

# Mark 1:1 & 4:35-41 // Christianity is Christ

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Preacher: Graham Daniels

[0:00] The reading this morning is in Mark's Gospel in chapter 4 beginning at verse 35.

! You'll find on page 1006 in the Church Bibles. Mark 4.35.!

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?

He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the waves, Quiet! Be still! Then the wind died down, and it was completely calm.

[1:14] 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. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you, Michael.

When I say, Bath, Do you know what I mean? Did you hear what I said then? Bath. Does that mean anything? Bath? No, I mean, I'm not trying to be funny.

It's a serious question, because I've got a Welsh accent. Bath. Does that make sense as a word? What I've worked out is that you can't really do it easily in a British language context, but also internationally.

You have to be careful, because a shower and a bath can be confusing, because in different cultures you have different ways of saying it. So a shower, you'll see where I'm going in a minute, is standing underneath water, isn't it?

[2:29] To get clean. sing, whatever. And in England, a bath is, how do I describe it?

You sit in it, and you fill it with water, and then you wash and relax. Happy? Did you ever play that game if you've ever had a bath in your house, where you move, you slide your bottom up and down in the bath, and you see how long it takes for the waves to go over the edge of the bath.

Because I was preparing this talk, and I stayed in a hotel recently, we don't have a bath in our house, only showers, so we stand underneath the shower. So I tried the bath game.

And it was a terrible bath, because in hotels, they don't like to put really hot water in case you soothe them, because it scalds you.

So actually, it's lukewarm, which is hopeless, really hopeless. Nevertheless, I filled it as high as I could, and it was five by the time we'd rent over.

[3:42] And I could just hear my mother, who's long gone, saying, what on earth are you doing? You're soaking the bathroom floor. This story is ridiculous that we've just read.

Michael wasn't ridiculous, but the story on one level is ridiculous. There are professional fishermen in a boat in a serious storm. The waters pouring in and bombing around.

And Jesus is sleeping on a cushion and is as cool as a cucumber in the story. Let's have a look at it on page 1006.

But before we really dive into it, keep your finger in 1006 and just go back a couple of pages to 1002. Just look there, because what we're meant to see with this is that when Mark, the writer of this account of the life of Jesus, sat down at his MacBook in the study to write it, when he had all these stories about Jesus from eyewitness accounts, when he sat down for you and me, the reader or listener, he has a clear idea in mind and he says it right at the start.

Do you see it there, 1002? The very first line of his book, the beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This may seem, forgive me if this is almost too elementary because you're bright people, Christianity is Christ, Jesus Christ.

[5:16] It's not a sociological concept, it's not a world religion first and foremost, though it is both of those things. Christianity is about Jesus Christ, about a person.

And Mark says to us right at the beginning, I'm going to tell you gospel, which means good news, I've got good news for you about Jesus Christ, Jesus the King, Jesus the ruler of Israel.

This is the great king that has been promised to the nation of Israel for hundreds of years and I'm going to write you stories about him but let me tell you, he says, before you finish my introduction, look at those words, the Son of God.

He says, Jesus, the Christ, the King, the Messiah of Israel is the Son of God. The Son of God was a title reserved for the Roman Emperor.

So in this culture, Mark is writing a suicide note because if he's heard saying that a Nazareth carpenter is greater than the emperor, he's a dead man walking.

[6:34] So it's meant to shake up the reader. Now, back to our story in 1006 because people are meant to say, what do you mean?

There's a man who's greater than the emperor, who has no formal education. He's not important. He doesn't live in Rome. He lives in a tiny outpost of the Empire and he was killed on a Roman cross in his 30s.

What on earth are you talking about, Mark? And then Mark says, good, read my story. I've got lords of stories about him and here's one of them. And they're meant to make our jaw drop.

They're meant to. Here it is. Come on, we're in it now. Now we're in the story. It's you and me looking at the story. An everyday journey, verses 35 to 36. That day when evening came, we're on page 1006, Mark chapter 4.

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, let's 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.

[7:42] Jesus is getting pretty popular as we read the story. Loads of people want to see what he's got to say. No one's quite sure who he is. We know because we've been told in the opening line.

They're trying to work him out but it looks like he's worn out because the evening comes and he says to his pals, listen, let's jump in the boat and get away.

You know, it'd be like saying, get the car, get the car. You know, we've got to get away from here for a minute. We need a rest. The lake that he jumps into a boat on is the Lake of Galilee.

It's 13 miles by 8 miles. So it's big. It's big. And so you need a big boat. And he's with professional fishermen. And look, they still come after him.

Do you see that line 36? There were also other boats with him. What pests they were. You know, they've jumped in an Uber to chase him. They just want to go where he's going. They want to see what's going on.

[8:39] Off they go. Now, this lake is huge. 13 by 8. It's 48 meters deep. And it's 700 feet below sea level with big mountains next to it.

So, professional fishermen know this is a dangerous place. And if it turns quickly, that storm could last hours, sometimes days. And it can be fatal.

And in chapter 1, we read that some of his friends were professional fishermen. So, they knew the lake. That was their workplace. So, we're in the story. He's in the boat on the lake.

They're off. Others are chasing. The threatening storm. Look at 37 and 38. See what happens here. You've heard it read well. A furious squall came up.

Squall is a funny word we don't use really anymore. Massive storm. Whirlwind. Not quite tornado, but big time problem on the lake.

[9:44] And so serious that the waves immediately start breaking over the boat. It's not a tiny boat. It's a boat with a lot of people in. The waves are coming in. It's nearly swamped, it says.

And then we get the line that's meant to make us go, that is ridiculous. What are you talking about? Look at 38. Jesus was in the stern sleeping on a cushion.

Don't you just love it? He's sleeping and we're told he's got a cushion. You know, what did he do? Did he send somebody over to Tesco and said, listen, we're jumping on that boat. It could be a trip. It's 13 miles. It's overnight. I need something to put my head on. Nip over to Asda and get a cushion, will you? Did he carry one round with him? You know, like people go to the airport with a little cushion for the flight?

I don't know. Did he have it in his rucksack? What is it in the boot? He's got a cushion. But the whole point here is that we're meant to see lots of things in this.

[10:48] One of the things we're meant to see is that it's an eyewitness account. Peter, one of his followers, is a professional fisherman. Peter was called by Jesus in chapter one.

Peter and Mark, the writer, we know from historical documentation, are pals. We're meant to read that this is ridiculous.

He's got his pillow out on the boat and they all think they're going to die and he's, well, it doesn't say he's snoring, that would be rude. But he's definitely fast asleep.

Now, you just need half a brain to realize that that would be ridiculous, right? That is a ridiculous situation. There's water coming into the boat.

He's getting wet and he's sleeping. Story goes on. It's a simpler story. Mark says, I'm telling you this story because the man I'm talking about, if you think the Roman emperor is important, this man really is God in human form.

[12:00] You're not sure who God is? If there is a God, you're not sure? Mark says, I'll tell you who he is. Him. If you want to know who God is, you need to know him.

And he's the kind of man who can sleep in a storm because there's no drama for him. Well, no wonder if he made the whole thing in the first place. If he made the wind and the waves and the sky and the sea and 200 billion galaxies, then he can pretty much relax in one storm on one planet on one lake, right?

And he does. He's having a sleep. The disciples woke him. There it is, 38. Can you imagine?

Imagine them saying to each other, listen, where is he?

Where is he? We've seen him do miracles. He's already done miracles. He's already upturned the laws of nature. Can you imagine them saying to each other, give him a pork.

I'm not waking him up. You wake him up. No, no, we'll have to wake him up. We'll be dead in a minute. Touching him. Jesus, wake up.

[13:08] Anyway, however it happens, he's awake and they can't contain it anymore. Do you see the words? 38. Teacher, don't you care if we drown?

I mean, they are absolutely terrified. Don't you care if we drown? Look. Drop your jaw with this one. That's the point. Verse 39. Of course, we've just got the straightforward words and the words tell us everything we need to know but you can't help but imagine.

How did he get up? Did he rush up? Did he jump up? Did he take his time? Did he, you know, did he do that? I imagine he had time on the ball, that's for sure because he's not a panicker.

So he gets up and he looks at the wind or feels the wind and looks at the waves and he just says, calm yourselves down.

[14:13] Put it away. Leave it. Stop it. Now, I tried that in the bath. You know, once the momentum's really going, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh.

I know you think I'm a nutter now but I really did think, wouldn't it be fun to go stop it? Didn't work. I might get a bill from the hotel actually.

Soaking the floor. Jesus said to a life-threatening storm, in the presence of professional fishermen and others, thoughtful people who were getting to know him, who were trying to work out who this man was, who were listening to claims, implicit claims at this point, that here was God in human form.

And they're just starting to feel out who he is. And he says to the wind and the waves, stop it. And he controls nature.

And this is in a group of stories where he does miraculous things. He breaks the laws of nature with healings and storms in the presence of people.

[15:34] And that's what he does. Of course, they can't catch their breath. 41. Of course, they were terrified.

Of course, they were terrified. They look at each other and they must have looked at him, looked at the sky, looked at the storm, watch it stop.

It could take days to stop a storm like this. Certainly hours. And it stopped like that. The wind stopped, the waves stopped. And they look at each other absolutely mortified and said, what is this?

Even the wind and the waves are being, that's mad. Who is this?

Christians come to church on a Sunday, the day that Jesus rose from the dead, at the end of this story. And you know, if you are a Christian this morning, here's the great thing about coming to church.

[16:43] don't you find you have to remind yourself all the time that this is incredible to know Jesus Christ because it becomes normal, doesn't it?

It becomes part of who you are. It is amazing if you are a Christian and I'll address the issue if you'd say, I'm not sure that I am.

Give me a moment and I'll come to that. If you are, somebody came into this world to show you that there really is a God and that's what he's like.

That he wants to save people from certain death. That he really cares so much that he would come to people like you and me and like these fishermen and he would say, I am so for you.

And I'm not just going to save in this example people from a storm but I'm going to save you from the greatest storm in the universe. Because as you live, you will die.

[17:51] And as you leave this world, you will meet me. And when you meet me, the one question Jesus will ask you and I is, did we turn away from putting ourselves at the centre of the universe?

Were we prepared to say that the very heart of my life is my ego, my reputation, my control and I said, nor to God.

And the Bible says that is the default human condition. There isn't a young woman or man or older person in this room today. Whether you come from a Christian home, whether your mum and dad are Christians, whether your teachers are Christians, whether your friend is a Christian, there isn't a human being in this room.

Whatever their background, rich or poor, nobody in this room says the Bible is born and grows up putting Jesus at the centre of their lives.

God is not the centre. We put ourselves at the centre. And that means that we've turned our back on God. Imagine that. I had a horrible moment when my mum passed away.

[19:13] She was a lovely woman. And she was a loud woman. Very loud. And my dad was very quiet. So our typical Friday conversation, because I lived away from home, went like this.

I phoned at six o'clock from a coin box off my own phone line. No mobiles. And the phone would be picked up and it would be my mother and we'd talk for 30 minutes. And then she'd say at about half past six, your father's here now.

All right, dad. All right, Graham. How's it going? Good. Good. Who are you playing tomorrow? I tell him who I'm playing tomorrow. He said, do you think you'll win? I said, no, I don't think so, dad.

And then he'd go, very good. Your mother's here. I go back to my mother. When my mum passed away, a former dad with my sister every Friday at six o'clock, the phone call would last about five minutes.

Hiya, son. Who are you playing tomorrow? Do you think you've got a chance? And I try and spread it out for two more minutes. I said, there we are, dad. Lovely to chat. See you next week. After about six weeks, my sister formed me up.

[20:18] She said, Graham, I don't know how to tell you this. I thought, I don't know. because she's a gentle soul, my sister. She wouldn't really confront me. I said, what's the matter?

She says, dad feels that you really can't be bothered to talk to him. He said, he used to talk to mum for half an hour and she says, mum's not here and you only talk to him for two or three minutes and you go.

He feels that you don't really want to know him. Oh, imagine how devastating that was. I love my dad. But of course, I didn't really know what I was doing.

It was just wired up that I would talk to him for two minutes in a week. Well, if I could make my dad feel that I really couldn't be bothered and I actually could but I didn't know how to do it.

Or imagine if you've got a friend who's a friend but you don't really pay attention to them. It's all about you. You're only really talking to them when you need something from them and you get into that habit.

[21:26] We know how desperate that is for a human being to behave like that. What if the person who put you in your mother's womb who knows you from eternity, who knows everything you do, every second of your life, every moment, who's totally committed to you, who planned your life and I say to that God is fine, no problem, I'll boss this one, I'll call you when I need you.

Can you taste how desperate this is? And I chose it and you've chosen it and what can God do? What can he do?

How can he save us? Not from a storm and the sea, but how can he save our lives when justice demands that we're rebels against him and we must face the consequences which is no relationship with him.

What the guy who calmed the storm did was come into the world out of unbelievable love, outrageous love because he saw you and me and he said they have turned their backs on me. I will pay for their rebellion. I will go to a cross. I will take the punishment that they deserve. The justice that should be on them will come on God himself through his son and when Jesus hangs on that cross and holds his hands out he says to people like you and me I love you.

[23:05] I love you. I love you so much that I will pay. so for the Christian this morning ladies and gentlemen for the Christian this morning remember this again remember it again today.

Think of the things that went wrong last week you know things won't be perfect this week in the ups and downs of life but the contract was signed when Jesus died.

He paid he will never ever leave you and he loves you too much to leave you alone. This is the amazing thing isn't it about being a Christian.

Sometimes people say the love is unconditional. Let's be clear it's not. It cost God his son. That was the condition of rescuing you and me and he loves you too much to leave you alone and say I won't bother you.

You crack on now that you say you're a Christian. No, no. He's after you all the time because he wants to make you the woman he plans you to be. He's going to change you and he's going to point out the things that need changing and he's going to show you he loves you a quarter to three in the morning when nobody's awake and you don't know what's coming tomorrow and you're frightened of tomorrow and he says I'm here darling I'm here I love you oh I know what you did yesterday I know it was stupid but I paid for that and you and me we're going to get better and we're going to get changed and I'm going to stick with you for the rest of your life and I'm going to see you one day that's what the guy who dealt with the storm was pointing to that he would deal with the ultimate storm of life which is our rebellion against our creator because the creator came to rescue that's what this story points to and if you're listening to me this morning and you say well okay okay broadly see where you're going with this can I address you first if you are

[25:08] I'm a guest so I don't know who's who right mostly if you're a young person whose parents are Christians let's be clear this is a personal thing it's deeply personal it's not second hand it can never be it can never be second hand a relationship with Christ is first hand you can't have it through somebody else you have to say you came into the world to rescue me you paid for me the cross and the resurrection were for me as well as my parents and I want you to be my saviour you can't stay in a second hand relationship and maybe today's the day where you say I know that and I affirm that and he is my saviour as well as my parents or my friend or my brother or my sister what a moment when he becomes centre of one's life and we submit to him and we turn to him and we trust him for those who say well I have no such situation

I'm an adult in my own right I've come with a friend or I've come on my own or I've come because I'm trying to work out what's going on in my life well of course what you've seen on the screen and the QR code and the opportunity to chat to people with a lanyard and you've seen at the front or your friend is there but don't go to bed tonight and put your head on your pillow without this reckoning in your mind because in the end the story of the rescue and the boat does point to the story of the rescue of your life on the cross of the perfect son of God who died took your place so that justice was done with overwhelming love and if a woman or man turns to Christ and says I've turned against you I'm turning back I receive your love for me at Calvary the cross he says come here gorgeous come here no one is too far away nobody's too far away for that and nobody's too good to do it you're a mug if you think you're too good to do it don't go around saying well I'm eight out of ten she's a nine she's magnificent most people I know are fives hopeless I'm a steady two one here don't do that Christ is perfect we're not justice must be done love overwhelms there we are should stop there I think what a story what a story not just the story of the storm but the big storm it points to oh please go to bed tonight knowing that Christ is your saviour not second hand and Christian as you came in this morning rejoice on Sunday that your phone was off you had 90 minutes just to remember who he is who this man is and what he thinks of you because this might just top us up to get another week right which is why Sunday matters because it slips away from our brain and hearts so fast are rejoicing it today let me pray heavenly father thank you for church for your church for creating the church thank you that when we meet together like this we can remember who you are when we come week by week recall the truths of who you are and bring you into our lives again and again and again and ask you to be our saviour and lord and friend mentor please heavenly father for the women and men in the room this morning who'd say well actually it's not first hand for me this is second hand may we if we're in that category turn to you look at that cross watch your death and resurrection and say you died there for me that I might be saved by you and you might live in me and transform me because you love me so much may some of us for the first time today even though we're not sure what the implications are take that existential step and act and not wait let me leave a moment before we sing our last song just a few seconds as I step down for you to talk to God yourself personally quietly and then we'll start to sing together to to to to to to!