Sermon Date: August 23, 2020

Fruitful and Free: Abiding with Faith

Mark 4:35-41

Jesus promises freedom and fruitfulness to those who abide in Him and His words. To pursue what Jesus offers, during our 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, we are encouraging all of us to engage three core spiritual disciplines of abiding: Scripture, prayer, and fasting. When these three practices of abiding are pursued in healthy, God-centered ways, they can help lead us to experience the fruitfulness and freedom that Jesus offers. One aspect of pursuing them in this way, requires that we pursue them in faith. Today, we are going to consider an account in Mark 4:35–41 that highlights the importance of faith as we seek Jesus.

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Opening Discussion: What is one of the worst storms you've experienced?
Read Mark 4:35-31
1. How is Jesus' revealed in this incident? What do we learn about him?
2. What do we learn about the disciples?
3. In light of the things that the disciples had already seen Jesus do (e.g., why do you think they were so slow to turn to Jesus for help?

Steve said:

The disciples' reaction is so very true to life, isn't it? When we experience danger (medically, emotionally, financially, relationally, etc.), we sometimes react as the disciples did: we panic and accuse God of not caring about us. Like the disciples, we sometimes fail to consider that two things can be true at the same time: we can be in legitimate danger AND the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each care deeply about us (even though it seems to us like He's asleep).

4. We too sometimes panic and accuse God of not caring rather than turning to Him in faith. Why do you think this is? Why are we slow to turn to Jesus for help at times?

Steve said:

Jesus isn't saying their emotions were wrong or invalid. He wasn't saying that they weren't in danger. He's saying that *they shouldn't have panicked*. By that time they should have had faith (or confidence) in Him, confidence that He cared about their well-being and that He was powerful enough to deliver them from danger. After all, it was Jesus' idea to get in the boat in the first place. And they had seen already seen Jesus cast out demons with a word and heal people with a touch (see Luke 4:35 and 6:10). Jesus wasn't mad that they woke Him up; but He expected them to address Him with faith, not with an accusation ("Do you not care that we are perishing?"). We tend to think, "Either you have faith or you don't, and there's nothing you can do about it." There is a sense in which faith is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). But Jesus is implying that they were responsible to add up the mounting evidence of who He was and *choose* to trust Him.

5.	What is some of the "mounting evidence" that you've seen in your life that Jesus is trust-
	worthy?

6. Read Romans 8:32. What does this say about why we should trust God?

Steve said:

During this 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, we are practicing three core habits of abiding. These are simple, time-tested ways that people have sought after God for thousands of years. . . We need a simple, effective plan for seeking God (not a formula to follow mindlessly, but a plan to follow thoughtfully and whole-heartedly). Today's passage suggests that we practice these three habits *with faith*. Let's think briefly about approaching the Word in faith, praying in faith, and fasting in faith.

7. During this 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting for fruitfulness or freedom in a specific area of life, what might it look like to approach each of the following spiritual disciplines with faith?

- Prayer
- Fasting