

## The Holiness of Jesus

### Mark 4:35-41

Of all the human beings who have ever lived, no person who has engendered more universal respect for His integrity than Jesus Christ. If the world is so complimentary about Jesus, “Why was He killed?”

#### **Sleeping through the Storm**

Mark 8:35-38a The narrative takes place on the Sea of Galilee. This body of water lies in the path of a wind tunnel that exists between the desert of the Trans-Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. Storms of violent proportion can arise without any warning.

The disciples had been out on that lake a thousand times, but one of these violent storms breaks out in the middle of the night. Every second the boat is in imminent danger of capsizing and killing the fishermen. Jesus is asleep in the stern of the boat.

#### **Afraid of the Storm**

Mark 8:38b The disciples are afraid. Their fear and the holiness of Jesus intertwines here.

In Western civilization, we have many philosophers and thinkers that have shaped Western thought. Some of these individuals were articulate atheists.

These atheists, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were trying to answer this question: “We know that there is no God, but there is a problem that still vexes us. Although we’re convinced there is no God, why is it that mankind seems to be incurably religious?”

The masses have a psychological need to worship something or someone.

Some atheist answered the question by saying the masses are simply superstitious—they are not very intelligent. They are not thinking critically about this stuff, so we just need to educate them.

Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx agreed that religion emerges out of the psychological needs of people—out of man’s human frailty, in mortality.

Freud suggested (and Marx seconded) *that every human being has a built-in fear of natural forces that threaten their very lives*. The first step in the process of religion was when people began to personify nature.

Many things outside of us that threaten our existence, such as cancer, fire, flood, war, or other people. We have learned how to manipulate and persuade people to protect ourselves.

#### **Inventing an Opiate**

So, the question Freud was asking was this: *How does one negotiate with natural forces?* These are impersonal, non-personal forces that threaten to destroy us. So, Freud said that what we do is project personal characteristics onto nature so that we can talk to the natural force and negotiate with it. Over time people sacralize (make sacred) nature, that is, they talk about the sacred, deities, who are in natural forces or are above these forces. Sometimes, we see God as an impersonal force that we try to manipulate. The prosperity gospel (name it and claim it) falls into this trap. When you are having a bad day and decide that you will no longer have a bad day, you fall into this trap.

When you and I do such things, we prove Freud and Marx’ philosophy that we can project our desires and our wishes upon nature, upon these impersonal forces. Here is what Freud concluded about religion: *out of our fear of nature we invent God*. It’s just that simple. So, God becomes a crutch or an opiate, as Marx suggested, for people who simply can’t bear to live in a hostile or indifferent universe.

#### **The Terrifying Presence of the Holy**

The disciples are terrified due to an encounter with the destructive forces of nature. They wake Jesus, pleading with Him to do something. He surveyed the scene and addressed the impersonal forces of nature, “Quiet! (Peace!) Be still!” Mark 4:39. The storm ceased, and the disciples were terrified.

Freud didn’t understand that there is something within the human heart which we fear more than any of the impersonal forces of nature—the power and the presence of a person who is holy.

## **Who is This Man?**

Mark 4:41 The disciples have witnessed a display from a man that they are not familiar, and it terrified them. All of us have learned with whom we can be vulnerable-Is this person safe? Because the disciples have never met a man like this, they did not know how to what to do with Him. What terrified the disciples was that they suddenly realized they were in the presence of the holy, and their fear was increased.

## **Uncomfortable with Holiness**

Luke 5 The disciples had been fishing all night on the Sea of Galilee and had caught nothing. Jesus tells them to throw their nets over on the other side of the boat. Peter is skeptical but tells the others to do so. The nets fill up with so many fish that the nets are in danger of tearing. Peter is not joyful but terrified. He says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." When the One who is holy comes into our midst, we become uncomfortable. We are aware of our unholiness.

## **Darkness in the Presence of Light**

When a pastor meets a group of people whom he has never met, the question is asked of him, "What do you do?" When the group discovers he is a pastor, the dynamics of the relationship immediately changes. The discovery makes people uncomfortable.

Proverbs 28:1a says that the wicked flee when no man pursues. Martin Luther said that it is the experience of the unbeliever to tremble at the rustling of a leaf. People are uncomfortable in our presence, not because we're holy, but because we represent the One who is.

The most vehement enemies Jesus had in His lifetime were the Pharisees, who were devoted to righteousness. They were the self-righteous ones. The people who were the most comfortable with Jesus were the outcast sinners, because they had no illusions about their own righteousness. Those, however, who took pride in their moral purity, when Jesus came, He exposed their unholy character. When the light comes, the darkness cannot stand in its presence.

## **Access the Holy**

When Peter said to Jesus, "Please leave," Jesus wouldn't leave. To Peter's everlasting joy, Jesus didn't take Him up on the invitation. The worst secret to keep in the whole world, is that we are invited to come into the presence of a holy God.

The secret the Christian carries around with him or her is the knowledge that the one place where we can really be vulnerable, the one place where we can be comfortable, the one place where we can be safe, is in the presence of Christ, that is in the presence of the holy. Even though we have this built-in antipathy and fear toward the Holy One, and even though we recognize we are unholy, in Christ we are welcome into the presence of the holy. Paul tells us that the first fruits of a person's justification are there two things: peace with God and access into His presence.

## **Get Your life Settled**

Some of you right now have no peace with God, and you are saying with Peter, "Please leave, Jesus, you make me uncomfortable." I beg you, if you have been listening to this series on the holiness of God, to consider a few things. There is no possible escape, ever, from the holiness of God. You will deal with it now or at some point in the future. You cannot escape it.

So, I plead with you: get it settled, now. Understand there is a righteousness that God has provided for you in Christ that is not your own righteousness. It is the righteousness of Christ that is freely offered to you if you will submit to the lordship of Christ. All that He has and all He has done becomes yours. When His righteousness becomes yours, the worst storms of divine wrath you could imagine are silenced forever, and God declares peace with you. You will have the experience of Isaiah when he knew the word of God, which said, "Behold, your guilt is taken away" (Isa. 6:7).

To be a Christian is to be forgiven. The essence of the Christian faith is grace. The essence of the Christian ethic is not arrogance, but gratitude. There are no Christians in this room who are righteous in and of themselves. Get it settled, now and forever.