**God Cares**

Based on [Mark 4:35-41](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mk4.35-41)

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In the midst of great turmoil and stress often I find helpful to speak to the situation with these words, "**God knows our troubles. He will take care of our needs…it’s not like he’s not aware of them; “God is not asleep**." So you can see there is a bit of irony for me today, since in our Gospel lesson, my words of comfort and assurance aren’t quite accurate. Because in our reading from Mark, God is in fact asleep.

Jesus had been teaching all day long and by evening he was tired. He's a man after all. God is a man, isn't that ironic too? **And did you ever think about it that a Man rules the universe?...enough to blow your mind...that a man, Jesus of Nazareth, is God!** Anyway, our tired God goes to the back of the boat, finds a cushion and falls asleep. “God is asleep.”

God the Son is asleep, and his disciples are bothered by this. After all, these disciples gave up their lives and livelihoods to follow this miracle worker, this great teacher/Rabbi. He called them to follow, and he has done wondrous signs and mighty deeds that gave them confidence that they were following no slouch. But now Jesus is slouching in sleep while their fears get the better of them, and they wake Jesus.

Now so far, nothing is really wrong. “If you want God's attention wake him up.” That sounds bad, I know, of course he's not asleep, but he hears our prayers. If you have something you desire God to act upon, ask him. That's prayer. Jesus says in Matthew 7:7, "**Ask and it will be given you.**" St. Paul writes, "**Pray without ceasing**." And Psalm 50, "**Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me**."

Today is Father's day, and it's good to remember how Jesus taught us to pray. "**Our Father who art in heaven**." With these words Jesus invites us to call upon his heavenly Father as our own; so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father. **We don't have to worry about waking him, or whether he's too busy or whether the concern is too small to bother him**. My children don't worry about that; they want something they ask, repeatedly, innocently, even confidently. So we may approach our Father in heaven as little children and he will not turn us away.

Back to the boat...the disciples are afraid because they believe they are in great danger and so they wake their Lord from sleep. **Only they don't ask him to do something about the storm, or to calm their fears, or even to simply help them man the boat.** Instead, when they find him sleeping amidst their stress they wake him with these words of unbelief, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

A few months ago, Alberta elected an NDP government in large part for the same sort of sentiment as the disciples have here. Alberta was facing social and economic troubles and people thought of the Progressive Conservative party, "D**o you not care that we are perishing.**" There was a perception; I'm not saying it's true or that I hold it, but there was a perception--I heard it--that the conservatives have been "asleep" in governing Alberta because they were thought to have this attitude: "**It doesn't matter whether we care or do anything productive, Alberta's going to vote for us anyway**."

Likewise you know, there is a very real perception today that God doesn't care for his creation. **A few years back, I was speaking to a University student who had recently renounced the Christian faith.** He had done so--he said--because of all of the suffering in the world... starvation, violence oppression and so on. In speaking with him, I assumed that these concerns led him to believe that God doesn't exist, because if He did He'd stop this suffering.

I was wrong. He still believed in God, at least as the creator. The young man said, "**Yeah, there has to be a God because there's no other explanation for human life. I've looked into it**," he said, "**and there's no way evolution could be true**." He continued…”**No,** **I've left Christianity because it's clear to me that this God, whoever he is, may have created us, but clearly he doesn't *care* about us. Because if he did, he'd do something about all the suffering."**

This gets to the central crisis of faith happening in our Gospel text. There's a difference between believing God exists and believing that God cares. As science progresses, as mankind delves deeper into the complexity and mystery of creation the more it becomes clear that our existence is no accident. The more archaeology happens in the holy land and elsewhere, the more the biblical witness is confirmed. But once again, just because God exists, that doesn't mean he cares.

And so the disciples, when they were in the boat with Jesus, they were wondering why he wasn't doing anything about the danger they faced, because they knew he could. They didn’t wake him with the words, “Teacher, are you not able to help us.” Instead they say, "Teacher, *d****o you not care* that we are perishing**?" And so Jesus awoke and acted to established two things, that he is powerful enough to save them, and that he cares enough to do so.

Jesus answers prayers, and he answered his disciples. He got up and immediately rebuked the wind and he said to the sea, "**Peace be still**." And it obeyed. The storm stopped and there was peace on the sea. And the disciples were filled with great fear and said to one another, "**Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?**" With a word, this man Jesus of Nazareth can speak to creation *and it listens*…it obeys. Who else is this but the very Word of God through whom--in the beginning--all things were made and without whom was not anything made that was made (John 1:3). This is very God who created light and life over 6 days by simply speaking them into. This is he, Jesus Christ, Word made flesh, the image of the invisible God. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Colossians 1:15-17). These disciples were beginning to wonder, perhaps even realize who this person in the boat with them was, and before his display of power and might they were rightly afraid, as it says after he spoke, “**they were filled with great fea**r.”

In order to end WWII with one final blow, the US developed the atom bomb…splitting the atom to cause massive destruction and display of power. Knowing such power exists gives you no comfort at all, it causes fear, especially if you aren't sure whether the person in control of the bomb is friend or foe, is for you or against you, is intent on protecting you or destroying you, is careful or careless.

And so, when his disciples accuse him of not caring, Jesus says, "Why are you so afraid, have you still no faith?" This faith Jesus is talking about is not simply believing that He is powerful enough to save them from danger. **This faith that the disciples still lack is a trust that Jesus is for them, that he cares about them, that when they are in danger he might, by his carelessness, allow something to happen that would harm them.**

Friends, God cares, Jesus cares. The disciples should have known this. Jesus had done many miracles of healing and casting out demons, showing his power and might in saving the weak and healing the sick…they should have known. He had shown compassion and mercy, healing and love. **They should have known he cares. But when the wind and the wave start their ominous commotion, and Jesus doesn’t get as anxious and nervous as they do, they think he’s being careless…but it isn’t.** Instead, it is the utmost display of confidence in the competence of his Father to work all things for the good of those who love him. Jesus sleeps like a baby, because his faith knows the Father loves him and no dangers, toils and snares will catch him off-guard. Jesus sleeps because he knows, God is not asleep.

The disciples had not yet come to faith because all they saw were acts of might and displays of power and authority from Jesus. But as God said to St. Paul, “**My power is made perfect in weakness**.” Displays of God’s power are no comfort to a lost and frightened sinner. In fact, **it only increases fear as was the outcome of Jesus’ calming the storm**. What sinful mankind needs is to see the love of God in his willingness to sacrifice for them. For that’s what true love is, sacrificing yourself for your beloved. It’s not using your power to their advantage, Love is giving yourself for the sake of another. “**Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend**.”

I still pray for that university student who had renounced the faith, that when he look at the suffering and death in the world he would not turn to God’s power and might and say “why aren’t you doing something, don’t you care.” **I pray that he would--in the face of present suffering—instead turn to God’s weakness on the cross, and see in it that God *has* done something, and it is everything**.

The suffering in the world is not the result of God’s negligence, but of our sin and rebellion. It is we who cause suffering, starvation, and violence in a world that God by His grace has given us with enough land and produce to feed the whole twice over, but we don’t. Our sin and the world’s refusal to repent is why God tarries to come and judge and make all things new. God tarries because He cares enough to save all. 2 Peter 3:9 says, “**The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance**.” That “repentance” is reached through the proclamation of the Good News, not that Christ has the power to save you; but that he cares enough to do it.

So fellow Christians, rejoice and be glad, **For god showed his love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us**. God so loved the world that he gave his only son. He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? **The disciples lacked faith in the boat because, though they knew Jesus’ power, they didn’t know his weakness for them. For they hadn’t yet witnessed the sacrificial death and righteous resurrection of this Christ who sleeps amidst the storm.**  For on the cross all was accomplished, on the cross the price was paid, on the cross the victory was won and that is the basis of our faith so that now in this life we can live knowing that God cares, and if God cares for us who can be against us? For we are sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).