

“Faith Fireworks: Four Pops and a Fizz”
Mark 4: 35 - 41

I. Introduce the series and its place in Mark’s strategy

A. Fort Benning fireworks on the Fourth of July.

1. There was a huge training field that would fill with people from the base as well as civilians allowed on post for the occasion. The rockets would rise overhead from one end of the field. You’d almost have to lay back on the field to watch them make their ascent, and then, with a bang, they would explode into shimmering stars of gold, and red, and blue, and green.
2. Sometimes, there would be a **dud** in the mix and all you would get would be a loud bang and a flash of light. Even those were an amazing part of the experience, because they were sudden, loud, and unexpected. The least impressive moments of the government sponsored displays were not the fireworks or the duds. The least impressive were **the fizzles**. They were usually part of the ground display that was supposed to spin and shed sparks and enrapture little kids, but the fuses, when lit, failed. The fuse would sizzle with flame right to the base of the firecracker and then nothing. **Just a weak fizzle that led to disappointment.**
3. The next portion of the gospel of Mark reminds me of those long ago fireworks displays. Mark records four miracle stories and then a visit of Jesus to his hometown that had a rather disappointing outcome. I’m calling this next section **“Faith Fireworks: Four Pops and a Fizz.”**

B. Faith Fireworks: Four Pops and a Fizz

1. Mark’s ultimate strategy:
 - a. Remember that Mark, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is not just telling the story of Jesus. He is telling the story of Jesus with a purpose.
 - b. Mark’s ultimate strategy is to encourage faithfulness and perseverance among persecuted Christians by assuring them with undeniable evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
 - c. Through Mark, God tells the people He Himself has called to faith in Jesus, that **our faith is well grounded, our hope is secure, our destiny is certain**; that we remain in His hands, loved, upheld, protected, and treasured. God proves that all He has given us in Christ is worth both living and dying for.
2. Where we are now: Faith Fireworks: Four Pops and a Fizz
 - a. Look closely at Jesus in this divine fireworks display.
 - b. Look at the relationship Jesus has with God and how their relationship spilled over into and affected the lives of the people Jesus encounters.
 - (1) Some of those encounters are fascinating like fireworks.
 - (2) At least one fizzles with disappointment.

C. The first rocket Mark launches bursts into Jesus calming a storm at sea.

1. **Mark 4:35-41 (ESV)**
2. Because this is such a familiar account in the life of Jesus, and because

we're all heard so many sermons and songs based on this text, we need to take a fresh look at some elements of the story.

a. Kevin Stokes and Tony Wood wrote a song you might have heard, *Sometimes He Calms the Storm*. The chorus goes like this:

b. *Sometimes He calms the storm
With a whispered peace be still
He can settle any sea
But it doesn't mean He will
Sometimes He holds us close
And lets the wind and waves go wild
Sometimes He calms the storm
And other times He calms His child.*

3. This is a great song, full of comfort and peace and assurance, but sometimes, when we've heard applications like this so often, we come to expect that any time we hear preaching on the text, what we've heard before is what we're going to hear again.

a. That kind of presupposition sets up an expectation that can cause us to miss the message God has for us.

b. It's not that what we heard before is wrong or bad or should be rejected.

c. It's just that it might only be a side dish on the banquet table of grace God sets before us in His word.

4. So let's examine eight elements (details) of Mark's account of Jesus calming the storm and see where it leads us.

II. Rocket #1 in this Divine Fireworks Display: Jesus Calms the Storm

A. Eight Elements (Details)

1. v. 35 - The event takes place at the end of a long day of teaching the people and explaining the parables to his disciples

a. The day begins 4:1 Jesus teaching along the shore

b. Continues through Four Parables with Purpose and includes many other parables

2. Jesus' request is to leave where they are and head to where the people are not, suggesting the sheer energy it takes to minister at that level

a. Does not ask to leave the ministry or the message

b. Does ask to leave the moment

3. v. 36 - Jesus asks the fishermen, who've spent their lives on the lake, to pilot the boat

a. Ever gotten on an airplane

(1) Situate your carry on

(2) Get out your book and pillow

(3) Prepare for the flight

(4) You don't go bang on th cabin door and insist the pilot let you fly the plane

b. Jesus spent his life as a carpenter, not a sailor

c. Jesus lets the guys with the expertise do their thing

- d. Jesus does the one thing an exhausted traveler does on the craft of experts: he entrusts himself to their expertise and goes to sleep.
 - (1) They took him just as he was: tired, hungry, and ready for a break
 - (2) Others accompanied him
 - (3) There is nothing abnormal or unexpected in this scene
- 4. v. 37 - The storm came up suddenly and violently, as storms did and do on the Sea of Galilee
- 5. v. 38 - Given the power of the storm, the question they asked Jesus is entirely appropriate
 - a. Do you not care?
 - (1) Is not an accusation,
 - (2) it is an inquiry
 - b. Teacher, why does our current predicament not cause you enough concern to be awake and afraid like the rest of us?
- 6. v. 39 - Just as Jesus has allowed the sailors to do what they can do, he now does what only he can do.
 - a. Awoke
 - b. Rebuked the wind
 - c. Said to the sea: Peace! Be still!
 - d. The calm was massive, complete, the biggest, most encompassing calm you can imagine (megale)
- 7. v. 40 - Having done what only he can do, Jesus turns to doing what he always does: developing in the disciples faith in himself
 - a. Two questions
 - (1) Why are you so afraid?
 - (2) Have you still no faith?
 - b. Jesus answers their earlier question with a question
 - (1) They wanted to know why he was not as concerned with their situation as they were.
 - (2) Jesus' question implies that the reason he was not afraid was because He has faith
 - (a) Faith in His mission
 - i) **Matthew 5:17 (ESV) "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.**
 - ii) **Isaiah 26:3 (ESV) You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.**
 - (b) Jesus remained fearless because of utter trust in the Father's person and plan
 - i) God is good
 - ii) God's plan will not fail
 - (3) **Disciples, if you would be fearless in the face of the**

storm, then have the faith Jesus has in the good heart and unshakeable plan of God.

- c. Jesus will always focus our attention on Him and His mission and call us to faith in Him and participation in His mission.
- 8. This entire episode leads to this question: "Who then is this?"
 - a. Question Mark intends to answer
 - b. Question Christ's presence intends to raise and answer
 - c. Question that, answered rightly, leads to eternal life for all who believe.
 - d. It is the single most important question any human being can ask, and is the question every work of God in the world seeks to raise.
 - (1) Question will not be raised by those who do not encounter the presence of Jesus through the testimony of witnesses.
 - (2) Question that demands that the Christian and the church not remain silent and self-serving in these days.
 - (a) "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."
 - (b) People lack knowledge because the church, in love with the world and life in the world, give the world no reason to wonder or ask who Jesus is.

B. Fireworks: How the Church Draws the World's Attention to Jesus

- 1. Idea #1 (from Jesus) - love
 - a. **John 13:34-35 (ESV)** ³⁴ *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* ³⁵ *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*
 - b. The world is characterized by lust, the church by love
 - (1) When the church acts in sacrificial love, of the quality of Jesus, it presents a contrast of heart similar to an exploding rocket against the night sky.
 - (2) The demands of a selfish world are selfish, the gift of a sacrificial church is selfless.
 - (3) Genuine love among believers will draw the attention of the world to Jesus as they wonder how such love can be and be sustained
- 2. Idea #2 (also from Jesus) - gospel proclamation
 - a. **John 12:27-36 (ESV)** ²⁷ *"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.* ²⁸ *Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."*
 - ²⁹ *The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."*
 - ³⁰ *Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine.* ³¹ *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.* ³² *And I, when I am lifted up from the*

earth, will draw all people to myself.”³³ He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

b. **Romans 1:16-17 (ESV)** ¹⁶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* ¹⁷ *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”*

c. The good news of Jesus

(1) has within it the power to save souls and change lives, and this gospel, when proclaimed, will do thrive according to its nature.

(2) Like seed, the gospel must be sown in order to grow.

3. **Idea #3 (from Jesus as well) - intentional, faithful obedience**

a. **Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)** ¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”* ¹⁹ *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* ²⁰ *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

b. Jesus calls us to become disciples, then sends us to make disciples

(1) There is not one without the other.

(2) We cannot be content with simply being disciples unless there is intent to make disciples

(3) Faithfulness, for which the church will one day be judged, requires not only faith but obedience.

(4) The scope of our disciple-making cannot be just is safe, but must include what is sinful: go into the whole world.

C. In these days of increasing fear and uncertainty, the world is looking for genuine peace.

1. Jesus shows His disciples the way to peace, through faith in Him.

2. Now, disciples of Jesus, go and show the world the way.