

Mark 4.35-41
Asleep in the Storm
WRCoB 1.14.24

A young man applied for a job as a farmhand.

When the farmer asked for his qualifications
The young man said, "I can sleep through a storm."

"What in the world?"
"What kind of qualification is that," the farmer murmured

But he liked the young man confidence.
So he hired him.

A few weeks later, the farmer woke up
To the sound of a violent thunderstorm.

He leapt out of bed and called his new hired hand
But the young man was fast asleep.

He quickly got up to check on things

He found that the gates were all fastened.
The tractor and equipment back in the barn.

And the animals were calm and had plenty of feed.

All was well.

Now it all made sense
What the young man meant
When he said, "I can sleep through a storm."

~~

I'm a good sleeper
I'm asleep before my head hits the pillow.

Judith can vouch for that.

I feel sorry those who have trouble sleeping.

Because sleep is wonderful.

The storms of life can rage around you
But if you can just close your eyes and sleep
For the moment, all troubles subside.

~~

Sleep is a very private thing
We are at our most vulnerable.

Sleep is also a bit unbecoming.

Because it involves all kinds of unflattering things.

Your mouth drops open
You drool and snore
Even talk in your sleep.

Jesus slept
He slept the sleep of a baby.

We need to remember that Jesus was human, too.

Our passage, will be helpful
In seeing both sides of Jesus' nature
His divinity and his humanness.

~~

Let's look at the human side of Jesus.

Mark writes that when evening came
Jesus had his disciples take him
To the other side of the lake.

Mark 4:36 (NIV) Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was.

Now there's a curious phrase, "just as he was".

The biblical commentaries don't explain what it means.

In fact, the New Living Translation
And the Contemporary English Version
Omit the phrase.

What do you think it means?

His disciples grabbed him "just as he was"
Got him in the boat and left the crowd behind.

Sounds to me it was important to move fast for Jesus' sake

Jesus must have been just absolutely beat.

Last week we saw him go home to find rest
And the crowds of people came
And he couldn't find any rest

No, Jesus was absolutely spent.

Preaching and teaching, healing and exorcizing
Traveling around the countryside
For weeks on end
Living on the generosity of others.

The truth is Jesus was so tired
That when the storm came up
Jesus slept through it

Like it was the gentle rocking of a cradle.

~~

Jesus asleep in the stern of the boat
Reminds me of another story in the Bible.

Jonah.

He's on a boat to Tarshish running God.

A terrible storm comes and threatens to sink the ship.

The sailors all cry out in desperation
 Throwing cargo overboard to lighten the ship.

Where's Jonah?

Below sleeping like a baby!

If someone is tired enough
 They can sleep through anything!

For example, Douglas Spedden, a young boy
 Slept through the sinking of the Titanic.

He was on board with his family!

He awakened briefly when his nanny
 Told him he would see the stars
 As they climbed into a lifeboat.

He fell back to sleep and slept until morning.

Napoleon Bonaparte would power nap
 Right in the middle of a battle
 Oblivious to the roar of the cannons.

Or how about Terry Pierce of Florida?

He fell asleep in a small commuter plane.
 The plane crashed.

He woke up lying in the woods
 A distance from the crash seriously injured but alive

He had absolutely no memory of anything
But peaceful sleep.

~~

Sleep . . . wonderful, inviting sleep.

Jesus, with his head on a pillow
In the stern of the boat
Slept soundly and undisturbed
While the waves tossed the boat.

~~

Meanwhile, the disciples were beside themselves.

How in the world could Jesus sleep through such a storm?

You'd think it might be reassuring.

If Jesus, the Son of God, wasn't scared
Why should they be?

They couldn't stand it any longer
Their fear was so great.

Mark 4:37-38 (NLT)

^{38b} **The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"**

And with his awakening
We see the fully-human sleepy Jesus wake up
And become the fully divine Jesus the Christ.

He rebukes the storm.

Peace! Be still!

He, then, rebukes the disciples for waking him.

Mark 4:40 (NIV) "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

And they looked at one another

Mark 4:41 NRSV “who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Jesus, fully human, fully divine.

~~

Sleep is vitally important.

God designed the rhythms of our bodies for sleep.

Sleeping takes up to one third of our lives
Eight hours out of every twenty-four.

When you put it that way, it seems excessive, doesn't it?

Thomas Edison thought it a waste of time
A heritage from our cave days, he writes

He slept less than four hours per day.

On the other hand, Albert Einstein
Slept ten hours a day
And took a nap besides.

Based on optimal health benefits
Sleep experts recommend 7 to 9 hours of sleep
And more for children.

The routine of a steady bedtime
And a regular waking up time
Helps keeps the rhythms of your body work.

~~

Besides the points made concerning sleep
Our take-away today comes in three points.

First point, in life, expect stormy seas.

As a Christian anticipate even stormier seas.

I know, it seems like a contradiction, right?

But as Christians, we face more obstacles
More challenges, and more temptations
And even persecution for our faith..

The great reformer of the 1500s, Martin Luther
Said of this verse.

“the first lesson of this Gospel is that if you want to be a Christian and want to have the gospel, you must anticipate rough weather, for it is inevitable.”

If we can accept the inevitability of rough weather
We can transcend above the storm.

~~

Our second point is that living without faith
Only works well in a calm sea.

When life goes smoothly
There seems to be no need for God in our lives.

All is well, why need God?

But when the storms of life are raging
Where will you draw your strength from
Who will you go to, to help dissipate your fears.

Again, from Martin Luther

“When you live in security, are free of danger, and have no needs, then you may think that with free will you can do anything. But in time of need ... where is your free will then? It’s lost and fails you when it comes to the test. But faith stands and seeks Christ.”

~~

Kim Sherer writes:

One night, while my young son, Ryan, was sleeping, a storm began brewing outside. After a loud clap of thunder, I heard Ryan wake up and run to find me.

When I tucked him back into bed, he asked me to stay with him until he fell asleep.

As I lay there with him, I realized Ryan hadn't asked me to make the storm go away, but to stay with him.

How many times have I asked God to take away the storms of life, when instead, I need to ask Him to stay with me and help me weather the storms more peacefully!

~~

And the third point in today's lesson is this.

It is a direct quote from Martin Luther.

“Even though he sleeps, Christ is in the boat.”

Remember it is not the strength of our faith

But the object of our faith

That saves us and calms the seas of our lives.

Like the disciples, our faith and trust can grow weak

In the face of stormy seas.

“When distress strikes and he does not help immediately, no matter, just hold fast, do not waver, but firmly believe that Christ is with you in the boat.

~~

Jesus, when he was here on earth

Was fully human and needed sleep.

But, Jesus the Christ, as fully divine

In the spiritual realm does not sleep.

Psalm 121:3-4 (NLT)

^{3b} . . . the one who watches over you will not slumber.

⁴ Indeed, he who watches over Israel
never slumbers or sleeps.

God remains active in our lives
Whether we're asleep or awake.

From a Biblical perspective
Sleep is the surrender of heart, soul, and mind
Into the care of our Creator.

In our passage today
Jesus models a balance between activity and rest.

Jesus trusts in the protection and provision
Of his heavenly Father.

He slept the deepest of sleeps
In the stern of a boat
While life's storms raged about him.

We can do the same
With Jesus in our boats.

Even if he is asleep.