

## The Care of Christ

*Rev. Ian Macleod*

*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?*

—Mark 4:38

Dear congregation, to get any glimpse of the glory of Christ ought to make us wonder and say, “What a glorious person Jesus Christ is!” Yet, as we do so, we might ask, “How can I come near to someone as wonderful and glorious and holy as He is?” We might feel more like Peter, who says, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). It might make us wonder why someone as glorious as this would have anything to do with us. Why would He care about someone like you or me? This passage answers the question, “Does Jesus care about someone like you and me?” It is quite possible that that is not a particularly pressing question to you when life is going smoothly—when health is good, when family life is good, when friends are good, when school and work are good. Yes, we all have our ups and downs but generally life is smooth and life is good. But it certainly *does* become a question that presses upon us in the context of suffering—when you get devastating news, that phone call, that doctor’s report; when things seem to go terribly wrong, then the questions that often come are, “Does God see? Does God care?” Even atheists will ask these kinds of questions in time of great trouble. You can think of the time after 9/11—the new atheists came out, and they had this very militant

approach: “Where was God? Does He not see? Why did He do nothing? Does He not care?”

But what about you in your own trials and in your own difficulties, in your own heartbreaks and temptations, in your own unbelief and questions, when things happen that seem so difficult to understand and you have disappointments and distresses. Life seems to go out of control, and not just outwardly but so often inwardly. There may be a calm outwardly on our face, but inwardly there is this storm. Maybe that is you today. Maybe there is a storm in your conscience: a sense of your sin, a sense of what sin deserves, a sense that you are going to perish. This then is no theoretical question. Does Jesus care? And here we are getting to the very heart of His character. What is He like? And under this theme—does Jesus care?—we want to see three things from this passage:

1. This is a question that Christ purposely raises in the minds of His people.
2. This is a question that He powerfully replies to.
3. This is a question that He perfectly redirects.

First, He purposely raises this question in the minds of His people: Does He care? Children, you know this story well. One day after teaching and healing, Jesus tells His disciples to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. As you know, they are fishermen, and this is a trip they have made hundreds or thousands of times, perhaps even daily. They are fishermen, so they know exactly what to do. They are at home on the sea. And most likely it was a beautiful day for sailing. At least, we don't read of them objecting or saying this is a bad idea, that the weather is not favorable. And then, too, Jesus falls asleep in the boat. This suggests to us very strongly that there is a calm on the Sea of Galilee.

People who know more about it tell us that on the Sea of Galilee, storms can, and often do, come up very quickly, and that is exactly what happens here. That, in itself, would not have been a major surprise to these fishermen. Suddenly, the wind picks up,

the sky gets dark, they begin to feel the wind and rain, and not just rain, but lashing rain, and there are strong waves hitting the boat. And I suppose, even up to that point, they are not yet out of control. And yet, it seems that this storm is unlike any other. For all their efforts, these experienced fishermen come to the place that must be the worst nightmare for every sailor—to *be out of control at sea*. To be out of control anywhere is a terrifying thing. Children, you know that: you ride your bike down a steep and winding hill and you think you are going along fine, but suddenly you lose control, and it is a very scary thing. Or maybe you are driving a car, and you start to skid, you try to correct, and you overcorrect, and before you know it you are out of control. It's a terrifying thing: you can see your life flash in front of you. Well, here on the sea, these fishermen are out of control. Waves are coming into the boat, and verse 37 tells us that they "beat into the ship, so that it was now full." The disciples reach a point of sheer desperation—"We are going to die; we are going to perish!"

But there are two other things in this account that are particularly troubling and confusing to the disciples, more than the water that is filling the boat. First, *they are here because they obeyed Jesus*. They are not like Jonah, running away from the Lord and doing the opposite of what He said. They are here because Jesus told them to go. "Let us depart to the other side." It wasn't a suggestion. It was a command. And what did they do? They promptly obeyed. They did what disciples are meant to do—obey and follow the Lord. They took Him "even as he was," Mark tells us, "in the ship." It suggests they went quickly; they didn't hang around; they took Him as He was in the ship. Matthew tells us that His disciples followed Him. Luke simply says, "They launched forth." Is that not what disciples do? Does Jesus not say in John 10:27, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"? Does He not also say there in verse 28, "And they shall never perish"? But the reason the disciples are in this storm, at this point of perishing, as they see it, is precisely because they did what Jesus told them. Doesn't that add to the trouble and the storm?

Maybe even today you find yourself in a storm that never seems to end, and the hardest thing about it is that as far as you can see, you are in it because you were doing what was right—you were following the Lord. But there is something else. It is not just that they are obeying Jesus—maybe it is even more this—it’s that Jesus was asleep. Interestingly, this is the only time in the Gospels that we are told of Jesus being asleep. Their problem is that they are looking at their situation and they cannot make sense of what Jesus is doing. What Jesus is doing or not doing does not line up with the circumstances around them or with what I, or we, think He should be doing. They are in the middle of a life-threatening storm, and verse 38 so *calmly* tells us, “Jesus was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow.” “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety” (Ps. 4:8). It is very obvious here that Jesus is in a very deep sleep. Children, maybe some of your parents think you could sleep through anything, but when you get a little older, it is not always so easy to go into a deep sleep. Jesus is a fully grown man, and He is in a deep sleep. There is a life-threatening storm, there is howling wind, there are crashing waves filling the boat and drenching Him with its water, and Jesus does not wake up.

What does that tell you about Jesus? It tells you He was absolutely exhausted. He was absolutely exhausted! You see the real humanity of Christ. He has been preaching all day—an exhausting thing for any man. He has been performing miracles and healing and dealing with the people all day long. He is on His way to Gadara to deal with a demon-possessed man, and He is absolutely exhausted. Nobody worked as hard as Christ did. Nobody had the responsibility; nobody had the enormous pressure on their shoulders as He did. So the disciples, no doubt, are happy to let Him sleep. They were the fishermen—this is what they are good at—so they happily let Him sleep.

But do you see a lesson here? Do you see that Jesus is testing them exactly at the point where they thought they were strongest? The Lord often does that. Moses is known for his meekness, but

what happens? He strikes out in anger and is not allowed into the Promised Land. Peter is known for boldness and courage, and yet it is a little maid that makes him deny and swear that he does not know Jesus of Nazareth. Here are these fishermen, and what are they known for but their skill, their strength, and their courage at sea. This is their expertise, their sphere of competence, but here they are in a boat, in a storm at sea, out of control, crying out and saying, “We perish!”

And yet, even in that, you hear the germ of faith. Why are lifelong fishermen crying out to a carpenter’s son to help them in a storm, except that they realize that this is no ordinary man? What we are emphasizing here is that Christ has a purpose in bringing His people through the storm. He is bringing His people to see that their strength is weakness in His sight. He is bringing them to see just how poor and weak and needy they are. He is bringing them to see that they need Christ at every single point. There is no area of their lives of which they can say they can do without Jesus. There is no area of our own lives where we can say, “It’s okay for Jesus to be asleep here; I can take the helm in this area of my life.” No. This is what Jesus is bringing them to see: that this is simply not true. We need Christ at every point—our best efforts, the places we consider ourselves most strong, and even our faith itself is weakness in His sight. Faith can be a very fragile thing. But Jesus often brings devastating experiences into the lives of His people—not to harm them, not because He does not love them, not to destroy them, not so they perish—but so they depend more and more upon the Savior. “Carest thou not that we perish?” is a question that Jesus purposely raises in their minds because it is a question that He wants to answer.

That brings us, second, to this: does Jesus care? It is a question to which He gives a powerful reply. Before we look at the powerful reply, we do need to recognize that it is a *painful* reply. In many ways, this is the most painful question that anyone could have ever asked the Savior. People can say many things about you. People can question your strength; they can question your courage, your

intellect, your ability, your stamina, your knowledge, or your wisdom, but when people question your *care*, that is the really sore spot. Because what is the most notable difference between the good shepherd and the hireling? The good shepherd, Jesus says in John 10, is the one who gives his life for the sheep. He does not flee when the wolf comes—he lays down his life for the sheep. That is contrasted with the hireling who *does* flee when the wolf comes. Why? Because he does not care for the sheep. That is how you know the difference between a good shepherd and a hireling—it is in their *care* for the sheep. Can you feel the sting of this question? “Master, don’t you care?”

What a thing to say to Christ! Maybe it was the first thing He heard as He woke up from sleep—words that, no doubt, went through His real human heart like a dagger. “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” The very reason He is here is because He cares. All you have to do is look at Him lying there in the boat: look at Him exhausted, worn and spent, in a deep sleep, so tired that He sleeps through a storm. Look at Him there, and you have all the proof you need that here is one who cares. This is the eternal Son of God. This is the brightness of the Father’s glory. This is the express image of His person. This is the one who upholds all things by the word of His power. This is the one who slumbers not nor sleeps. Yet here He is, in His human nature, absolutely exhausted in a boat. Why? Because He is made in all points like unto His brethren so that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest to them; so that, ultimately, He could die for their sin. And this is His journey: He is on His way to Jerusalem and to Calvary itself, not to sleep a sleep of exhaustion, but to sleep the sleep of death. Oh, how deeply He cares!

It is a painful question, but it is a question He has been leading them to ask for this very purpose—that He would give this powerful reply, and that He would show them just how much He does care. Because, children, what was it that woke Jesus, if not the storm? What brought Him out of His sleep, if not the wind and the rain and the drenching sea? What woke Jesus up from His

deep sleep? What woke Jesus up from His deep sleep was a cry for help—a cry for mercy and for salvation. “Lord, save us,” they say. “We perish!” That is what woke Him up. Thomas Boston says that the language of passion in the disciples is sometimes mixed with the language of grace.<sup>1</sup> Passion and grace. We could also say unbelief and faith. These two things are coming together here. There is the noise of the sea and the waves and the noise of their unbelief—We are going to perish! There is the noise of unbelief—Jesus does not care! But that is not what woke Him up. What woke Him up was the sound of the bleating of His sheep. He heard the cry of faith—the cry for His mercy, for His help, for His salvation—and we read, “And he arose.” I simply want to tell you today that if you come to this same Lord in your storm, whether it rages inside of you or outside of you, and you say, “Lord, rise, help and redeem us; Thy mercy we trust,” you will have His full attention. You can read Psalm 18 when you have time this afternoon and it will give you a vivid picture of how the Lord in heaven responds to the cry of His afflicted people.

Here is His purpose then: He wants to show them just how much He really does care. What a powerful reply we have in verse 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.” There is something so very impressive about the sea, isn’t there? Even as you stand on the safety of the shore and look out over the vast sea or ocean, there is something about the size of the sea and the power of the sea, with its relentless waves crashing on its shore, that is so very impressive! But the size and power of the sea are not as impressive as the one who made it, the one who claims it as His own. Psalm 95 says, “The sea is his, and he made it.” The one asleep on the boat—He made the sea. It belongs to Him.

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1. Thomas Boston, *The Whole Works of Thomas Boston: Discourses on Prayer*, ed. Samuel M’Millan (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1852), 11:49. Exact quote: “The language of passion is sometimes mixed with the language of grace in the prayers of saints; which when they discern, they will be ready to correct.”

I wonder what Christ's first thought was as He woke up. We know His mind was saturated with Scripture. Everything He did, He did with Scripture in His mind, Scripture informing Him. Each day He rose, His spiritual instinct was, "I will Thee bless." Where did His mind go when He woke up in the storm? Yes, He had heard His disciples, and He had heard the storm, and He saw the sea, but what was His first thought? Did His mind go to Psalm 93? "The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters." Or did His mind go to Psalm 89:9? "Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them." And here, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, *arises* and simply *speaks* to the sea and speaks to the wind, and says, "Peace, be still," and what happens? The swelling sea obeys His will, and its angry waves are stilled into a great calm.

Isn't that altogether marvelous? There are times in your lives when all you can see are the storms and the waves, and everything seems out of control. We can look at what is happening in our world today, and it so often seems so choppy and out of control. But the real difficulty is often that we do not hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. I don't see what Jesus is doing. It is as though He is asleep, as though He is not aware of my situation and my pain, as though He doesn't care. And that storm within you that no one else sees? You feel all alone in it, everyone else seems asleep, and you wonder if Jesus cares. He has raised that question in your mind so that He would answer it by showing you who He is and how much He really does care.

That brings us, third, to see: does Jesus care? It's a question that He perfectly redirects. After rebuking the wind, after dealing with the elements, He turns to another troubled sea, a sea inside His disciples, and He asks them, "Where is your faith?" Notice, He does not ask, "Where is your skill? Where has your courage gone? Your competence? You are fishermen, aren't you? Where has your naval expertise gone?" No, no, the real question for



them is, “Where is your faith? Where has *it* gone?” Because the problem here is that the circumstances around them have begun to control them and their faith, rather than the other way around. The circumstances have blurred the vision of faith. Sometimes faith can seem like it is almost 20/20, and you see God and Christ so clearly, and you think, This is where I’m going to stay. But then storms come and blur your vision, and you wonder if it was all just a dream. Jesus is saying here that the circumstances have blurred your faith. “Is this the view of Me,” Jesus is saying, “that you have? Is this consistent with all that you have seen and heard of Me? Is this the impression I have given you in all that I have taught you, in all I have said and done? That I am one who does not care? That I am one you are to follow and obey and trust, and yet in doing so you *will* perish? Where is your faith?”

We should be very thankful for these questions. Sometimes Christ says, “Why do you have so little faith?” Sometimes He says, “Where is your faith?” When we hear that, we ought to ask ourselves, “Do I have faith? Do I trust Christ? Do I believe in the Son of God? Is He my only hope? Do I need Him and depend on Him for everything I have? Do I have faith?” The Lord often uses stormy experiences to bring people to faith, to show them that they do not have faith, to show them that they are depending on their own strength and not on Christ, and to bring them away from that false security so that they will depend on Him alone. Think of Martin Luther in that thunderstorm. He thought he was going to die, and yet the Lord used it to bring him to Himself. Think of Saul of Tarsus on that road to Damascus, thrown off his horse, seeing a great light, and hearing, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” What waves these were for Saul! But why? Why were they there? Not to destroy him, but to bring him to faith, to bring him to the Lord Himself. Think of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4. Nebuchadnezzar is proud and thinks Babylon is his. He has done all this. The Lord brings him into a great storm; He brings him down and humbles him. He makes him feed with the animals; He humiliates him. Why? To destroy him? No! To make him say

that there is none like the most high God, the one living and true God, the one who does His will in the armies of heaven. None can stay His hand or say to Him, “What doest thou?” So, if the Lord is asking you today, “Where is your faith?” and you have to say that you are in circumstances that show you that you do not have faith, then the reason is so that you would cry out to Him for it. It is His gift, and He gives it. Go to Him for it.

But of course, here, with the exception of Judas, these men *do* have faith. Yet where is the evidence of it? They are acting as if they have none. If you put the three Gospel accounts of this together, one says, “Lord save us, we perish!” Someone else is shouting, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” Someone else is just saying, “Master, Master, we perish!” They are calling upon the carpenter’s son for help.

And the wonderful thing here is that Christ powerfully replies—even to the weakest of faith. You would look at this and say, “This is poor faith, this is weak faith, it is almost no faith at all. It seems so small and flimsy in such a great storm. It will never succeed.” But remember that, a few verses before this, Christ describes the kingdom of Heaven as being like a grain of mustard seed, which, though small, grows up and becomes taller than all herbs, and shoots out great branches (Mark 4:31–32). If you would have asked the disciples after this event if they had faith, they might not have recognized it themselves. But Christ recognized it! And it was precious to Him. He saw the grain of mustard seed. He saw it and heard it in their cry, and it was precious to Him. It awoke Him out of sleep, and He rebuked the wind and there was a great calm.

I want you to see here how this perfectly redirects the disciples to where they need to be. Look at the effect this has on them, because it is staggering. There are actually two effects. The first effect is not what you would expect. You would expect to read, “There was a great calm on the sea, and they had a great calm in themselves; they were relieved, and they settled down and were composed and at peace themselves,” but no, it doesn’t say that

at all. It says, “And they feared exceedingly.” It is as if they were more afraid after the storm than when they were in the storm. But of course, this was a different kind of fear. This, children, is what we call *the fear of God*. This fear has adoration, reverence, love, and respect in it. It is a fear where you are aware that you are in the presence of God. That is the fear that the disciples had, *exceedingly*. It shows why Jesus was doing all He was doing. He was drawing out their faith—the germ, the mustard seed. He was drawing it out; He was redirecting the unbelieving question, “Does He care?” to the question of faith: “Who is He?”

That is the second effect—*He is making them focus on Him*. In the middle of verse 41 we read, “What manner of man is this?” Not, “What manner of faith do I have?” but, “What manner of man is this?” Because this is what faith looks to: faith looks to Christ. Faith is taken up with who Christ is. Who can speak to the wind and the sea, and it obeys his voice? What manner of man is this? That is a wonderful question to be taken up with. And, indeed, this man is a real man. He is a real man—you can find Him physically and emotionally exhausted. You can find Him sleeping through a storm, you can find Him hungry in a wilderness, and you can find Him thirsty beside a well. He is a real man. But He is also a man of perfect faith and a man of perfect trust in His heavenly Father. Oh, the wonder of this man! He is no mere man. A *real* man, yes, but He is no *mere* man. Because this man who is absolutely exhausted is the same man who says to you, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). This man, whom you can find hungry in a wilderness, is the one who says, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger” (John 6:35). This one who you can find thirsty beside that well is the one who says to you, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37). What manner of man is this? This is the God-man. This is the man, as Zechariah tells us, who is God’s fellow (Zech. 13:7).

You have these storms in your own life, within and without—  
anxiety, worry, conscience, sin—but has it brought you to this:

“What manner of man is this?” This is the man you need. This is the God-man you need. Perhaps we think of the church and its persecution, and we see storm clouds gathering. Here is where the church ought to focus its eyes: “What manner of man is this?” The next verse in Mark’s gospel is so beautiful: “They came over unto the other side of the sea” (Mark 5:1). Jesus will always bring His people to the other side of the sea. You perhaps think the storm will never break. You think it will never end. But this will be true of you, as it was true of the disciples: they came over unto the other side of the sea, and, ultimately, He is bringing His people to the place where there is no sea, to heaven itself.

Let us look at one last thing here, because the great effect of all of this—the perfect redirection of all this—is to redirect us to another storm. It is to redirect us to Calvary. You ask, “What manner of man is this?” and you see in this man one who can save His people from perishing in the sea of divine wrath. Here, we see, it is not simply the wind and the rain and the outward circumstances of our life that need to be calmed. Ultimately, *this* is the reason Christ is here: He is here to subdue not the storm on a sea but sinners to Himself. He is here to save sinners from perishing in their sin, to save them from perishing in a lake that burns with fire unquenchable. That is why He is here. And to do that, God has to do something much more than simply speaking the word of His power. He can create out of nothing this way. But He cannot save a sinner this way. God cannot remove sin simply by speaking a word. Something more is needed to subdue your heart, to take away your sin and the guilt of your sin. For that, Christ had to go through another storm. It’s the storm spoken about in Psalm 69, a psalm that speaks about the sufferings of Christ, a psalm that the New Testament quotes more than any other in referring to the suffering of Christ. And that psalm begins with the Lord Jesus saying, “Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing, where the floods overflow me.” You ask, Why is He there—the brightness of the Father’s glory, His beloved Son, the express image of His person,

upholding all things by the word of His power—why is He in such a storm? He is there because the Father sent Him. Speaking reverently, it is the Father’s initiative: He sent the Son. He says that in this psalm: “For thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren.”

Think about the storm the Savior is in and ask, “What did the Savior find in that storm?” When the storm clouds gather over Gethsemane, when Calvary’s shadow begins to stretch over the man, Christ Jesus; when the waves of divine wrath begin to beat into His soul and flood into Him, as this man who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, as He prepares, as He begins to be wounded for the transgression of His people, as He begins to be bruised for their iniquities, when His soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: what does He find? In Matthew 26:40, He comes to the disciples and He finds them asleep. Again and again and again. “For their eyes were heavy.” “Could ye not watch with me for one hour?” Could He not say, “Don’t *you* care?” Psalm 142—another psalm that speaks of Christ in His suffering—tells us, “I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.” He was in this storm alone, and there was no disciple. There was no angel, no, not even God Himself rose to rebuke this storm. No voice is heard saying to these waves and billows of divine wrath, “Peace, be still.” Psalm 88, as it is written in Psalter 240, applying again to Christ, says, “Thou hast brought me down to darkness, ’neath thy wrath I am oppressed...waves of wrath have surged about me.” Ask it again: “What manner of man is this?” Dare we look at the suffering Savior on Calvary, dare we look at that cross, and ask, “Carest thou not?” This is the reason He undergoes such an awful storm, the reason why He is there in Calvary speaking about floods and innumerable sins and iniquities, like great waves, flooding into His soul. Why has He come here? Why has He come to this? The unmistakable and glorious answer is: because He is the God who for His people cares.

What think ye of Christ? I see a man of perfect composure and poise in the boat. I see a man of awesome power—even the wind and rain obey His voice. But most of all I see this: I see one who cares for His people. This is a truth we need to learn in all our storms. Peter, who was in this boat, learned this lesson. Most believe that Peter is the apostle behind the Gospel of Mark. Likely, then, it was Peter crying out, “Master, carest thou not?” But in Acts 12, Peter is in another storm. Herod has just killed James, the brother of John, and because it pleases the Jews, he captures Peter. And here we are in Acts 12; it’s the night before they are going to execute Peter—what a storm he faced when Herod would have brought him forth. Yet, the same night, Peter, in that storm, bound with two chains between the soldiers, *was sleeping*. And it took an angel to wake him up. It appears he was in a deep sleep too. He had learned the lesson. No doubt, he remembered the lesson of that night on the boat: that the Lord often brings His people through storms in order to focus their attention on Him and His great care for them. And it is Peter, then, who tells you and me, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:6–7).

Amen.