

**GLIMPSES OF GLORY:
AWESOME
MARK 4:35-41
FEBRUARY 3, 2013**

Perhaps the most overused word in recent years is “awesome.”

When you hear someone say, “Wow, that’s awesome,”
they could be talking about a view of the Grand Canyon,
a song they like,
a good ice cream cone,
or a car wreck at a NASCAR race.

“Awesome” can mean anything from, “That’s nice,”
to “I’m so overcome I’m speechless; I don’t know what to say.”

It’s time for us to reclaim the original meaning of the word.

Merriam Webster’s Dictionary says awe is
“an emotion variously combining dread, veneration, and wonder
that is inspired by authority or by the sacred or sublime,
for example: I stood in awe of the king.”

When we turn to the ultimate authority, the font of all knowledge, Wikipedia, it says,
“Awe is an emotion comparable to wonder but less joyous.

One dictionary definition is ‘an overwhelming feeling of reverence, admiration, fear, etc.,
produced by that which is grand, sublime, extremely powerful, or the like:
in awe of God; in awe of great political figures.’

Another dictionary definition is a
‘mixed emotion of reverence, respect, dread, and wonder
inspired by authority, genius, great beauty, sublimity, or might.’”

Can you think of a time when you felt awe?

Not “aaaah” yawning during the sermon, but awe.

Tell the person next to you.

When did you feel awe at something great, grand, beautiful, huge, or powerful?
Go ahead and tell them.

I remember the first time I saw the Grand Canyon.

Huge and beautiful, stretching to the left, right and down seemingly forever.

There was no way to get a photograph that could capture it.

I also recall a few quiet, peaceful mornings at our ranch in the hill country.

Early mornings, sitting on the porch with a cup of coffee,
watching God’s creation wake up.

Or when I saw the Lincoln Memorial,

that huge stone sculpture of a great leader,
and some of his most magnificent words carved on the interior walls.

Awe is when something takes your breath away

because it is so beyond your capacity to fully comprehend it or describe it.

Can you think of a time you were in awe of God?

The followers of Jesus were awestruck a few times.

Not all the time.

Frankly, because they didn’t really, fully understand who he was, who he is,
until after his death and resurrection.

One of the first times recorded in Mark’s Gospel is in chapter 4.

Up until this time Jesus had healed a few people and done some teaching.
 But there were other supposed miracle workers around at that time,
 healing people and casting out demons.
 What got the attention of the followers of Jesus was something different, something more,
 something that no one else could do.
 Jesus made a storm come to a screeching halt.

MARK 4:35-41

Jesus stilled the storm,

 and their reaction was: “Wow. Dude! Totally awesome!”

But let’s back up and work through the story verse by verse.

 There are some wonderful little details that fill it out.

 In verses 35-36 we see evening coming on, and Jesus wants to cross the Sea of Galilee,
 actually a great freshwater lake.

 He wanted some quiet time apart from the crowd that had gathered.

 I want to lay out a challenge for the workaholics among us:

 Think about that for a moment.

 The Son of God, all-powerful, took time for rest and quiet.

 The Gospels are punctuated by mention that

 he “withdrew to a quiet place,”

 he “went up on a mountain to pray,”

 he left the crowds to rest,

 to spend time with his heavenly Father ,

 to recharge his emotional and spiritual batteries.

 If the Son of God needed to do that,

 you and I need to do that.

 We are NOT stronger and more enduring than he was.

 If the Son of God took the time to do that,

 you and I can too.

 We are NOT more needed than he was.

 Do you only feel good about you when you are doing, producing, working?

 Do you feel like you only identity and value then?

 If so, I hope you’ll think back and figure out

 who put that message in your head.

 Because it wasn’t God!

 Or maybe you’re afraid of what you might hear if you were quiet for a moment.

 It might be your own inner stuff you don’t want to deal with.

 Or it could be the voice of God you’re trying to not hear.

 God created us NOT to be human DOINGS, but human BEINGS.

 He built into the rhythm of things a day called Sabbath,

 a day to cease from working, doing, producing,

 a day to rest and spend time with God.

 I learned years ago that when I take time off from work,

 God keeps the world spinning on our axis without us.

 He even keeps the church going without me!

 And he’ll keep your world going, too, when you rest.

 It’s all part of remembering and relearning that

 God is God and I’m not.

 Jesus withdrew from the crowds,

 and they set off to cross the lake.

But in verse 37 a powerful storm suddenly blows in,
 with high winds and threatening waves.
 On that lake a storm can appear over the surrounding hills very quickly and without warning.
 They didn't have weather reports on television, radio or iphone,
 not that they are all that accurate even today.
 But they had nothing to forecast the weather.
 So, as fishermen who were always out on the water,
 they would always be prepared for the worst.
 But this storm is so bad, it threatened to swamp the boat.
 And even with four seasoned professional fishermen among them,
 the disciples were in a panic.
 Jesus, meanwhile, was sound asleep.

In verse 38 they woke him up, all in a lather,
 "Jesus! Teacher! Don't you care if we drown?"
 Now, let me push the pause button here.
 What is their question, really?
 Did they assume he had the power to fix their situation,
 and he was just not doing anything about it because he doesn't care?
 I don't think that's it.
 After all, when he did stand up and
 stop the storm with a spoken command,
 it was all shock and awe for them.
 They were blown away!
 Clearly they did NOT realize he had the power.
 Which means, of course, that
 they didn't really know who he was.
 Who he is.

So *what do* they mean when they ask him, "Don't you care?"
 Given the situation, it seems like they just expect him to be in a panic like them.
 How can you sleep through this?
 You ought to be frantic like us!
 Don't you care that we might drown?
 Don't you care that you might drown?
 Don't you care about life?
 Why aren't you panicking like us?
 And if that's their question,
 again we see they didn't really know
 who he was and is.

Their question, their lack of faith, is what many people struggle with today.
 Hardship strikes,
 the pain goes on and on,
 and the questions and doubts arise.
 Twenty school children and six teachers and administrators shot down in cold blood.
 There's no way to make sense of what happened.
 There's no adequate answer to the question, "Why?"
 Why did he do it?
 Why did God let him do it?
 For those most deeply affected, there have to be questions and doubts.
 Does God really care?

Could God have stopped this from happening?
 Where was God and what was he doing?
 Or, perhaps some wonder if there is no God after all.

Jesus, don't you care?

Why aren't you frantic and panicking?
 Why aren't you doing something?
 They were in the dark,
 both physically, since it was night,
 and figuratively, since they did not really know who he was.

Jesus didn't argue their point with them.

Instead, he took action.

He was simply himself.

Verse 39 says, "He got up,

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

Before we get to the "Wow" of his followers,
 take a close look at that language.

"He rebuked the wind."

A rebuke is a stern warning, a strong correction.

"Rebuke" is the word used by the Gospel writers for how Jesus cast out demons.

But here he rebukes the wind.

As if it was a demon?

Or least a manifestation of the brokenness and evil of creation
 that derives from the human brokenness of sin.

There's a hint here of the creation story in Genesis 1,
 where God speaks light into being and separates the light and the dark,
 then pushes back the deep waters that symbolize chaos and death.

And only after that does God create life.

First God had to create a safe place for life. (Ge.1:3-13)

That seems to be a little bit of what Jesus was doing,

controlling the wind and waves by his spoken word,
 creating a safe place for the lives of his followers.

It was an act of ultimate power and authority.

And I think his followers got that,

because they were stunned by what happened and what it meant about Jesus.

Verse 41 says "They were terrified and asked each other,

'Who is this? Even the wind and waves obey him!'"

There were other religious leaders around who appeared to heal the sick and cast out demons.

But, since Moses parted the Sea of Reeds and Joshua parted the Jordan River,
 no one had ever done anything like this!

Who is this?

They didn't offer up a good answer.

In verse 40 Jesus recognized their confusion
 and realized they had more questions than answers.

"Do you still have no faith?"

Fortunately, their lack of understanding and trust
 did not keep Jesus from acting.

If you feel spiritually inadequate, take heart.

They were in the boat with him,

did not understand,
 yet received from him a life-saving miracle.
 Your spiritual adequacy is not nearly as important as
 the goodness and power of Jesus.
 HE is our source of security and life.

It seems all his followers knew for sure was that Jesus was much more than they had thought before.

It was the moment of, "AWESOME!"

Shock, surprise, amazement, fear, all mixed together.

They must have recognized there was something of divinity in Jesus.

Only God could do such a thing.

Only God has power over nature, over his creation.

In the Old Testament the psalmist wrote that

the God of Israel "stilled the storm to a whisper;

the waves of the sea were hushed." (Ps.107:29)

And here in Mark we see Jesus doing just that.

Is Mark telling us that Jesus is where the God of Israel was working?

Perhaps that Jesus IS God?

In fact, that is exactly what several other writers of the New Testament said about Jesus.

John's Gospel tells us Jesus is the Logos, the Word of God,

"through whom all things were made." (Jn.1:1-3, 14)

Paul's letter to the Colossians says Jesus "is the image of the invisible God.

For by him all things were created." (Col.1:15-16)

They say JESUS has power over the creation.

Jesus is God, the Creator, in the flesh.

Jesus the rabbi, the sandaled man walking the dusty roads of Galilee,

the Jesus who sweats in the heat, who gets hungry,

who needs his rest from the crowds and sleeps in the bottom of the boat,

this Jesus is... God?

AWESOME!

His power and authority over the wind and the waves suggests he can also speak order into the chaos of our lives.

Are you facing a storm?

Grief over the death of a loved one,

an unplanned pregnancy,

fear at the mass shootings we're hearing about way too often,

uncertainty over the economy, your own job and income,

pulled this way and that by competing loyalties,

your marriage strained, or your child going off the tracks?

A few years ago I was feeling pretty overwhelmed with all my responsibilities at NWH,

working on my doctorate, and everything else in life.

I was putting in long hours,

trying to work hard and work smart,

praying for God's help, all of that.

But I was a bit overwhelmed.

One night I had a dream.

I was in a totally enclosed barrel, floating in a great river,

and then going over a waterfall.

I was in the barrel, and it was in free-fall.

But I was not afraid.

Somehow I knew my barrel was in God's hand,

and he would not turn loose.
 When I woke up, I remembered the dream vividly,
 and I knew its meaning just as vividly.
 I'd never had a dream like that before.
 I haven't had one since.
 But that morning I was no longer feeling overwhelmed by my life.
 I was, instead, overwhelmed by the awesomeness of God.

What storms are you facing?

You can ask Jesus to get involved, to bring order out of the chaos, peace out of turmoil, to still the storm.

Oh, you might have doubts and questions and uncertainties
 about what he can do, or what he will do.

But if you ask him,

even if it's as rough as his followers saying, "Don't you care?"

you might be surprised at what he does.

You might say it was awesome.

You might even say HE is awesome.

SERMON NOTES:

When have you felt a sense of awe?

Taking a break, Sabbath rest (v.35-36)

Questions about Jesus (v.38)

Jesus' power and authority over creation (v.39)

Jesus is awesome! (v.41)

Divinity of Jesus (Ps.107:29; Jn.1:1-3, 14; Col.1:15-16)

Into what chaos and disorder in your life do you need Jesus to speak order?