

Theology - 'The Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41) is best interpreted as a parable.' Discuss.

Email your essay to: [kerry.wardle@dhsb.org](mailto:kerry.wardle@dhsb.org) by Friday 28th May.

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The calming of the storm is one of the more famous stories found in the New Testament. Found in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is seen, with his twelve disciples, to be crossing the Sea of Galilee - notorious for its windy and stormy nature - however, it is during this time when Jesus has fallen asleep. Jesus's disciples, worriedly, awoke Jesus asking if he wants them to perish on the Journey, after waking up, Jesus rebuked the storm and his disciples, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?'. Jesus's disciples only stood there in awe wondering who Jesus was, that even the sea and wind obey him. The journey through the Sea of Galilee was an important one, Jesus planned to spread his ministry to the Gentiles (an umbrella term for anyone who isn't Jewish) and expected his disciple to believe in the mission.

The widely accepted definition for a 'parable' is a '*succinct, didactic story...that illustrates one or more instructive lessons or principles*' which also have some element of morality and/or spirituality. The story itself is most definitely succinct and didactic, the main message is clear; have faith. Nowadays, the significance of the story is that we need to have faith in our lives whenever a metaphorical storm rears up, conveying God's omnipotence. Another possible meaning that could be interpreted here is that you will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

However, how else can this be interpreted as being? One popular question about 'The calming of the storm' was why was Jesus asleep in the first place? It comes as a surprise how Jesus was able to nod off in that din, so the main theory was that Jesus was just trying to check his disciple's faith. A more plausible explanation was that the author was making Jesus sleep out of literary importance but that would mean that the whole story is fictional allowing it to be interpreted as it being a story, allegory or even an analogy - though it's a bit far stretched. Despite all of this being said, the point is still a bit weak.

Further analysing this, another question pops up, what was the point of Jesus silencing the storm in the first place? Bearing in mind that at this stage in Jesus's life, his message had not been so widespread nor had his fables and parables been told yet, so why did his disciples ask him for help? They wouldn't have known if Jesus could even help them, yet they still asked him. An elucidation of this would be that it was out of pure desperation but that still does not answer why Jesus showed off his powers. If Jesus really had wanted to test out his disciples' faith he still would not have done so in such a spectacular manner since he already reprimanded them and there really wasn't that much of a point of silencing the storm. If Jesus's disciples didn't wake Jesus up, it is safe to presume that they would not have perished in the storm because they have faith in Jesus. Demonstrating his naked power only scared and awed his companions rather than bringing them comfort. Again this can be interpreted as a message that by simply stating 'be still' to chaos around your life you could still achieve some sense of inner peace.

Some of the most interesting analysis we can pull forth from this passage was the rhetorical questions that Jesus asked, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' Jesus openly asks his disciples why they are afraid, according to the first stories found in the bible, fear is the first emotion felt by humans, mentioned explicitly by the bible. Dating all the way back to when Adam first felt fear after eating the forbidden fruit. This could hint to us that fear is just superficial and meaningless, for any person experiencing a massive storm, fear would probably be the first emotion you would feel. The origin of faith is more interesting as Abraham is credited as the 'Father of Faith', Jesus asking 'Have you still no faith?'

can be interpreted as Jesus pointing out that after all these hundreds of years after Isaac's (Abraham's son) faithful sacrifice, how come people still have a defect in trusting people?

After all of that lengthy analysis that is definitely not succinct, we can tell that 'The Calming of the Storm' is, perhaps, more ambiguous than we previously thought, but the main root of the story is intertwined with the idea of faith. Some people may argue that this parable differs a lot from all the other parables such as the 'Parable of the mustard seed' which is much shorter and is not based on historical accuracy. Nonetheless the basic ideas of a parable is here with a lesson and a clear message. In conclusion, I believe that 'The Calming of the Storm' is best interpreted as a parable.

By Jack Chen, 8N