



GROUPS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Series: Mark Part One - Week 5, Nov 19, 2023

Scripture: Mark 4:35 - 41 (NIV11)

*Community is shaped by the conversations we share.
These questions are just a tool to help you meaningfully engage with
the themes of this week's teaching.*

Message Summary: This week we join the disciples in the storm to reflect on our experience of meeting the divine in the moments that rock our world.

- **The other side (Mk 4:35-36)** Mark is the gospel of double takes; this is the first of the two perilous boat journeys (6 boat journeyed in Mark total). They go to the other side - the Gentile Decapolis region. Jesus is expanding the circle of inclusion. The presence of other boats with them can be explained as this: “do you want to know who Jesus is - come join us and see for yourself.”
- **Sleeping deity (Mk 4:37-38)** Biblical stories are about meaning-making. One way to interpret storm at sea and a hero asleep is to look at Homer’s Odyssey. Another way is to join early Christians and see Jesus as the kind of Jonah who gets it right. And the third is that here we have a story where Jesus will show that he is God. But before we get to calm after the storm we need to honour the

cry of the disciples “Are you asleep, God?!” It is toxic not to be able to ask questions or feel what you feel.

- **Wind and sea (Mk 4:39-40)** Jesus rebukes the wind. The word for rebuke is more like “shut up” or “put a muzzle on it” and it is a lot like what Jesus says to an evil spirit in Mk 1:25. In the ancient world sea often represented evil or chaos, and with this “exorcism of the sea” Jesus speaks the language of his day, he shows what his power is like and that he is divine. It was an important story for the disciples to pass down. Our tiny practices of bringing order out of chaos train our musculature to do more when needed.
- **Numinous (Mk 4:41)** The disciples ask “Who is this?” “The numinous” describes an experience as a mystery that elicits dread and fascination (comes from 1917 book The Idea of the Holy by Rudolf Otto). CS Lewis wrote about the Numinous as the feeling of wonder and a certain shrinking. It’s like awe, and the object that excites awe is the divine. And the point of the story is that we can meet God the numinous in the fights that almost do us in, and in the experiences that rock us, and in all our trying to love mercy and do justice and be fully human.

Connect: As we’re talking about storm and calm today, what is one place in your life right now that feels a bit more chaotic and stormy than you’d like and what is one thing that offers you calm, peace or hope?

Share: When Jesus directed the boats to go to the other (Gentile) side, he wants to expand the circle of inclusion and shalom.

What are some of the examples of “the other side” in your life right now? What voices are you listening to that are expanding (or challenging) the way you see the world?

Reflect: Jesus sleeping through the storm before calming it is a significant part of the story. There’s a pause in the panic. A moment to listen and to honour the disciples’ (and our) cry “God, are you asleep? Don’t you care that we’re drowning?”

A few questions here:

Why do you think the gospel writer wanted to record this moment of Jesus sleeping through the storm? What is the meaning-making behind it?

And, why do you think it is so important to make room for honesty and to honour our cries in the storms of life, “God, are you asleep?” What does that do to our spirituality (really, our humanity)?

Engage: In the experience of the storm and in seeing Jesus calm it, the disciples experienced the Numinous - wonder and shrinking, dread and fascination.

What is transformative about this sense of awe?

What role did awe or the experience of God the Numinous play in your spiritual journey? And, is it possible to cultivate a sense of awe in our everyday lives or can it only be encountered?

Take away: Bobbi talked about how we develop a 'musculature' for resisting chaos through small acts of goodness and mercy, through tiny practices of bringing calm out of chaos.

Could you name some of the tiny practices or small acts of calming the chaos in your life and the impact they have had on you or those around you? Or, can you talk about how someone’s tiny practices or acts of kindness contributed to calming one of your storms?

What is one thing that you’re taking away from today’s conversation or from the sermon?

Pray:

*Loving God,
We confess that we prefer to picture a cozy God
A close friend
A gentle spirit.
And you can be all of that.*

*But there are also times when we confront something
So much more outside the bounds of our imagination
So much more mysterious and strange
So much more likely to make us shrink with awe
And you can be all of that too.*

*Stir in us the impulse to move toward the other side of a divide
Remind us of the strength of our honesty
And invite us into the world of calming storms with our faith.*

*Spirit of the living God, present with us now,
Enter the places of our heartbreak, our confusion, and our loneliness
And heal us of all that harms us.
Amen.*