



Links Players

QUESTIONS REDUX | WHY ARE YOU AFRAID?

...a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he [Jesus] was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:35–41, ESV)

Fear! First-tee jitters are real. Finding oneself "in the hunt" coming down the stretch has been the undoing of many men. The fear of "blowing it right" on a tight, tree-lined fairway in competition can cause tremors in the hands.

Why do golfers tighten up when we finally get where we want to be—"in the mix" to win, facing the last hole to post our lowest score, or finishing in front of a large gallery? Why all the fears?

Dr. Bhrett McCabe, sports psychologist to Cameron Young and Sam Burns, trains men to embrace the moment: "The goal is not to eliminate nerves but to perform effectively while experiencing them. We do that best when we focus on executing the next shot, not on scoreboards, trophies, or rankings." In short, fear arises when we start thinking about outcomes.

Fears come in all shapes and sizes, and nobody goes through life without battling a variety of them. For a toddler, the fear that a monster is lurking in the closet is as real as an adult's fear of heights or of being trapped in an elevator.

And yet what I fear might not bother you at all. My brother-in-law picks up snakes and laughs while doing it. I get weak in the knees just thinking about it.

There are rational fears, and there are irrational fears. It would be irrational for an adult to look under the bed for monsters. Worrying that Bigfoot is in the attic is not something one would expect from a psychologically healthy adult.

On the other hand, healthy fears are evidence-based responses to real, imminent threats that protect our physical safety—for example, returning to the clubhouse when lightning is in the air is the prudent thing to do.

In Mark 4, we find Jesus asleep on a cushion while the disciples fear for their lives as a violent storm batters their boat. It seems altogether reasonable for seasoned fishermen to be afraid when their boat is about to capsize.

Yet Jesus reprimands them for fear and lack of faith. This might seem like a misplaced correction—and it would be, if it were anyone other than Jesus in the boat.

If the reader approaches this story assuming that the supernatural is superstition and that Jesus is a mere mortal, then they will dismiss this miracle as folklore. After all, who tells the wind to "be quiet" and the sea to "calm down," and then watches them obey?

The disciples' reaction to this extraordinary moment is telling: "They were filled with great fear" and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Exactly! The answer should be obvious: He is the Lord of glory, the King, the One whom all the elements obey.

Unlike the disciples, the storm recognized its Maker and obeyed. We, like the disciples, often fail to recognize that Jesus, though a man, is also God. He is the One sent on mission to rescue the world—crucified, buried, risen, crowned, and placed in charge of the universe.

The greatest and healthiest of fears is fearing the One who can command the elements and watch them obey. Of course, this fear is of a different sort than fearing a storm; rightly understood, this fear is awe, reverence, astonishment, and worship.

Dismiss him as folklore or bow on bended knee and worship him as your Maker and Redeemer. Either Jesus is God in the flesh, or he is a fictional character conjured up in the minds of first-century anglers.

Everyone must decide. Choose wisely.

Prayer: Jesus! Teach us to rightly fear you!

READING: Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 8:23-27; Proverbs 1:7.

1. When have you felt “in the boat” like the disciples—overwhelmed by circumstances and questioning whether Jesus cares—and how does this passage challenge your response of fear versus faith?

2. What fears in your life are more about outcomes (scoreboards, approval, failure, success) than about real danger, and how might focusing on “the next shot” with Jesus change the way you face them?

3. How does seeing Jesus as both fully man and fully God—Lord over wind, waves, and all creation—reshape what it means for you to “fear” him with awe, reverence, and worship in daily life?

NOTES



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