

Room for Jesus' Rest

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[0 : 0 0] God, where are you? Do you even care? God, I've been looking for a job for months and months and months, and it seems like nothing is out there, and I'm pretty sure that if I don't find a job soon, my family is not going to be able to stay in our house because we can't afford rent anymore.

Where are you? God, we just got back from the doctors, and the report doesn't look good. And if it was my health, that'd be one thing, but watching my kid have to go through that, I don't know if I can handle this.

Do you even care, God? I think these two questions, God, where are you, and God, do you care, are at the center of a lot of our questions to God and about God.

I would guess that pretty much everyone in this room at some point in their lives has asked those questions in some form or another. God, where are you?

God, do you care? There's questions that reveal to us the fact, or that show the fact that we live in a broken world.

[1 : 1 6] We're broken people surrounded by brokenness, and we want a place of safety and a place of refuge in the midst of that brokenness.

We cry out, God, where are you? And if you're here, do you care? Do you care about these storms that are happening in our lives?

Are you with us through them? And in the Christmas season, these questions become even more pronounced because we talk about things like hope and peace and love and joy.

And they're such wonderful, beautiful ideas, but for so many people in our world, they're things that are dreams and not realities. And yet, the Bible tells us that there's something that happened, something amazing that happened on Christmas.

that can give us true love, joy, hope, peace. And so today, we're going to look at a story from the book of Mark that you just heard read about Jesus and his disciples on a boat.

[2 : 3 0] And we're going to hear his disciples ask the same question, do you even care? And we're going to see what Jesus' answer to them is and how that connects to our lives today.

And spoiler alert, he does care, and that makes a huge difference. So my name is Eric. Welcome to Watermark Church. We're so glad to have you here with us today. If you have your Bible or bulletin, you can flip open to the story.

And the first thing I want us to see in this story about Jesus and the disciples on the boat is a set of contrasting reactions. Contrasting reactions. So if you're following the storyline, Jesus has been teaching.

He's been teaching and teaching and teaching. There's so many crowds that he has to go out on a boat on the lake so that he can speak to the crowds and not get smushed or wet. And he finishes teaching, and he says to his disciples, all right, let's go across the other side of the lake.

You know, the crowds are exhausting. Let's get some rest. Let's go away. And the disciples say, all right. The disciples, they're Jesus' followers. A lot of them are fishermen. They know this lake like the back of their hand.

[3 : 43] A lot of them have spent thousands of nights out on this exact lake fishing again and again and again. And so for them, a trip across shouldn't be a big deal.

Jesus says, let's get in the boat. Let's go across. They say, sure. They head out to sea. And as they get to sea, a great storm hits. Now, like I said, these guys were fishermen.

They had been in the sea before. They had probably faced lots of storms before. They were experienced in facing storms. But this one wasn't just any storm.

It was a great storm, a furious storm. I think in life, each of us faces storms. Each of us faces difficulties and issues and problems, whether that's in our job, in our relationships.

Jesus and his disciples on the boat, they faced a literal storm. There was rain splashing down from the sky. There were waves that were crashing over the edge of the boat. The boat was getting full of water.

[4 : 47] And the disciples were doing everything they possibly could to keep the boat upright and keep everyone on it alive. They, obviously, are terrified, as I think any of us would be in that situation.

When we think about boats today, we think about, like, huge cruise liners that can face any storm. These guys were not on that. They were on a fishing boat that was maybe as long as this stage right here and made out of wood.

And there were waves coming up, crashing over. I'm sure they thought it was just a matter of time until one of the waves split their boat in half. They were scrambling.

They were panicking. They were afraid. Can you relate to the disciples? Being in a situation in life where you're doing everything you can to fix it, to make it better.

And yet, no matter how hard you try, it seems like it just keeps getting worse. And there is nothing that you are able to do to fix it. And yet, they keep trying and keep trying.

[5 : 59] And if we look, we see a contrasting reaction in Jesus. The disciples are panicked. The disciples are rushing and hurrying and trying to make everything better.

And Jesus is napping. How is he able to do that? That's my big question when I read this story. How on earth is Jesus able to nap in this situation?

For me, I remember when we first got married, my wife and I had a big discussion because I love blackout curtains in the bedroom. Because I like it pitch black when I sleep.

I like quiet and dark and calm and a soft mattress. No commotion. No waves splashing in on me. No people running around screaming.

No my life being in danger. I like blackout curtains. I like blackout curtains. I like a soft mattress underneath me. Jesus did not have those things on the boat.

[7 : 05] And yet, he was sleeping calmly. How is he able to do that? When I think about my life, back to my desire for comfort when I sleep, I realize that as much as the environment and the darkness and the quiet helps me sleep, there's actually one much bigger thing that can get in the way of me sleeping.

Stress and anxiety. If I have a fight with a friend, I can lay in bed awake for hours. Replaying the conversation in my head over and over.

I should have said this. Can't believe I said that. Next time, I'm going to fix it. Next time I see this friend. Maybe I should give them a call right now. No, they're probably asleep.

Maybe I'll call them first thing in the morning tomorrow. But then when I call them, what should I say? And I replay everything in my head over and over and over because I'm stressed and I'm anxious.

And stress and anxiety get in my way of sleeping. And I think something that we realize when we look at this story is the disciples are stressed and anxious.

[8 : 26] They're running around. They're afraid. They're trying to save their boat. And Jesus, in contrast to the disciples, has peace. He has rest in the midst of this raging, furious, massive storm.

If you look at the original language, the word used to describe the storm is mega. It's a mega storm. And he's asleep on the boat. Because he has perfect faith in God's provision and protection of him during that time.

When we were little kids, my brothers and I, we'd sleep in our beds. And in the middle of the night, if we woke up and we were scared, we would walk down to mom and dad's room.

And we'd walk in there and we'd have our blanket and our pillow with us. We'd lie down on the floor next to them. And we'd be able to fall asleep. Even though it was less comfortable than our beds, we were around the most powerful people that we knew.

And we knew that the most powerful people we knew loved us and would protect us in that moment. And so even though we were in less than ideal circumstances, we were on a hard floor instead of a soft bed, we were able to sleep soundly.

[9 : 44] Because we knew that we were safe and protected in the presence of mom and dad. And I think that's exactly what is happening with Jesus on the boat right here. The disciples are panicked.

They don't know where God is right now. They don't know whether God cares about them. But Jesus does. Jesus knows that God has perfect love for him. And so he's able to lie down and sleep in the midst of the storm.

While the disciples have a wrong reaction that leads to desperation, Jesus has a right understanding of God's love for him that allows him to lie down and get rest in the midst of the greatest storm that anyone on that boat had ever faced.

And this contrasting reaction leads to a confused question. Because when the disciples look at Jesus' rest, they don't see perfect faith.

They don't see confidence in God's provision. They see apathy. They look at Jesus and they don't think, oh, he's resting perfectly in God's love.

[10 : 56] They think he doesn't care about what happens to us. He doesn't care if we die. He just cares about his nap.

And they go to him and they wake him. And they yell out, teacher, don't you care that we're all going to die? Now this is a ridiculous scenario, just by the way.

The disciples are fishermen. They've been on this sea thousands of times. They've faced plenty of storms. They know what they're doing on the water. Jesus was trained as a carpenter.

And in the storm, the fishermen on the boat come to get the carpenter to help them save the boat. If you want a little modern equivalent of this, imagine that you work on the trading floor at HSBC.

And you look at your computer screen and all of a sudden everything goes red. And the markets are crashing and you have no idea what to do. And they're going down, down, down.

[12 : 01] And you're like, surely they're going to fix themselves. Any moment now, I hope? And they don't. They keep going down, down, down. And I'm pretty sure in Hong Kong, they have a fail-safe, right?

That if the market goes down a certain amount, it's supposed to stop trading immediately. But you reach the fail-safe point and it just keeps going down, down, down.

The market's down 20%. And you turn to your neighbor and you're like, what's going on? And they say, I don't know. And you look back and it's down 30%. And you try everything you can figure out to save your portfolio as you watch everything that you've been building up crumble to pieces.

And then you think, I know what to do. I'm going to call Tobin. He can fix this. That's what the disciples did on the boat. The fishermen call up the carpenter to come save their boat.

It's like the banker calling up the pastor to say, hey, fix this market crash. But here's the difference. The disciples knew that there was something special about Jesus.

[13 : 11] They knew that he was powerful in a way that none of them were. They knew that there was something unique about him that none of them had going for them.

But you notice when they ask their question, they don't actually come to him and ask for help at first. They don't come and say, hey, can you do something about this situation?

No, they come to him and they ask him the much more pressing question on their hearts, do you even care? Jesus, look at this situation. We're about to die.

And how can you sleep through this? We thought you loved us. But now we know that maybe you don't. Because if you truly loved us, you'd obviously be doing something right now.

They misinterpreted his response of faith as a response of apathy. And because of that, they didn't turn to him for help. They turned to him to find out whether he actually cared.

[14 : 18] And because they weren't confident of Jesus' love for them, because they weren't confident about the fact that Jesus cared about them, they were scrambling around in fear, anxiety, and stress, trying to fix the situation rather than turning to him, which would have been the simple solution if they had known that he cared about them.

I think the same thing happens to us a lot of times. Something goes wrong at work. We maybe say like, God, please do something.

And then we figure, he's not going to handle it. I got to do this on my own. And we go out, and we spend 90 hours a week at the office for the next couple weeks to try and fix everything that's just gone wrong.

We don't trust that God's going to be good and that God's going to care for us. And we think, I have to take everything into my own hands.

I have to fix it on my own. And so we take it into our own hands, and we don't turn to God to help us. We act just like the disciples, scrambling in fear and anxiety, rather than like Jesus, learning to rest in God's perfect care for us.

[15 : 31] And so the disciples, because they don't recognize Jesus cared for them, come to him, and they ask him the crucial question, do you even care?

There's a problem with their question. The problem with their question is that they ignored the fact that Jesus was on the boat with them. Think about it.

Jesus is on the boat with them. Which means even if we were in some hypothetical world where he didn't care at all about any of the other people on the boat, he still cares about what happens to the boat because whatever happens to the boat is going to happen to him too.

By climbing onto the boat with the disciples, Jesus has linked his fate to their fate so that whatever happens to them happens to him as well. And he has to care about what happens to them because he is on the boat with them.

The disciples question whether he cares for them because they've forgotten the fact that he is with them. They lose sight of the fact that he cares about them because they've lost sight of the fact that he is with them.

[16 : 48] You know, if he was standing on the shore or if he was walking on the water and this storm hit the boat, maybe they'd have some grounds for asking if he cared.

But he's on the boat with them when the storm hits. His fate is tied to theirs. He has to care about them because he has become part of them by stepping on the boat with them.

And so in response to the disciples' question, do you even care? Jesus gets up and he rebukes the wind and the waves.

He says, cut it out, and they do. And it's not just that they slowly, gradually go away. No, it stops. The Bible says there was a great storm and after Jesus says to calm down, there is a great calm, a dead calm, a mega calm.

It's not just that the rain sort of stops. But the rain stops, the wave stops, the sea is as clear as glass. You can look down and see your reflection perfectly over the edge of the boat.

[18 : 04] And then he turns around to the disciples. He says, why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?

Now put yourself in the disciples' shoes for a second. They were just in a mega storm. They were confident that they were going to die.

Fear is the logical response in that situation. When you see waves bigger than your boat crashing down on top of you, fear is the natural response.

And yet the first thing Jesus says to his disciples after they wake him up is, why are you afraid? I think underneath this is a bigger statement.

He's telling them, if you knew, if you only knew that I was good, and if you only knew that I cared for you, then your response would not have been fear.

[19 : 10] Your response would have been faith. Rather than scrambling, rather than trying and trying and trying desperately and failing again and again and again to save this boat, you would have come to me and I would have rescued you.

If you knew that I was good, you would have turned to me rather than turning to fear and anxiety. You still haven't learned that.

Disciples, when are you going to learn that I care desperately for you, that I'm with you, and I'm for you? And I know this story happened 2,000 years ago on a sea in a land that's thousands of miles away.

And that we here today could sit and listen to this story and think, eh, what does that have to do with my life? But the truth is that this story has a deep continuing significance for our lives because this story on a miniature level is a picture of what Christ came to earth to do.

Like I said, the question the disciples asked is one that basically all of us ask at some point in our lives in some way. God, do you actually care?

[20 : 39] You care about me. You care about the people I care about. You care about the situations happening to us in life. And maybe we don't ask the question in those words.

Maybe we don't actually ask or think the question out loud at all. But we have actions that reveal the fact that we don't believe that God cares.

And so we do things like we calculate out how much money do I need to be financially secure for the rest of my life. And then we add \$2 million to that U.S.

and stick it in a bank account just to be safe in case. And we think, okay, now I'm safe just in case.

When they announced that layoffs are coming up in our office, in the weeks leading up to the layoff announcements, we lose sleep wondering what's going to happen if my name is on the list and I no longer have a job.

[21 : 45] We lose sleep because we don't believe that God cares for us. We don't believe that he's good and he's for us. And what's true of the disciples and of Jesus on the boat is true of us in our world today as well.

Confident trust in God's goodness and care for us leads to rest. Confident trust in God's goodness and care for us leads to rest.

And failure to trust in God's goodness leads to fear. If you want to know today how you're doing at learning to trust in God or failing at that, a simple question you can ask yourself.

Is my life marked more by fear or by rest? If you're a guy and you don't like to admit that you're ever afraid of anything, then you can substitute out the word fear for stress and anxiety and concern.

Is my life marked more by stress, anxiety, and concern or by rest? Because stress, anxiety, fear, concern are all symptoms of the fact that we have hearts that are failing to trust in God.

[23 : 23] But there's a deeper question here too. And that question is, can we know that God cares for us? Because it's useless to know how to respond when God cares for us if we can't know whether he cares for us.

And the thing we need to remember in response to that question is that what was true of Jesus and the disciples on the boat is also true of us today.

That just as Jesus was with the disciples on the boat and therefore had to care about what happened to them because he was with them. That Jesus is with us today.

Matthew chapter 1 in talking about the Christmas story says that his name will be called Emmanuel, which means God with us.

In John chapter 1 it talks about the word and it says the word was God, the word was with God, the word was in the beginning with God, the word made everything and then it says the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

[24 : 41] The word, Jesus Christ, came and took on flesh as a human being, as one of us and he lived among us as one of us.

On the boat he had to care about what happened to the disciples because he was with them, because he had linked his fate to theirs so whatever happened to them was going to happen to him too.

And in the Bible it tells us that we as humanity were created by God for a relationship with him and that each and every one of us rebelled against God and said, I want no part in this.

But each and every one of us said, God, I'm wiser than you, I'm smarter than you, I know more than you, I've got this, leave me alone. And that each and every one of us deserved a punishment.

We deserved a great storm of God's wrath against us for our rebellion. And in coming to earth, Jesus perfectly followed and obeyed God.

[25 : 52] As one of us, he came and the Bible tells us that on the cross he bore the great storm of God's wrath for us. The greatest storm that any of us could ever have to face.

And it wasn't just whatever happens to you happens to me also, like on the boat. But it was one step further than that. It was, I am going to bear this so that you don't have to.

His response to us when we ask do you care is even greater than his response to the disciples on the boat. How could I not care?

I'm with you. I'm one of you. I faced the greatest storm for you. Because I love you. Because I care.

because I want you to know my great love for you. So what does this look like in our lives on a practical level?

[27 : 01] For one thing, we're going to face storms. If you look at this story, Jesus actually tells the disciples to go out onto the water. He says, let's get in the boat, let's go.

He knew there would be a storm that night. I don't think they did. And yet he leads them into the storm. Not because he's evil, not because he's apathetic about what happens to them, but because there's some part of his character that he wants them to see that they will never see unless they go through the storm with him.

And so even if we're with Jesus and even though he cares for us, we'll still face storms, but as we face storms in life, he's with us and he cares.

And so we can have confident rest through the storms knowing that the greatest storm of all has been faced by Jesus for us. And that in these other storms, that he's with us.

That he's protecting us. that we can turn to him rather than desperately trying to fix it all on our own. So we can have rest.

[28 : 23] It's interesting in this story that the ability to rest, like Tobin said, we always assume that it's based on our circumstances. But you notice Jesus and the disciples were in the exact same circumstances.

Both of them were on the same boat. Both of them were being tossed by the same storm. And yet Jesus had rest and the disciples didn't. Because Jesus knew that God was with him.

And the disciples forgot. And if you had asked any of the disciples at that moment, why are you so afraid? They would have said, duh, look around you.

How could you not be afraid? We're afraid because of this storm. But that was a lie. How do you know that? Look at the last verse of this passage.

It says, after Jesus has calmed the storm, and they were filled with great fear, and said to one another, who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?

[29 : 26] When the storm hits, they're sure that they are going to die and they are scared. When the storm stops, they know that they are safe and they are more scared than they were during the storm. The storm was not what caused their fear.

If the storm caused their fear, then number one, Jesus would have been afraid with them, and number two, their fear would have stopped as soon as the storm stopped. But there was something deeper going on in their hearts.

There was a fundamental lack of faith in Jesus' care for them, an ability to provide for them, and that led to fear. great fear, even after the storm was gone.

And so our ability to face the storms in life isn't based on our circumstances, but rather on whether we know that Jesus is in the boat with us through every storm.

And I know that that's a really abstract concept, so I want to give a couple more concrete pictures as we close up, of what this could look like functionally in our lives on a day-to-day basis in Hong Kong.

[30 : 39] And the first thing, sleep. I know it sounds simple, but I read an article this week published in 2011.

They did a scholarly study of sleep habits in Hong Kong and discovered that almost 40% of people in Hong Kong suffer from insomnia. insomnia. That's 2.2 million people in the city.

And they found that the leading cause of insomnia among the people surveyed was perceived stress in their lives. And a really sad stat about this study is they checked some people's religious beliefs to see whether being part of a religion increased or decreased your chances of having insomnia.

And out of the Christians surveyed, the people surveyed who identified themselves as Christians, they were actually more likely than the average person in Hong Kong to suffer from insomnia. Exactly.

Now those stats would say that in a room this size, maybe about 80 people suffer from insomnia. Most of them because of perceived stress in their lives.

[31 : 55] things. And I know there are some people who have trouble sleeping because of physical stuff. Like I woke up this morning with my nose all congested and my throat dry and it was before my alarm went off and it was a pain.

I'm not talking about that. But after I woke up an hour before my alarm went off and I blew my nose and I drank some water, I climbed back in bed and I lied down to try and go back to sleep for that last hour.

And all of a sudden, stuff for the sermon today started running through my head. and it took me a while to fall back asleep. That's what I'm talking about. How many of us lie in bed at night unable to sleep because we feel like we have to have control of the world in our hands?

Because we don't trust that God is good and that God cares for us. In the middle of the great storm, Jesus slept. I think for us, one of the biggest signs that we're starting to understand this concept of God caring for us will be sleeping soundly through the night.

The second thing, rest. I know this is difficult in Hong Kong. We live in a city where even when you have a day that you don't have to go into the office, you're expected to constantly be available for emails, to constantly be on call to come in for emergency situations.

[33 : 20] situations. And even if your office doesn't necessarily say that they expect it, a lot of us just do that anyways for various reasons. And even if you don't do that, how many of us on our day off just have our minds full of things coming up in the office in the next week?

Of how we're going to handle the different tasks that we have coming up? We can't get it out of our minds, our work. It consumes us. We're with our kids.

We're playing at the playground, but we have one hand pushing the kid on the swing and the other hand checking email on the phone to make sure that we're not missing out on anything from the office. We're with our friends at the coffee shop, but instead of being able to hang out, we're just studying because we have the exam coming up so soon and we need to be ready.

And what Jesus wants us to learn in this story is to rest, to truly rest, not just to step away but still have our minds consumed by everything going on, everything stressing us out in the world, but to learn to let God handle it.

You notice when the disciples come to Jesus on the boat, they say, don't you care, we're drowning. He doesn't look at the situation and say, oh, good job, guys. You kept us up for this long, but don't worry, I got it from here. That's not his response.

[34 : 49] His response is, guys, why? Why did you try so hard for so long rather than coming to me in the first place? Why did you waste so much energy on fear rather than just come to me?

I've been here the entire time. I've been waiting. So I think us learning to rest is a huge, huge indicator that we're starting to get this concept.

And I know rest looks different for different people in different phases of life. Maybe if you have kids, learning to rest means putting away the cell phone while you're playing with them. I know some people get the shivers just thinking about that idea.

But is God in charge? Maybe for all of us, that means putting away electronics during our time with God, reading our Bibles.

Maybe if you're a student, it means learning to close the textbooks for a couple hours and go do something you enjoy with your friends. You know, I have a friend who's doing a law degree for fun. And I know what you're thinking.

[36 : 00] Who does that? That's my question too. But I was teasing my friend about doing this law degree for fun because, again, who does that? And this friend told me that they had actually gotten a really, really grade, like top grade in their class on one of their entire classes.

And so I thought, who does a law degree for fun? And out of those people, who outperforms their entire class of people who want to be lawyers? And I was giving my friend a hard time, understandably, for being a bit of a nerd.

And my friend looked at me and she said, Eric, you don't understand. Everyone in that class has incredible stress because they want to be lawyers and they feel like the grade they get in this class is going to determine whether or not they have a job in the future.

And so every minute of studying for them is an intense pressure cooker of trying to make sure that they're secure for the future.

They feel like their entire future depends on how they perform in this exam. For me, I'm just doing it for fun. So I don't care if I get a good grade. As long as I pass, that's fine.

[37 : 17] Which means that when I study, I'm able to actually enjoy it. I'm able to have this freedom and rest that no one else can have. And so when I take my exam, I'm having fun.

I'm enjoying the material. And they are so stressed that they can't think straight. And so I'm able to get better grades than all of them. And we laugh.

And then, you know what we're going to do? We're going to leave here today and we're going to go home and we're going to stress about the upcoming week. But God is saying, stop.

Stop stressing. Stop worrying. Learn to rest because I care with you and I've proven it by coming to be with you. That's what the story on the boat is all about. That Jesus has to care because he's with the disciples.

And that's what Christmas is all about. That God has to care about us because he came here to be one of us. He came here to be with us.

[38 : 23] And so when we ask God, where are you? He says, I'm right there with you. And when we ask God, do you care? He says, of course I care.

How can I not? I'm one of you. If you have any doubts, look to the manger. Look to the cross. Stop stressing.

Stop worrying. Stop being afraid. Learn to come to me. Learn to sleep. Learn to rest. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your great love for us. We thank you for Jesus and for the cross. We thank you for the boat and for the great illustration of the fact that you care for us.

Thank you for your power to save. Thank you for the fact that you are with us through the storms. Even when we can't see you, even when it feels like you're apathetic, that you care because you're with us.

[39 : 27] God, I pray that each of us this week would learn to trust in your care for us. that we would learn to see that you're good, that we would learn to sleep, we would learn to rest, that we would learn to stop stressing, stop being anxious, stop being afraid, stop scrambling to try and fix everything on our own.

Instead, learn to see that you are a good God and a good Father to us. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen.