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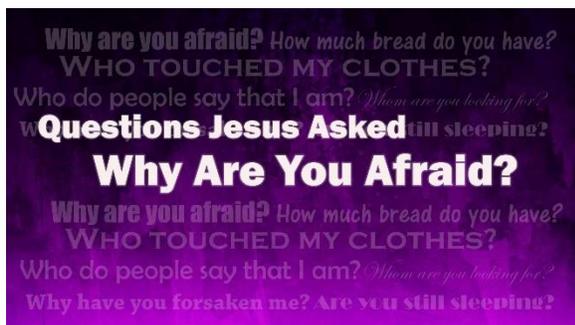
Title: Why Are You Afraid?

Preaching: Danny Gulden, Lead Pastor, Promise Road Campus

Text: [Mark 4:35-41](#)

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[Watch the Service](#)



This is the first Sunday in the season of Lent, which is the 40 days, not counting Sundays, between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Lent is a season of self-reflection, a journey that leads to the cross and ultimately to an empty tomb. It is a time of personal and communal transformation.

Our worship series for Lent is called "Questions Jesus Asked." Asking questions is important to our growth as people of faith. We know this because Jesus asked a lot of questions. The Gospels record Jesus asking 370 questions. Leading into Easter, we are going to look at a few of these questions and think about what it means that some of Jesus' most powerful teachings and truths come from the questions Jesus asked and the way people responded to these questions.

We start today with, in a way, another number. Jesus asks 370 questions and in the Bible, some version of Do Not Be Afraid appears 365 times. Jesus asks his disciples this question: *"He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"* ⁴¹*And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"* Mark 4:40-41

Let's set the scene: Jesus has spent a full day teaching and he and his disciples need to get away for the day, to the other side of the sea of Galilee. So they pile into some boats and prepare for the journey. At some point in their trip, a storm comes up. If you have been out on a body of water and a sudden storm comes, you know it can instill fear in you. As many across the country experienced first-hand this week, storms are not to be messed with. Jesus though, has a curious response to the storm at first and then has a response that puts fear into his disciples.

"A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸*But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"* ³⁹*He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the*

sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. ⁴⁰He said to them, "Why are you afraid?" Mark 4:37-40a

Why are you afraid?

Jesus asks that question of the disciples in the boat and asks us that question today? Despite being told not to be afraid, not to give in to fear, we are afraid, and we do give into fear. It is our fear that often keeps us from having the faith we desire.

A group of middle school students was recently asked what they are most afraid of? Some of the responses included:

- Victoria, who said her greatest fear was roaches in her room because they are disgusting.
- Lau said that his biggest fear was rock climbing because he is afraid of heights.
- Heidi said that her biggest fear was the fear of failure. She said every time she fails at something; she is filled with fear.
- Eddie said his biggest fear is FOMO. The fear of missing out.
- Louis said his biggest fear is not being prepared for the future.
- Gabriella said her biggest fear is losing a family member to death.

We recognize these fears and of course, we have our own fears. I wonder if we are truly aware of the role fear plays in our lives; the role fear plays in our conversations, our decisions, our actions, in how we see others. Perhaps one of the biggest fears we deal with daily is a fear of change. The fear of change so often holds us back from faith.

I believe faith is about transformation. I believe fear is a very limited tool when it comes to transformation.



A photograph taken shortly after Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in the fall of 2005 shows the devastation of a cemetery in the historic district of the city, trees toppled, debris covering the ground, burial vaults broken and scattered all over. In the middle of the devastation, untouched by the storm, stands a statue of the Risen Christ, arms extended wide, offering a blessing of calm over the devastating scene. Peace Be Still.

This is the blessing Jesus offers that causes the storm to subside. Everything just stops. The fear of those in the boat we can understand with the wind and the

waves crashing around them, but I think it's AFTER the storm, where this gets interesting.

The preacher David Lose asks this question about this scene on the Sea of Galilee, "Do you think the Disciples were more afraid during the storm or after the storm?"

Leif Enger's *Peace Like A River* is a good book that begins with the narrator Rueben Land telling the story of how his father saved his life by an apparent miracle. He goes on to say that "*Real miracles bother people, like strange sudden pains unknown in medical literature. It's true: They rebut every rule all we good citizens take comfort in. Lazarus obeying orders and climbing up out of the grave — now there's a miracle, and you can bet it upset a lot of folks who were standing around at the time.*

He concludes with this: *People fear real miracles because they fear being changed.*

This is true: amid the chaos of a storm, Jesus calms everything. Jesus sets everything right and they say, Who Then is This? It is not a statement of joy, praise, or acclaim, rather it is a statement of fear. Right up against one another we see the power of God's care and love through the actions of Jesus and then we see the Disciples wondering "what have we gotten ourselves into?"

Do you fear change? I don't mean in a surface-level way but in a deep, meaningful, and real way. The kind of change we experience when we encounter the living God and realize that life will never be the same again.

If this season of our lives is about transformation, perhaps we should begin by confessing that we struggle with that idea.

We want to cling tightly to beliefs, views, patterns that are well-established, rather than those that fit with the faith that God calls us to.

We fear real experiences of God, what we might call miracles because we fear changing the way we live. We fear truly following Jesus because he asks us to change.

We know this because Jesus has asked his first followers to change. It wasn't too long ago that they were people working, at home with their families, going about their daily lives until Jesus came along. Now they are in a boat crossing a lake to an unfamiliar land while witnessing and hearing about a kingdom, a new way of living, and seeing the world that is so very

different from anything else they've experienced or heard of before. And now, this Jesus is calming a devastating storm that is tossing them all around and wondering "why are you so afraid?"

Back to Reuben Land, the narrator in *Peace Like a River*, who said people fear miracles because they might be asked to change, he points out as well that *ignoring them will change you also*.

Ignoring the unmistakable presence and calling of God in your life will change you as well.

You see, we don't have a choice when it comes to being changed. Change happens. This journey through this season of Lent reminds us of the fragile, yet miraculous, wonderful nature of life. It's a call ultimately to receive and embrace a new life. What kind of life do you want- a life of fear or a life of faith?

Why Are You Afraid? Get in the boat, head out to the other side of the water, to a new place, to a new life in Christ.

Let Us Pray Together.