

October 20, 2019

The Miracles of Jesus
Who is Jesus?
Mark 4:35-41

Miracles were a large part of Jesus's earthly ministry. Webster defines a miracle as a surprising and welcomed event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency. The miracles of Jesus are important because they underscore his message. That means, Jesus was not just a teacher or leader. He was God incarnate, who had divine power at his disposal. His miracles exposed God's priorities. The miracles of Jesus are found in all four Gospels. The first miracle Jesus performed was the changing of the water into wine in Cana. The last miracle Jesus performed was when Jesus restored the ear of the arresting soldier in the garden. Only the feeding of the multitude is found in all four Gospels. The miracles of Jesus can be grouped into four categories. The first category is Jesus's authority over nature. The second category is Jesus's healing miracles. The third category is Jesus's exorcisms. The fourth category is Jesus's resurrections.

Today's miracle, Jesus calms the storm, shows Jesus' power over natural law. It is not the only one. In this category there are other law-breaking miracles. Jesus turned water into wine, arranged the miraculous catch of fish, fed the multitude, walked on water and Jesus found a coin in the mouth of a fish. In our time, healing stories grab our attention because we are preoccupied with individuals. That was not the case in Jesus' day. They accepted physical healing easily. They were more interested in the breaking of natural law because it reminded them of creation itself. That is what we hear in our scripture today. Our scripture reading for today is Mark 4:35-41. Let me call this message *Who is Jesus?*

Mark 4:35-41 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." ³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Jesus of Nazareth (c 4 BC) once said, "*I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.*" (John 14:6) That quote is not open for

debate. Those are the words of the Master, himself. And all of God's people said, **"Amen!"**

We find ourselves today in the fourth chapter of Mark. Jesus and the disciples are in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. Their boat is surrounded by other boats. That body of water was infamous for sudden storms and that is exactly what happened. Without warning, the wind began to blow, and the boat, (with low sides perfect for the nets), begins to fill with water. The disciples begin to panic, but Jesus is fast asleep. The contrast between the disciples and Jesus is shocking. They awake Jesus to tell him he is about to die. Jesus is surprised by their emotional state. He comments on their lack of faith and calms the storm. The disciples who had been traveling with Jesus thought they knew him, but their understanding of him was incomplete. They ask a question the world has been trying to answer for generations. "Who is this?" In other words, they asked the question, who is Jesus? How do you answer the question, who is Jesus? The answer you receive will depend on the person you ask.

If you would have asked Jesus' cynical generation the question, who is Jesus, they would have given you same basic information about him. Jesus was a carpenter. He was the biological son of a woman by the name of Mary. Some believed, Jesus was the biological son of Joseph. Some had questions about his true father. Some didn't even care enough to answer the question, because he came from Nazareth. Have you ever lived in a town the whole world looked down upon? That was the case with Nazareth. Jesus' entire world looked down on Nazareth. Even one of his own disciples, Nathaniel, before following Jesus, looked down on Nazareth. Do you remember John 1:46? It says, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" If you asked Jesus' cynical generation, who is Jesus, their answer is incomplete. If you find their answer incomplete say, **"Amen!"** Who is Jesus?

It is safe to say, Jesus is the most influential person who has ever lived. His teachings and the retelling of his story has influenced the lives of billions, even Non-Christians. Perhaps, that is why other world religions have been forced to answer the question, who is Jesus? Consider these things with me. Buddhism values Jesus. Some Buddhist scholars are emphasizing the similarities between the life and teachings of Buddha and Jesus. Scientology values Jesus. You can find the teachings of Jesus in the earliest forms of their religious beliefs. In 1974, the religion of Rael was created. It is a UFO religion. Today, they have a following of approximately 100,000. They believe the world was created by species of humanoid extraterrestrials. I believe their theology is a little off but, they too value Jesus. They consider Jesus a prophet. Who is Jesus?

The Bahai Faith values Jesus. Established in 1863, in Persia and parts of the Middle East, the Bahai faith looks for values in each of the world religions. They strive for a new world order, where a balance is struck between the beliefs of all world religions. They consider Jesus to be a manifestation of God. However, they believe Jesus is just one of a series of manifestations of God. Jesus is not the first manifestation of God and

Jesus will not be the last manifestation of God. The Bahai Faith may be politically correct, but the Bahai Faith is wrong. Their answer to the question, who is Jesus, is incomplete. Who is Jesus?

Islam values Jesus. Did you know in the Quran, the sacred text of that religion, Jesus is mentioned twenty-five times? That is more often than Muhammad, himself. Jesus is portrayed as being both moral and pious. His generous ways caught the eyes of God, who selected him to be a divine messenger. They also believe Jesus's original message was lost and altered by first century Christians. Muslims believe, Jesus was not the incarnation of God. As a matter of fact, Muslim reject the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Muslims answer to the question, who is Jesus, is also incomplete. Who is Jesus?

The Hebrew faith values Jesus. They believe Jesus was an historical figure. They believe Jesus was a good man and teacher. They reject the concept that Jesus is part of the trinity and the reject the idea Jesus was the Messiah. The reason is simple. He did not fulfill the Messianic prophecies. Conservative Jews believe the last word from God came through the prophet Malachi, who lived approximately 400 before the birth of Jesus. They believe, any Jew who believes Jesus was the Messiah has crossed the line and has left the Jewish community. In other words, the Jews answer to the question, who is Jesus, is also incomplete. Who is Jesus?

In the Christian faith, the answer to the question, who is Jesus, is not simple. It is complex. It has been said the word became flesh and theologians turned it back into words. That may be true. Consider what the Christian theologians tells us. We believe, Jesus was the incarnation of God. In other words, Jesus was God, who was active at the creation of the world. His love for us can never be questioned. We celebrate Christmas, because we stand in awe of the fact, Jesus left the perfection of heaven to enter our sinful world to save us from sin. He was both fully God and fully human. For a three-year period, he taught the world about the Kingdom of God, performing miracles to emphasize his message. Yet, his message was more than this world could handle. The religious leaders of his day decided to eliminate Jesus. Their plan worked to perfection. Jesus was arrested during the Passover. Jesus had two trials, one in front of his own people and the other in front of the Roman authorities. He didn't have a chance. In the end, Jesus was found guilty and executed. He died Roman style, crucified. The few who saw Jesus die on that day witnessed the depth of God's love for mankind. On a Friday, the day before the Sabbath, they placed his corpse in a tomb and cried themselves to sleep. On the following Sunday, the tears of his followers were replaced by cheers. A few women made the great discovery. Jesus had somehow conquered death. Every Easter we celebrate the resurrection, because it changed everything. Your belief in the resurrection is not optional it is indispensable. If you believe in the resurrection of Jesus, then you will be saved. If you don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus, then you are lost. (Romans 10:9) Jesus's resurrection was a bodily resurrection, he was not a ghost. For forty days he walked this world in his resurrected state, proving to all, he had returned. Once that forty-day period was

complete, Jesus ascended into heaven. Ten days later, on the Jewish festival of Pentecost, his divine mission was completed. The Holy Spirit came and filled the hearts of all believers. The question sounds simple, who is Jesus? The answer is very complex. If you believe in the resurrection of Jesus say, "**Amen!**" Who is Jesus?

When I was in seminary, I had a friend by the name of Mike. He was a wild guy with long red hair and a good heart. He was from the Illinois side of the Mississippi River in the St. Louis area. We lived in the same apartment complex, so we would ride to school together. As we traveled those few miles, we talked and share our stories. Of all the stories Mike told me, this is the one I remember.

He freely admitted, when he got of college, he was a non-believer. The last thing he worried about was Jesus. That all changed one Friday night. He was out drinking and being wild with his friends. Completely drunk, he decided to drive home. He didn't remember much, but he was driving fast. The expected happened, and Mike got into an accident. He didn't remember getting cut out of his car and he didn't remember being taken to the hospital. He did remember being in the hospital's emergency room. In an unconscious state, he heard his mother talking to the doctor. She began sobbing when the doctor told her, it didn't look good. The doctor wasn't a miracle worker, but she promised to do her best, but she wouldn't make any promises. There was an excellent chance Mike was going to die. Mike didn't want to die, so, in that unconscious state he promised God, he would do better. As a matter of fact, he promised God to service Him the rest of his life, if God would save him. Mike pulled his shirt open to show me the large ugly scares on his chest from the accident. Mike was good to his word. Once he recovered, he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. In time, he heard God calling him into the ministry and enrolled in seminary. The last time I heard from Mike, he was serving a church in Illinois. Ask Mike the question, who is Jesus, and he will give you the best answer. Jesus is his Lord and Savior. That is the only correct answer.

How do you answer the question, who is Jesus? There is only one truly correct answer. Jesus must be your Lord and Savior. He is your only hope of salvation. The disciples sat in the boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. A storm began to rage, and they thought they were going to die. They woke Jesus to tell him he is going to die too. No one died that day. Jesus calmed the storm and showed the disciples he had the ability to control nature, itself. The disciples are blown away, and they asked themselves the question people for generations have been trying to answer, who is this? Who is Jesus? Later, Jesus would give them the answer, "*I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.*" And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"