

# Letting God be God

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at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.  
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Mark 4:35-41

*On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." 36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" 39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. 40 But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"*

I'm not returning to our series on discipleship this morning in order to bring this message to us. A year ago I delivered to you 12 sermons about a promise that God made to me over 20 years ago. In sharing those messages with you, God made the promise to this congregation and for many of you the promise became yours as well as mine.

But believing a promise is true and believing that promise unto fulfillment is not the same thing. When the time comes for God to fulfill His promise, will we be able to believe Him for it? It is very easy to stand here today and say to you, "I believe *someday* God is going to keep His promise to us and we are going to see a mighty move of God *someday*." But when *someday* is *today* and God is saying now is the time can I still stand with confidence and say, "Today, I believe the promise is to become reality"? Or will I let weak faith prevail. Weak faith is still faith but it is a faith that says God can do it *someday*, but just not today.

Moses had told Israel that God would deliver them from Egyptian slavery and take them back to the land of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They had experienced the deliverance from bondage and they could believe that *someday* the Promise Land would be theirs. But when that day arrived when God was ready to give it to them, the people balked and could not believe God. They had a promise; the time of the fulfillment of the promise was at hand, but they could not trust God and therefore the promise was not accomplished. The consequence was 39 more years in the desert until those who would not trust God died.

God, your Father, wants to lead you into a place Jesus called the abundant life. It is a place where the resurrected life of Jesus lives in you uninhibited and unrestricted. The life of the Vine flows in and through you to be very fruitful indeed. Call it what you want. Some people call it the victorious life, the exchanged life, the crucified life, the resurrected life, but regardless of what we call

it, this is what Jesus has saved us for. We aren't saved to live a life in the valley, defeated, but to be able to live no matter whether on the mountain or in the valley, whether in suffering or success, to live an overcoming, abundant life—the life of Christ in you. The only obstacle to that happening is weak faith. I want to show you that your weak faith is a result of one thing: not letting God be Himself to you. This is not just true of the Christian but it's true to the one yet to become a Christian. That's why you are still on the outside looking in. You don't let God be Himself to you. If we are to overcome we must let God be Himself.

## I. The Miracle and Its Significance

### A. The Work Load of Jesus.

It had been a very busy several days for Jesus. Our Lord had spent the entire previous night in prayer, seeking the will of God concerning who would be His 12 chosen apostles. The next day He called them and commissioned them. After this very momentous event they entered a home to eat and could not eat because of a great crowd that entered the home and spilled to overflow outside demanding that He take up their requests and solve their problems. His own family believed He had suffered a nervous breakdown from sheer exhaustion and they tried to take Him by force back home. No more had He dealt with that situation than scribes from Jerusalem arrived accusing Him of being a cult leader possessed of the devil.

He refutes their accusation but again has to deal with His family who request that He come outside and let them reason with Him. He leaves the home and goes to the sea and gets in a boat to teach the multitude. He spends the rest of the day preaching and teaching about the kingdom of God. Once finished with the large crowd, He then had to explain in private all He had taught to His confused disciples who understood very little of what He had said that day.

He gives one final word before He falls asleep. He says to all in the boat in verse 35, "Let us cross over to the other side."

And now He is asleep in the back of the boat using something for a pillow. He is dead to the world, thoroughly exhausted. As the disciples look at Him lying there they see a very incredible, but a very tired, man. His exhaustion demonstrates that He was in every sense of the word, a man.

Mark interrupts the hope of Jesus' peaceful sleep by an event that even experienced seamen like Peter, Andrew, James and John were terrified about.

### B. The Storm.

*"And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling."  
(Mark 4:37)*

The words *great windstorm* is the same word for hurricane or whirlwind. This was not just a normal storm, this was one that even these experienced fisherman were frightened by, not knowing if they would live or die.

The water was coming in faster than they could bail it out. They tried to save their lives as the boat filled up with water and finally they awaked Jesus. They did not awaken Him for Him to do a miracle, because they didn't ask for that. They awakened Jesus to either make Him help bail out water or maybe to get Him to ask God for help, but they didn't ask Him to do what He did.

*"But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?'" (Mark 4:38)*

### **C. The Power of God Manifested.**

*"Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm." (Mark 4:39)*

Notice the word *rebuke*.

Jesus' response is more than a man's response. It is the very action of God. You need to see this if God is going to talk to you right now and that's what we want Him to do. I want God to talk to us. You've got to understand that what Jesus did was more than just a good miracle-working teacher. This was the very action of God. Commanding the wind and the sea is something only God can do.

*You who still the noise of the seas,  
The noise of their waves,  
And the tumult of the peoples.  
(Psalms 65:7)*

God calms the seas, not men. Not even good men with great faith.

*You rule the raging of the sea;  
When its waves rise, You still them.  
(Psalms 89:9)*

This is Scriptural evidence that it was more than a mere man in that boat, speaking and rebuking the wind and waves. God is the only one who tells the creation what to do and because He is the Creator He has the power to do it. In fact, this story is more significant than most of us have ever realized. Jesus is demonstrating to these 12 men that He is more than just a Messiah-like figure but rather He is the fulfillment of the prophet like unto Moses, but greater.

Before Moses died he prophesied there would come after him a prophet like him but even greater than him. Jesus does something very similar to what Moses did. In Psalms 106:9 David gives us a picture of the Exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea and he too uses strategic words.

*He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it dried up;  
So He led them through the depths,  
As through the wilderness.  
(Psalms 106:9)*

Moses didn't part the Red Sea. God used him, but the truth is, as David said, it was God. How did God do it? He *rebuked* the sea. Now here is Jesus, knowing the Scriptures really well, standing up and rebuking the sea. What was He doing? He was showing His disciples there was a new Deliverer in town. Moses was faithful in the house of God, but Jesus is the One who built the house, says the writer of Hebrews. Here He stands and rebukes the sea and gives them safe passage to the other side, just as Moses did before. This was a new Exodus.

This was a sign that He had come to bring deliverance, but not just deliverance from Egyptian bondage or slavery, but He's come to deliver you from your sins to set you free. To set the captive free even to this day so your heart can sing, "Free, yes, free indeed!" This was a new Exodus.

The Scriptural proof is there, yet these men didn't understand anything they saw. May I add one more indictment against these men—but, not just against them, because as you'll see this morning I can identify with them so clearly therefore I would say it's also an indictment against us.

Did you know this event was prophesied in Scripture? In Psalm 107 it describes this miracle in detail. It's talking about God doing it in times past, with Jonah and the seamen then, but those are just types and illustrations of the great Jesus who would do this. Read this with me and marvel at the accuracy and the level of detail the Psalmist had concerning what Jesus would one day do.

*For He commands and raises the stormy wind,  
Which lifts up the waves of the sea.  
<sup>26</sup> They mount up to the heavens,  
They go down again to the depths;  
Their soul melts because of trouble.  
<sup>27</sup> They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,  
And are at their wits' end.  
<sup>28</sup> Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble,  
And He brings them out of their distresses.  
<sup>29</sup> He calms the storm,  
So that its waves are still.  
<sup>30</sup> Then they are glad because they are quiet;  
So He guides them to their desired haven.  
(Psalms 107:25-30)*

Tell me that's not a prophesy of what Jesus did. He fulfills it to the letter. The disciples were beside themselves, they really believed they're dying and at any moment the water was going to capsize the ship and they'll be lost at sea. At their wits end, they cry to the Lord and what does He do? He brings them out of their distresses and calms the storm and brings them to their desired haven.

The disciples were not ignorant of the Old Testament. Every Jewish boy grew up in the synagogue and there received their education. This was their school and their church. Their textbook was the Old Testament Scriptures. Much memorization took place. Maybe they weren't so familiar with this prophesy but what I'm trying to show you is the preponderance of Scriptural evidence that says only God commands winds and waves and only God does wind and wave obey.

The disciples stand there after this event and they are flabbergasted. Why are they astonished? Because of their weak faith.

## **II. The Weak Faith of the Disciples**

Even after seeing what they saw they are still unbelieving.

In verse 40 Jesus said, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" or "little faith" as Matthew 8:26 says, "But He said to them, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?'" They had faith or they wouldn't be following Him, but it was weak faith.

Jesus said they were to cross over to the other side of the lake, which wasn't even as big as Kentucky Lake. He said their destination was the other side. This was God speaking. It was the word of the Lord.

Friends, whatever God has told you, whatever He has told you that will come to pass, will come to pass. If He has told you to do something He intends for it to be done. It's not a potentiality or a possibility, no. With God it is certainty. He had said they were to go to the other side. That should have been a sufficient word for those men but because their faith in the Son of God was so small they allowed what they saw and heard to be important to their faith than what Jesus said. And herein is our problem, just as it was for these 12 men. As a church God has made us some promises and to some of you He has made promises to, and to all of us He has made the promise of an overcoming Spirit-filled, fruitful life. You are a branch in the Vine and He will prune you and cleanse you so that you may bear more fruit so that in the end you will bear much fruit, "for in this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit."

Fruitlessness or little fruit is not the reason He saved you. Some may bear more fruit than others but in the end you are to be fruitful.

The reason we can't believe God for that promise of fruitfulness is because we too allow what we see and hear to have more weight and pull with our hearts than what Jesus has said and what He has promised to do. That's why the disciples' faith was weak and why our faith is weak also.

Their focus was entirely wrong and I submit to you so is our focus most of the time. Instead of our focus being on Christ and who He really is, of which I'll speak more in a moment, we focus our attention on ourselves.

Learn this principle. It's a law, a rule, and there is no exception:

**When your faith is mixed with a focus on self, faith will always be weak.**

For example, if a man does not believe God, the Bible, or the miraculous it is because he has set his intellect up as greater than God and will only believe what he can explain.

What about the believer? You've taken Him at His word and believed in Him to change your life, but if your faith in Him is polluted, adulterated, or mixed with any part of self, your faith can never achieve what God would call great faith.

Last Sunday evening I taught a message titled, "The Progression of Moses' Faith," because Moses is one of the best examples in all of Scripture of how faith progresses from weak faith to great faith.

At the age of 40 something happened to Moses. It was an incredible event in his life. I'm not going to read it from Exodus, but from Stephen's sermon in Acts 7. Stephen gives us more insight into the psyche and soul of Moses and this event.

*"And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. <sup>23</sup> "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart [where did that come from? It came from God. It "came into his heart", it didn't start in his heart. It wasn't self-originated or initiated. God did something with Moses. We'll talk about that in a minute] to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. <sup>24</sup> And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. <sup>25</sup> For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. (Acts 7:22-25)*

The writer of Hebrews gives us even more insight. Do you know what it is? "By faith, Moses when he came of age refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer the affliction of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of God more than the treasures of Egypt for he looked to the reward" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

That's what happened to Moses at age 40. God did come to him and faith was there. Moses knew the story of his birth and knew it was not an accident that he had been plucked out of the jaws of death by Pharaoh's daughter. He knew about the pitch basket his mother made and Miriam, his sister, had watched over. He knew all of that and learned that it wasn't an accident but the providence of God. God's hand had made it all happen because he would be the deliverer of his people.

So by faith he left the throne and the life of Egypt and became a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He became one of them, supposing that when he came on the scene with all of his training and experience of Egyptian culture and life the people would know he was the one God had chosen to deliver them.

But there was a problem. Moses' faith was not pure or great at this point. It was strong enough to suffer but not strong enough to succeed, because it was corrupted with self-confidence. It was polluted with self.

If a man believes God can use him because he is gifted or that he's the obvious choice for God or that he's dedicated or has the certain gifts or talents or experience necessary, his faith is weak because it's adulterated with self-confidence.

Here again is another biblical principle. Learn it well. God will not tolerate trusting Him and trusting yourself at the same time.

God had to do something with Moses. He sends him to the backside of a desert for 40 years and there he enters the dark night of the soul. That is the experience where God breaks a man so He can use a man. He afflicts and wounds His servant so that one day that servant will be pliable and useable.

For 40 long years God took this man, full of himself and ambition, thinking he was qualified to do the will of God, and so humbled him that 40 years later at the age of eighty on the side of a mountain looking at a bush that burned but wasn't consumed, God called him.

What was Moses' response then?

*"Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." <sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" <sup>12</sup> So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." (Exodus 3:10-12)*

Did you hear what said to God? "Who am I?! I can't do that!" We are so quick to say, "That's a boy, Moses, you finally learned your lesson." And I'm telling you the whole message last week was to say he hadn't. He still had weak faith. It was still as weak as it was at the age of 40 because it was still mixed with self. Only now it wasn't self-confidence but self-pity. "I can't do that. You can't use me. I'm washed up and too old. You can't do that with me." The whole focus was still on himself not God and God's amazing, omnipotent power.

Beloved, many of us are not living fruitful lives as God intended, and neither is our church as fruitful as it ought to be, because our focus is on ourselves and we're not letting God be God. There is something in me that fights against letting God be Himself and it keeps my faith weak.

### III. The Inability to Let God Be Himself

*And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (Mark 4:41)*

Do you understand what they're saying? "We saw it, but we don't believe it. I don't believe what I just saw. Who is this man? Men aren't supposed to do that. Men aren't supposed to tell the wind and waves what to do, only God does that." You would think that the logical powers of reasoning would kick in and they would come to the right conclusion. But they didn't.

#### A. The Disciples Problem With Jesus' Deity.

The apostles could not see Jesus for who He really was for two reasons. First, they couldn't see who Jesus really was because all they could see with their eyes was that He was a man. There was no visible manifestation about His appearance that would lead you to believe He was deity. Isaiah said He was not handsome. He didn't have beautiful, God-like features, no halo or bright lights. He's in the back of the boat exhausted. God doesn't sleep or slumber, says the Bible, and this man is asleep. They saw Him eat and get hungry; they saw Him stub His toe and say, "Ow, that hurt". They were assessing, judging, and evaluating Jesus by what they saw not by Scripture.

The second reason they couldn't let Jesus be who He was is because of their preconceived ideas about the Messiah. This was not the problem of just the 12 disciples but the problem of all of Israel, especially the leaders who had Him crucified. Their theological box said the Messiah would be like different and Jesus broke all of those preconceived ideas. He wouldn't fit into their mold, not even the disciples' mold. The disciples never understood that the Scriptures said the Messiah wouldn't just be a man but also God. They saw the Messiah as someone who was a human descendent of David and a great deliverer like Moses. They never read the Old Testament Scriptures and saw that the Messiah would also be God as well as a man. Their theological box never allowed them to see Jesus as He really was. That's why even after watching Jesus do something only God can do they are saying, "Who is this guy?"

Why do we do that? Why do we want to remake God to fit our theological box? I'll give you one reason: we want control. There is no other reason.

You cannot let God be who He really is in your life because that would mean He has absolute control doing whatever He wanted to do, not what *you* want Him to do and that's very difficult for us. Isn't that true?

I want God to do what I think is best. I want Him to allow me to have a little bit of say so we remake the image of God into something compatible that will leave us some control.

Do you want to have great faith? Then you're going to have to let God be Himself which means be in absolute control with you having no control or say.



## **B. Absolute Surrender to God.**

Here we are again. We're back to that subject. I'm sure to the chagrin of some of you, we're now again talking about absolute surrender. You would rather me talk about something you didn't understand because at least then you could just check out on me, but you understand absolute surrender and for that reason you don't like it. I want you to listen this time thinking that this is the way to true joy and happiness.

If you say "no" to absolute surrender to God and His control of your life it's like saying "no" to your own happiness. I want to keep sounding that trumpet because God truly knows what you need in order for you to have life at it's absolute best. There is a best life now and it's the life absolutely surrendered to Christ with no holds barred! Throw out the moorings, the ropes, and the anchors and say, "God, take my boat wherever You want to take it!" That is the best life. And in order to have that kind of life you have to be absolutely surrendered.

The problem with that term, "absolute surrender", is we define it as doing everything God commands. We make it an obedience issue. But I want to approach it from a different perspective because it's more than an obedience issue. One of the most fundamental flaws of most parents today, their number one mistake is they try to teach children to become good through obedience.

We believe if we can get our children to do what we tell them to do they will grow up and be productive, good adults, but it doesn't always work that way. There is no telling how many times I've seen children under mom and dad's authority who did everything asked of them, but once they gained freedom and was on their own they rejected the lifestyle mom and dad tried to teach them. They wouldn't adopt the values mom and dad tried to teach them as their own. Why? Because submission is more than an obedience issue. Surrender to God is more than an obedience issue; it's a faith issue and is integral.

If that child will not just do what I tell him or her to do but will trust me that what I'm telling him is absolutely good for him, he will not only be compliant but adopt my understanding of life because he trusts me. That's all God wants to do with you, His child.

God is not interested in your obedience or compliance if there is no faith. Christianity is not just doing what God told us to do. It's believing and trusting God therefore I do what He tells me to do because I have confidence in Him—I believe and accept Him the way He is—good.

You absolutely surrender to God when you see God the way He is. To see God the way He really is you'll see Him as trustworthy, good, awesome, and fun. I don't mean that in a sacrilegious way but I mean it in the sense of spiritual joy and pleasure that is unspeakable and full of glory. That's what I want for you. I want your life to be characterized by that statement. Joy unspeakable and full of glory ought to be the description of every one of us in this room. There ought not to be these long dry periods where our joy has been drained like water out of a bathtub. We ought to

live in unspeakable joy and full of glory—this is what Jesus intends for us. The reason we don't is because we don't see Him as He really is. We have remade Him to fit our boxes. That's why your faith suffers and your joy languishes—you're not serving the one true God. For most of us, including myself, when my faith languishes and my joy dims, because we're not serving the one true God. I'm not seeing Him as He really is or letting Him be Himself.

The only way you can be absolutely surrendered to God is when you are content with whatever God brings into your life, no matter how painful.

And you can only be absolutely content with what God brings into your life when you are content with who God really is, when you are at peace with letting God be who He is because you trust Him as He is.

Great faith has to let Christ be Himself. This is the essence of self-denial. To deny yourself means you trust Jesus completely because you see Him as He is and you accept Him as He is.

If I could do one thing it would be to make everyone to fall in love with Jesus for Jesus' sake, not for what we can do for Him or what He can do for us but just for Himself.

### **C. Personal Application.**

When I read this passage earlier in the week I was gripped with one very important fact—I was not letting God be Himself to me.

When I preached that message last Sunday evening about Moses and his faith growing into great faith I did not realize then I was still mired in a weak faith. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and called Moses to deliver the people, Moses resisted, "Oh no, I'm not your man, I can't do that," because he was still focused on himself and not yet on God's power. I confess to you there was a degree of satisfaction in my heart that I had surpassed Moses and had grown beyond that in my walk with God. But when I read this text earlier this week, in my own private devotions, God showed me I was in the same place as Moses when He spoke to him in that burning bush.

I'm not saying I'm anything like Moses. I'm unworthy to even be compared with this servant of the Lord. But God has shown me my faith is no different than Moses' that day.

Much like Moses, when I came here in 1993, more than twenty years ago, I was 33. When you're 33 you believe that you're almost invincible, that nothing is too difficult for you and God. Before I came here I had been saved seven years, a biblical number by the way, and in those seven years I thought God had trained and prepared me to do His will and I was going to do it. I wasn't afraid to do it and I wasn't going to let anybody change my mind or keep me from doing God's will. I had my nose to the grindstone and my eyes on the goal and I was full speed ahead, and don't get in my way because I'll run over you. I was confident, not just in God but in myself. To some people

I may have appeared to have great faith but God looked at my faith and said it was weak because it was still corrupted with self.

Then in the year 2000, seven years later—my life is lived in seven year spans I think—God did something. He began that process of breaking me. And over the last several years He has been stripping me and breaking me and humbling me until I tell you there are many Sundays I wish I didn't have to come and preach because I'm afraid I'm going to fail yet again. I'm being as honest as I know how to be, because I believe God is going to help people through this. I'm taking my mask off. God has allowed one failure after another. Everything I have tried to do God has stopped, hindered, and blocked it. He has said no and even when I, in rebellion, would try again to do it, He shut it down where I couldn't.

If everyone who has joined the church since I've been here were still here we would be running 300-500 people, but look at us.

This is the hand of God I'm convinced.

There is something innate in us that tugs on us to be in control, to have a hand in everything, to get some of the credit. We don't mind God getting the glory so long as we get some. The only way God in His love and mercy can use a people is by taking them through the shadows of the dark valley of humiliation, the valley of the shadow of death. He has to crush them and prove to them that they cannot do anything apart from God.

Like Moses, I am content to live in obscurity. I believe God has done such a wondrous work in my soul that I can be content with God no matter how difficult it is. I have learned to trust God in the hour of difficulty, with people betraying me, lying about me, deserting me, and rejecting me. I've learned to trust God in the hour of babies born with Down's syndrome. I've learned to trust God in financial difficulties when there was no money or way of hope. I've learned to live in obscurity. I've learned that God is better than anything and as long as I have God I can be happy.

But God showed me earlier this week that my faith was not as sound as I thought it was and that it was still weak faith. Why? Because I was willing to trust God in suffering but not in success. I will not let God be Himself. If God wants to bless me I don't know how to receive it. In fact, I can't believe that He wants to bless me. I've reshaped God to be this kind of God who makes His people learn only through suffering. I've tried to stuff the Almighty into my box, a God that I can cling to when it hurts but never risking success. My faith can believe that He rules over all suffering, adversity, affliction, and trials, and you can trust Him when you're going through these. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me." I know He's with me and that He's bringing this into my life for good—"all things work to good to them that love Him"—and I believe that. Without a shadow of a doubt I can trust God when it hurts. Some of you have remarked the worst things get the happier I become. Yes, because I know God and I know He's working! I can trust God in adversity because He's taught me that for the last 14 years. That's all I've known—failure.

I've not known success. And God showed me while reading Mark 4 that I had put Him in my theological box of believing that He doesn't calm seas and hush winds anymore. *Jesus did that when He was on earth but He doesn't do that anymore.* I was shocked.

I'm the person who argues with the naysayers that He hasn't changed. I believe He hasn't changed. I'm the one who tries to argue that He still does the miraculous. But God showed me that really don't trust Him to do the miraculous.

I can believe God someday for the promise at Oak Grove. I can believe Him someday because with *someday* there is no threat. There is no exposing my faith that it may be wrong or inadequate. How easy it is to believe that someday He's going to bless you but you can't believe him today because you may lay your head on your pillow tonight disappointed.

All we can see of Jesus is that He'll get us through the dark night and troubled waters but we don't believe He'll do it by standing up and saying, "Peace be still" and the storm immediately ceases.

The Lord showed me my faith is still weak because I have difficulty believing God is the same Jesus that stood up in that boat and said, "Peace be still" and everything was still. I have trouble believing God for success. I would have never dreamed that in a million years, but when God exposes your heart you see it and you can believe it.

So, I want to say to this church today that something is going on in my heart and soul. The only way I can describe it is that I believe God is getting ready to fulfill His promise. I believe the time is at hand. Something is stirring in me that tells me now is the time. And if the Lord will help me I want to let Him be who He is. I don't want to make Him after my image. We see Jesus doing miracles in the Bible, parting Red Seas, shutting mouths of lions, setting armies to flight, and raising the dead, then I look at church history and I don't see too many miracles since then and I've allowed church history to form my concept of God. Let me tell you something—church history is not inspired! This Book is inspired. This is the revelation of God and the revelation of Jesus Christ is this: He stands up in the middle of the storm and says, "Peace be still" and it is! He's the God of the miraculous.

I'm not trying to get us to believe in signs and wonders in the crazy way many talk today about them. I'm trying to tell you that you need to let God be God. He might just want to bless you. In fact, I'm determined to believe that He does. God doesn't bring suffering into our lives without a reason. He brings suffering into our lives so He can trust us with success. The suffering and the affliction we have suffered all these many years, even the hand of God wounding us, is so we could be prepared for the day God stands up in the middle of the boat and says, "Peace be still" and the deluge of His blessings come pouring in. He's preparing us otherwise the suffering has no purpose, the affliction is needless, and God is sadistic. But that's not the God I see in Scripture. In Scripture I see a God who marvels us, amazes us, and astonishes us.

I'm here today to testify that I believe God wants to bless you and take you out of the valley of humiliation and put you on the mountain where you enjoy His blessings. He might once again return you to the valley but it will be with the knowledge that one day you will see the mountaintop again because in every valley He restores my soul. He restores us so we can see the mountain of God.

I'm not called to live in mediocrity or a normalcy this church world has defined as Christianity. Absolutely not! I serve the Living God who stands in the middle of storms and says, "I rebuke you," and the seas obeys. That's the kind of God I have. That's the kind of God you have given your life to. You believe Him only when you see Him as He is and let Him be Himself. You've got to let Him be Himself in your life. *That sounds risky. I'm afraid to do that.* I understand. I am too. Why? Because I'm afraid I'm going to be made to look like a fool. But I would rather be a fool in this life having tried to see Him as He really is than to go through His life having wasted it for a mediocrity that is not what He died for.

That's what I believe we see in this text. We see God who can do whatever He wants to do and He wants to bless His people and show them His marvelous might and power while they're standing there astonished, not believing what they saw. I don't want to be like that anymore. I want to know Him as He is to be known. Yes, there are more valleys, there is more suffering, but the suffering is not the goal—the goal is that God can trust us with His blessings. He made Jesus' soul an offering for sin, why? So that He can reap a people, posterity, and an offspring.

The cross was not the end, but we make it the end. We make suffering the goal. *Oh, if I can suffer for Jesus then I'm really spiritual.* Yes. But can you be successful for Jesus? For Michael it takes more faith to believe God for success than suffering. I've already learned how to suffer and I'm sure I'll learn more, I don't know the full of degree of suffering. I know I can't compare to others who have suffered far worse than me. But I know if that's what God ordained for me I could cling to Him because who else do you have when you have nothing else but pain? It's easy to cling to an anchor in the midst of a storm, but is there faith in this room to believe God to prosper you? I'm not talking financially, I'm talking spiritually—that He would trust us with souls, many souls, hundreds of souls. Can we believe God to make Himself known in this city and this area through *you*? Can you believe God would do that for you? I didn't ask if you believe He could do that, I'm asking if you believe that He will. There's where great faith lives—not only do I know He can but that He will.

The sinner may say this morning in his or her defense, "Well, that is my problem, I don't have the faith to believe. I want to believe, but I can't. I am far from this great faith." My dear friend, I want to hold out to you wonderful news—God has said that your faith in Him need not be perfect nor does it need to be great. He gave us an example of man who got his prayer answered while having a very imperfect and incomplete kind of faith. His son was demon possessed and Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." To which the father replied, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" And Jesus answered this weak faith with compassion and healed his son.

“But Pastor,” you say, “I don’t believe that I have that much faith as that desperate father.” Very well, do not despair. Jesus said if you have faith the size of a mustard seed that you could see your prayer answered. Therefore, call out to him with your small faith and He will answer you.

Yet again you resist and say to me, “I don’t think I have even that much faith.” Alright then, you still do not need to leave here discouraged that your faith is not enough, for the Bible says that if you can just look to Jesus you would be saved. The Bible says, “Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22). Jesus said “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (John 3:14). When Israel’s camp was overrun by poisonous snakes, God told Moses to make a brass serpent and put it on a pole and should anyone be bitten they would not die if they only lifted their eyes and looked upon the brass serpent. Here, Jesus is saying, “Just look upon Me dying on the cross for you. Look to Me, and be saved. Look and live!”

Once more you say, “Pastor, I appreciate what you are trying to do, but I don’t have any faith that I can lift my head up and look toward God.” Very well, my friend, again I say to you, do not despair, for the Lord told us of a man who also could not look up and away to God. He was a very wicked man who “would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” (Luke 18:13). At least you can admit this to God. You can tell him that your greatest crime is that you cannot trust Him, but you are sorry for this and that you need rescuing. I tell you He will respond. Will you not cry out to Him?

We believers have seen the Lord and we do believe, albeit weakly at times. Let us also cry out to Him that we have not allowed Him to be who He really is to us. We have sinned against Him by trying to stuff Him into our boxes and believe Him when we deemed it safe to do so. Let us today trust God to be Himself and be content to not only trust Him with our trials but also with our needed triumphs. Amen.