

The King of Creation

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[0 : 00] So nature is a force to be reckoned with, isn't it? As I've just prayed and as we'll all have seen on the news and the reports, we've seen the terrible bushfires in Australia, and the fires have been so intense, so widespread, that 43,000 square miles of land has been completely burned up.

To put that in context, that's nearly half the area of the United Kingdom. It's an absolute tragedy, with so many people having been displaced and some having died.

The power of nature is truly terrifying. Whether it's fire caused by heat and drought, or an avalanche caused by heavy snow, or an earthquake caused by movement in the earth's crust, there are times when God's creation inspires absolute terror.

And don't Jesus' disciples know it? Nature is destructive, it's deadly, and in this terror of nature's destructive power, we find Jesus' disciples in this story cowering from it, in this next section of Mark's account of Jesus' life.

And what we'll find as we reflect on this story, is that Jesus is more powerful still. This is the central truth that Mark wants to make crystal clear to us in this story.

[1 : 27] And we'll consider this under two main headings. We'll see firstly that Jesus is the King of creation. And then following on from that, we'll think about how Jesus is therefore worthy of our faith.

So that's where we're going. Let's dive in and consider firstly this huge observation that Mark is making about Jesus' identity, that Jesus is the King of creation.

The context, of course, for seeing that Jesus is the King of creation, is creation itself. The setting places us with Jesus' disciples in a boat, in the middle of a huge storm.

So let's read the first few verses again. Mark writes, So a bit of a geography lesson for you.

The Sea of Galilee, where this storm happened, was pretty used to bad storms. The sea sits 700 feet below sea level. And then 30 miles to the north of it is Mount Hermon, which is 92,000 feet high.

[2 : 47] So cold air from the mountains is always clashing with warm air that's coming up from the sea. And so the result is that there's regularly impressive thunderstorms on the Sea of Galilee.

And so this means that this particular thunderstorm must have been truly incredible. Because the disciples who owned the boat were seasoned sailors.

They worked as fishermen on this very sea. And yet look down at what they say in verse 38.

Teacher, don't you care if we drown? It reminds me of one of my favourite paintings.

The painting is called The Ninth Wave. And it depicts a group of sailors desperately clinging to the mast of a ship. And above them the waves keep crashing down.

The sea looks terrifyingly powerful in comparison to the sailors who look fragile and doomed. And that's just how the disciples feel.

[3 : 48] While Jesus is asleep in the stern. The contrast really couldn't be greater. But what Jesus does when they wake him up though reveals something really quite staggering about him.

Look down again at verse 38 with me. 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? He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, Quiet, be still.

Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. Mark's style always keeps the action moving. He doesn't like to linger too long. And here that movement really brings out the contrast.

The disciples are terrified. They wake up Jesus and as soon as Jesus speaks, the winds died down. And it was completely calm. How different in just a matter of moments.

The storm was powerful, but it was no match for Jesus' words. As an English graduate, I'm almost contractually obliged to find power in the spoken word.

[4 : 57] And to tell you the truth, I am deeply moved when I go to the theatre to see a Shakespeare. Which is a bit nerdy, but I am. And I hear the words spoken with feeling on the stage, it moves something within me.

But even Shakespeare's words can't light a candle to Jesus' words. Jesus' words have the power to calm creation.

He speaks and all is still. We've gone from a situation which looked to the disciples' eyes to spell certain death, to a relaxing day on a pancake flat seat.

And all because of Jesus' powerful word. And notice what he says. Mark tells us in verse 39 that he rebuked the wind.

And the words he uses are quiet, be still. It's a rebuke. Jesus is telling off creation. And creation responds. The winds become quiet, the waters become still.

[5 : 57] What's interesting to see is how similar this is to an earlier miracle that Jesus performed. In chapter 1 of Mark, Jesus met a man who was possessed by an unclean spirit.

And Mark says that Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, saying, Be silent and come out of him. And the spirit did what Jesus said. And those sorts of parallels just help us flesh out our picture of what's going on.

Because this story fits into our growing picture of Jesus' power. And the power of his words. And it helps us see the scale of the miracle. He's able to rebuke creation in the same way that he rebuked an unclean spirit.

Therefore, his rebuke of creation tells us something both about creation and also about Jesus himself. When God first created the world, we're told in Genesis, which is the first book of the Bible, that God saw that it was good.

But then sin entered God's good creation. And one of the results of sin is that a creation which was once good became catastrophically corrupted and distorted.

[7 : 07] And that's the reason for the natural disasters that we began the talk with. Sin wrecked the world. Paul, one of the later New Testament writers, says this about creation in his letter to the Roman Christians.

He says creation was subjected to frustration and that it is currently in bondage to decay. In short, he's saying that creation has been affected by sin.

And so, Jesus' word comes up against the power of a fallen creation. And it's his word that wins. Not the howling winds, not the torrents of rain, not the walls of water.

His word. And this ties into what we've seen recently in Mark. Over the past two weeks, we've been hearing Jesus' parables. Jesus was teaching his disciples about his kingdom and how it grows as the word is sown.

We've now entered a new section of the narrative where over the next three weeks, we're going to see Jesus perform three spectacular miracles which display his power.

[8 : 16] And one of the major ideas that links both of these sections is Jesus' word. We've learned that God's word is sown like seed and through it the kingdom grows.

Now we're seeing that Jesus' word has power over creation and power to save his disciples from drowning. The link between them that the disciples are yet to get is that Jesus' words and God's words are exactly the same.

And the proof is in the words themselves. Who alone can rebuke creation but the creator? Jesus is God, the powerful king of creation.

And that's the point, really. Jesus is the creator. Other writers in the Bible explore this thought as well. Paul, again, he writes to the Colossian Christians saying, In Jesus all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities.

All things have been created through him and for him. The writer of the Hebrews says the same. God has spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

[9 : 34] So when the creator walks on earth and says to creation to be still, creation's going to listen. Creation might be marred by sin, but like the HMY dog, it knows its master's voice.

Creation recognises the voice that brought it into being at the very beginning of time. And creation obeys its king. And this helps us to see just how powerful Jesus is.

I think it's very easy for us to have an image of a very small Jesus in our minds sometimes. Gentle Jesus, meek and mild. And whilst it's absolutely true to say that Jesus came in weakness and in humility as a man, it's also true to say that he never stopped being the God who created the cosmos.

The disciples may be travelling with Jesus and learning from him. Already in Mark's account, they've seen evil spirits cast out, the sick healed, and Jesus' own powerful teaching. But even they are blindsided by Jesus' power here. Look down at verse 40 with me. He said to his disciples, Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?

[10:50] They were terrified and asked each other, Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him. So whether you've been following Jesus for years, or whether you're only really considering him for the very first time, Mark wants you to know that Jesus is strong and powerful.

He's the king of creation. And that leads nicely on to our second point, where off the back of recognising that Jesus is the king of creation, we're going to consider how that makes him worthy of faith.

I want us to reflect together on how we should respond to Jesus if he really is this powerful. And the lens that Mark gives us for responding to the king of creation is the disciples.

We've just read their response, but it bears repetition. He said to his disciples, Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? They were terrified and asked each other, Who is this?

Even the wind and the waves obey him. Mark's giving us another contrast here. He's contrasting how Jesus wants the disciples to react with how the disciples actually do react.

[12:02] Jesus wants them to respond with faith, but they only respond with fear and confusion. I want to briefly say that fear is not a bad response by any stretch.

As I suggested earlier, it can often be all too easy to believe in a small Jesus. But the king of creation is anything but small. And this is Jesus' disciples' first real taste of how awesome and cosmic his power is.

Fear, in some ways, is a right recognition of Jesus because he is, in fact, God. Throughout the Bible, whenever individuals see a vision of God or see his angels, they invariably respond with fear. The Bible tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Fear of God and a right recognition of his power and authority understands who he is and comprehends the stakes, if you like.

C.S. Lewis, in his novel *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, I think, illustrates this very well. In the story, the Pevensie children have arrived at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, and the conversation has turned to Aslan.

[13:18] Aslan, who is Lewis's powerful, imaginative picture for Jesus in the Narnia stories. And the dialogue goes like this. Aslan is a lion.

The lion. The great lion. Ooh, said Susan. I thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.

Safe, said Mr. Beaver. Who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king, I tell you. Jesus isn't safe.

His disciples realized that when he rebuked creation. But he's good. He's the king. And what that means for us today is that we follow the king.

So we can firstly be encouraged by his power because he is more fearsome than any storm. In fact, he is more to be feared than any storm that might ever hit us, physical or metaphorical.

[14:21] Jesus is so much bigger and so much stronger. And I think that having a right fear of Jesus will help us keep things in perspective. When we experience, as we will, pain and sadness, Jesus is with us.

He who's stilled the sea will give you the strength to carry on and keep on following him. But I think it's also a challenge for when we don't recognize his fearsome power.

Having a very small view of Jesus will, I think, inevitably lead to us having a very small view of living for him. But having a big view of Jesus and having a reverent fear of him will encourage us to give him our all, to keep battling sin and to take him and his words seriously.

But fear alone is not enough. Nor is it what Jesus explicitly desires of his disciples here. What Jesus wants from his disciples then and all people now is faith in him.

We've read it before, but let's read verse 40 again. He said to his disciples, Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? Fear without faith is useless, as the disciples revealed.

[15 : 42] Instead, fear should lead to faith. Because the primary reason for faith is the same thing we keep coming back to in this passage. It's the same reason that the disciples responded to Jesus in fear.

Because he is the king of creation. And knowing this gives Christians confidence in Jesus. we don't follow a mere man.

Our faith is in the one who spoke the universe into being. And the ramifications of that are huge.

And as we head towards the end, I'd like to focus on just two of those.

Firstly, I think it's essential for us to grasp the power of Jesus' word. We've seen how his word reveals his kingship over creation.

but it's also his word that saves the disciples. Jesus speaks and the waves which threaten to kill his friends abate. And this is a picture of the salvation that Jesus' word affects for all people who have faith in him.

[16 : 49] The word goes out like a seed and the word is the call for people to repent and believe in the good news. And the word is Jesus' word and it saves.

What we have in this miracle is, in a sense, an enacted picture of the saving nature of Jesus' word.

We learnt that his word builds the kingdom but now we see more clearly what is meant by that.

Jesus' word of good news saves. Here, Jesus' word saves his disciples from death by water but the bigger reality that this story is pointing towards is that Jesus' word saves from spiritual death.

It rescues us not from waves but from the punishment that all of us justly deserve as sinners. That's why Jesus' word calls us to repent and believe.

He wants us to turn away from sin and instead follow him. He wants us to believe in his identity as the son of God and the king of creation and he wants to save us from our sin.

[18 : 02] Mark himself illustrates this in the story. When Jesus falls asleep in the boat in the middle of a great storm he's reminding us of an individual from the Old Testament Jonah. And Mark's deliberately making parallels so that readers familiar with the Old Testament would pick up on them.

When Jonah was asleep in the boat it was because he was running away from God. God had told him to preach to a city called Nineveh and Jonah decided that he was having none of it because he didn't want Nineveh to repent and be saved.

But eventually to cut a long story short he does go and Nineveh do repent and they do respond to God. And so Jesus here represents a better Jonah.

He has come so that his word might be heard and believed. Further to that the book of Jonah was written so that God's people would turn back to God instead of continuing in sin.

So Jesus is calling his disciples and all who heard him to repent and follow him. It's the same today.

One thing I didn't mention about that painting the ninth wave is that the mass that the dune sailors are floating on is shaped just like a cross.

[19 : 22] The waves may be coming for them but there is in the midst of despair a symbol of hope. Jesus' cross is a symbol of hope for all Christians because it's on the cross that salvation happened.

Jesus took the punishment for our sin and allowed all who repent and believe in him to be made right before God. And so it is in the case of the disciples' boat.

it's a picture of the greater salvation that Jesus was to bring when he died on the cross. He's more than just the king of creation.

He's the king who died for us. And that's why his word is so important because it points us toward him and allows us to have the salvation that he offers to all.

We're blessed to have Jesus' word in our Bibles. I think what would be great to remember is in the Bible are words that lead to Jesus and lead to salvation in him.

[20 : 27] A helpful phrase I've often heard is we never outgrow the gospel. And it's so true. From the day you first believe to the day you die to the endless days that you experience spent in eternity in a new creation with Jesus himself, you'll never outgrow the good news of Jesus' salvation.

So it will always be useful to reflect and meditate on it. It will always build us up and remind us of Jesus' kindness to us.

It will always encourage us to live for him. And not only that, but it never loses its power. When we share the good news about Jesus with our friends, our colleagues, family and strangers, it always has the power to save.

And closely tied to the saving power of Jesus' word is the wonderful truth that one day he will make all things new. That's what God says in the very last book of the Bible.

Behold, I am making all things new. And this is great news. I began this talk by mentioning the tragic bushfires in Australia, along with examples of other sorts of natural disasters that can occur in our fallen world.

[21 : 47] But one day, all such disasters will end. We said earlier that creation was messed up because of human sin.

Well, Paul writes, for the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

In short, what Paul's saying there is that one day God will completely renew creation. As Jesus saved people from sin, so he will save creation from sin.

No more bushfires, no more floods, no more hurricanes. Creation will be made new and perfect and beautiful. And God's children, those who have trusted in Jesus, well, they'll get to enjoy it forever. Jesus is, after all, the king of creation. And his goal is to bring his people into a new creation. Just as we are made new when we believe in Jesus, so creation will one day be renewed.

[23 : 09] And that ultimately is the Christian hope. That's why Jesus is worthy of our faith. So, to finish, within this brief episode on a stormy sea, we've seen Jesus' powerful word and the fact that he is the king of creation.

We've also seen that because of that, he is worthy of our faith. He is the saving king, he's the king of creation, and he's the one who will one day restore creation to its original goodness.

The disciples allowed their fear to overtake their faith. Jesus called for us today is to recognize him as the king of creation, to have faith, and to believe in the power of the king to save and to restore. Let's pray. Father God, we thank you that Jesus truly is the king of creation. We thank you for his powerful word, that it's a word which saves.

Father, we thank you that by his word, he is redeeming his people, and he is redeeming creation, so that one day he will have a new people living in a new creation in perfection and glory.

[24 : 27] Lord, we long for that day, and we thank you for that great hope that we have in it, Lord. We thank you that it's all true, and that Jesus has given us that firm foundation in him to hope in.

So Father, keep us trusting in that, and keep us reflecting on that wonderful truth that Jesus is the king. Amen.