

Mark: 4:35–41

From Catena Aurea:

35. And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

36. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

37. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

38. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

39. And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

41. And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. in Matt. 28) The Lord took the disciples indeed, that they might be spectators of the miracle which was coming, but He took them alone, that no others might see that they were of such little faith. Wherefore, to shew that others went across separately, it is said, And there were also with him other ships. Lest again the disciples might be proud of being alone taken, He permits them to be in danger; and besides this, in order that they might learn to bear temptations manfully. Wherefore it goes on, And there arose a great storm of wind; and that He might impress upon them a greater sense of the miracle which was to be done, He gives time for their fear, by sleeping. Wherefore there follows, And he was himself in the hinder part of the ship, &c. For if He had been awake, they would either not have feared, nor have asked Him to save them when the storm arose, or they would not have thought that He could do any such things.

THEOPHYLACT. Therefore He allowed them to fall into the fear of danger, that they might experience His power in themselves, who saw others benefitted by Him. But He was sleeping upon the pillow of the ship, that is, on a wooden one.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. in Matt. 28) Shewing His humility, and thus teaching us many lessons of wisdom. But not yet did the disciples who remained about Him know His glory; they thought indeed that if He arose He could command the winds, but could by no means do so reposing or asleep. And therefore there follows, And they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

THEOPHYLACT. But He arising, rebukes first the wind, which was raising the tempest of the sea, and causing the waves to swell, and this is expressed in what follows, And he arose, and rebuked the wind; then He commands the sea; wherefore it goes on, And he said to the sea, Peace, be still.

GLOSS. (non occ.) For from the troubling of the sea there arises a certain sound, which appears to be its voice threatening danger, and therefore, by a sort of metaphor, He fitly commands tranquillity by a word signifying silence: just as in the restraining of the winds, which trouble the sea with their violence, He uses a rebuke. For men who are in power are accustomed to curb those, who rudely disturb the peace of mankind, by threatening to punish them; by this, therefore, we are given to understand, that, as a king can repress violent men by threats, and by his edicts sooth the murmurs of his people, so Christ, the King of all creatures, by His threats restrained the violence of the winds, and compelled the sea to be silent. And immediately the effect followed, for it continues, And the wind ceased, which He had threatened, and there arose a great calm, that is, in the sea, to which He had commanded silence.

THEOPHYLACT. He rebuked His disciples, for not having faith; for it goes on, And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have not faith? For if they had had faith, they would have believed that even when sleeping, He could preserve them safe. There follows, And they feared with a great fear, and said one to another, &c. For they were in doubt about Him, for since He stilled the sea, not with a rod like Moses, nor with prayers as Elisha at the Jordan, nor with the ark as Joshua, the son of Nun, on this account they thought Him truly God, but since He was asleep, they thought Him a man.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

4:36 The Boat Was Already Filling

Testing the Disciples.

Athanasius: Even while he was asleep on the pillow, the Lord was testing his disciples, when a miracle was wrought that was calculated especially to put even the wicked to contrition. For when he arose, and rebuked the sea, and silenced the storm, he plainly disclosed two things: that the storm of the sea was not simply from winds, but from the fear of the Lord who walked upon it; and that the Lord who rebuked it was not a creature, but rather its creator. Letter 29.

The Word Sailed with Them.

Athanasius: They awakened the Word, who was sailing with them, and immediately the sea became smooth at the command of its Lord, and they were saved. They became proclaimers and teachers at the same time, attesting the miracles of our Savior, and also teaching us to imitate their example. Letter 19.6, Easter a.d. 347.

4:38 Asleep on the Cushion, They Awoke Him

The Bark of the Church.

Origen: For as many as are in the little ship of faith are sailing with the Lord; as many as are in the bark of holy church will voyage with the Lord across this wave-tossed life; though the Lord himself may sleep in holy quiet, he is but watching your patience and endurance: looking forward to the repentance, and to the conversion of those who have sinned. Come then to him eagerly, instant in prayer. Fragments on Matthew 3.3.

Who Was Asleep?

Gregory Nazianzen: He was tired—yet he is the “rest” of the weary and the burdened. He was overcome by heavy sleep—yet he goes lightly over the sea, rebukes the winds, and relieves the drowning Peter. Oration 29, On the Son 20.

Sharpening Their Perceptions.

Cyril of Alexandria: And so he sleeps, leaving them in fear, in which their senses would be sharpened to perceive the significance of what was to come. For no one feels what takes place in another's body as acutely as that which happens in his own. Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 8.5.22.

4:39a He Rebuked the Wind

4:39b Peace! Be Still!

By Whose Authority.

Basil: Pay close attention to the Lord's words; whenever he instructs us about the Father, he knows that by using terms of personal authority, such as "I will; be clean"; and "Peace! Be still!" and "But I say to you"; and "You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you"; and other similar expressions, we will be led to recognize his authority as master and creator. By these encounters we are meeting the Father of the Son, the Father who creates through the Son. This does not insinuate that the Father's creation is imperfect, or that the Son's energy is feeble, but shows their unity of will. On the Holy Spirit 8.21.

4:41a Who Then is This?

The Ship, His Humanity and His Divinity.

Ephrem the Syrian: The ship carried his humanity, but the power of his Godhead carried the ship and all that was in it. In order that he might show that even his humanity did not require the ship, instead of the planks which a shipwright puts together and fastens, he, like the architect of creation, made the waters firm and joined them together solidly under his feet. So just as the Lord strengthened the hands of Simeon the priest, that his arms might bear up in the temple the strength that was bearing up all, so did he strengthen the feet of Simon the apostle, that they might bear themselves up on the water. So that name which bore the first-begotten in the temple was afterwards borne up by the first-begotten in the sea. Homily on Our Lord 50.

4:41b Wind and Sea Obey Him

Awakening the Christ Asleep in You.

Augustine: When you have to listen to abuse, that means you are being buffeted by the wind. When your anger is roused, you are being tossed by the waves. So when the winds blow and the waves mount high, the boat is in danger, your heart is imperiled, your heart is taking a battering. On hearing yourself insulted, you long to retaliate; but the joy of revenge brings with it another kind of misfortune—shipwreck. Why is this? Because Christ is asleep in you. What do I mean? I mean you have forgotten his presence. Rouse him, then; remember him, let him keep watch within you, pay heed to him.... A temptation arises: it is the wind. It disturbs you: it is the surging of the sea. This is the moment to awaken Christ and let him remind you of those words: “Who can this be? Even the winds and the sea obey him.” Sermons 63.1–3.

The Author of the Deep.

Prudentius.

His power and miracles proclaim him God.

I see the wild winds suddenly grow calm

When Christ commands; I see the storm-tossed sea

Grow smooth, with tranquil surface bright,

At Christ’s behest; I see the waves grow firm

As the raging flood sustains his treading feet.

He walks dry-shod upon the flowing tide

And bears upon the flood with footsteps sure.

He chides the winds and bids the tempest cease.

Who would command the stormy gales:

“Be still,

Your strongholds keep and leave the boundless sea,”

Except the Lord and maker of the winds?...

Who on the sea could walk, who with firm step

Upon the flood could without sinking tread

That path with soles upborne and feet unwet,

Except the author of the deep, the Spirit,

Poured from the Father's lips, that moved across

The waves, not yet hemmed in by solid shores? A Hymn on the Trinity, Lines 649–79.