to the other, or the disciples from stormy seas to smooth sailing, from darkness to victory. And it’s the same way in our lives, so many times we’re left wondering, “Are we there yet?” We want the details, we want the steps laid out for us, we want to know when we’ve arrived, but life is so much more unpredictable than that. In fact, as you read the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, there are lots of unknowns, lots of surprises, and so even now we don’t always know how we’re going to get from point A to point B.

Today, many of us are trying to get to the other side, wherever the other side is, but we can’t see through the darkness, the wind and the waves. And maybe for you, it’s a healing, a miracle, a ministry, or a child, and you find ourselves asking again, “Are we there yet?” Maybe your sensing the call of God on your life, your heart is pounding, and yet you’re wondering what to do in the meantime?

Consider the apostle Paul, from childhood he’d been studying the Scriptures, he was zealous for the things of God, and it was quite a few years, decades later, when the Bible says,

“As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9:3-6).

Now, after all the years of preparation, you know he’s been serving God, when he hears the audible voice of God, he’s called, but it’s a change of direction, it’s a new thing, but he’s ready to go out and change the world, when God says, “Wait.” In fact, the apostle Paul tells us,

“After three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter…” (Galatians 1:18).

He was ready to preach, but in the meantime, after three years in the wilderness, three years in the desert, because God had a different plan.

What do we do in the meantime during that period of waiting? Do we moan, grumble, and complain until the next highlight comes along, or do we recognize the value in the meantime? You know, you’re not where you used to be, but you know that you’re not where you’re supposed to be? And some of you know deep inside that God has called you here or that God has sent you there, but you’re wondering what to do now.

And I think many times that we have this misconception of the meantime, that the way is going to be clear, that we’re going to know exactly what to do and when to do it. And yet, for many of you today, you’re in the meantime, you’re wondering and waiting, and you keep asking, “Are we there yet?” In fact, you may be wondering if you’re ever going to make it through this storm? If you’re ever going to make it to the other side? And yet, as I’ve studied the Gospels, looking at the multiple crossings of this lake, the Sea of Galilee, there’s only one thing that I discovered, one common thread that assured Jesus followers of making it across. And that was number three, that they stayed in the boat.

## 3. Stay in The Boat

You see, no matter which crossing it was, except for Peter taking one quick stroll across the lake, they all stayed in the boat, and they all stayed on mission. No matter whether it’s Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, they all got in the boat, they all went across, and they all made it to the other side. And so, for some of us today, that means just stay with your family, stay in the church, because there are going to be temptations in the dark, temptations in the meantime, but the longer you stay around Jesus, the closer you are to him, the more significant his presence becomes.

Today, we can stand firm, being confident, celebrating that we’re not who we used to be, or where we used to be, but that we’ve crossed over from death to life. That’s what Jesus said in John chapter 5,

"Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he’s crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).

You see, I can celebrate the meantime, because I’m not who I used to be, and yet at the same time I know that there is so much more to come. A time is coming when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. The best is yet to come; just around the bend there are even greater things for my life, your life, and for this church, but what do we do in the meantime?

This is an especially important question because so many of us do too much and yet all of our straining, rowing and working can’t get is where God wants us to be. This was the lesson that the disciples learned, that they needed to trust him and have faith that he’s going to get the boat to the other side. You see, it was Jesus who told them to get in the boat in the first place and so what he started he will finish. And so, there are going to be days where it’s stormy and dark, but if you and I are going to fulfill the purpose of God, if we’re going to be who God called us to be, if this church is going to continue for the purpose that Christ built it, we must stay in the boat. And what that means for us, is that you keep doing what you’re doing, you stay engaged, you stay in the Word of God, and you trust that Jesus is working all things together for good.

One of the things about storms that you can count on is that they never last, they come and they go. And so, we just need to follow the example of the disciples, staying in the boat, and staying in the house of God. In fact, the apostle Paul said it this way, he said,

“Let’s not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we’ll reap a harvest if we don’t give up” (Galatians 6:9).

At the proper time, in the meantime, when you’re wondering if you’re there yet, just hold on, stay in the boat, ride out the storm, because you’ll reap a harvest if you don’t give up. And I know that there are some of you who are in a storm, there may be some waves crashing over you, the winds are blowing, you may be taking on water, but can I encourage you not to give up, to just stay in the boat?

You see, even with the waves and wind howling, we just need to stay the course, to trust God and not lose heart. Because at the proper time we’ll reap a harvest if we don’t give up. And so, we need one another, we need the people of God, this community that Jesus is building, and we need to stay in the boat, in the church, in the midst of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us pray.

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