

February 7, 2016

Does Jesus Care?

Mark 4:35-39

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Life can suddenly come crashing down, causing us to _____ whether the Lord cares. In times of _____, we ask, does Jesus really care about us? We have no doubts that the Bible will give us the _____, so we keep on looking to it for the answers. Our goal is to _____ God because we love Him and we want to be close to Him.

Longing to be close to God is _____, and especially when you're hurting. The sons of Korah, in Psalm 42, describe the heartache of _____ for God. "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul _____ for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while *they* say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' "

When tough times come, many times people feel God is _____. They wonder if the Lord is _____ and if He cares. They _____ for God's help and comfort. Does Jesus care when our hearts are broken with the loss of a loved one, when the bills pile up, when the children are hungry, or when we can't seem to get well? Does God hear our _____?

Nothing, however, _____ the notice of God. Luke 12:6 says that not even a _____ can fall to the ground apart from God's knowledge. God not only sees what happens outwardly, He also sees the troubles inside your _____. He knows all about you because He _____ you. There's never been a single _____ in your life when God hasn't wanted to be close to you and bless you.

Our reading today comes from the Gospel According to Mark 4:35-39.

Frightening, life-threatening storms happen _____ on the Sea of Galilee. In this storm Jesus is _____, with "his head on a cushion." The disciples cry out "Master, don't you _____ that we're perishing?" We all ask questions like this when we're frightened and we need an _____. We see the world's agonies and we _____ if God is paying attention. We need _____ from someone bigger than we are and we need it now.

Jesus didn't answer their question. Instead, He rebuked the storm and He made the water _____. Then Jesus asked His disciples, "How is it that you have no _____?" The real question is not whether Jesus cares, but whether we _____. Of course, Jesus cares. Mark describes how the Lord Jesus delivered Legion, a demon-possessed man, who lived like a beast (Mark 5:1-20). Later in the chapter, Jesus healed a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and then He raised the daughter of Jairus.

Someone objects, "But why doesn't God _____ every problem? Why does the Lord seem asleep and uncaring?" Are you assuming that if God doesn't _____ all our problems that He doesn't care about us? Some folks want God to keep us _____ from struggles or difficulties. It's tempting to question God's _____ when we face challenges or disappointments. We think if God really loves us, He'll _____ us from any and every problem.

Is a painless world, free from any problem, really the _____ world for us? Oh, it may be convenient and it may even be comfortable, but is it best for our _____, for our growth as individuals? Doesn't the person who has no problems and has everything his way often get _____ and think the world revolves around him? Don't challenges _____ us into people of character?

Read what the Bible says in James 1:2-4. We may see our trials and struggles the _____ way. We may not realize that God permits them because He sees a greater _____ with them than without them. Struggles help us to become the _____ people that God desires. So let's rejoice in our trials because God uses them to _____ us into His people.

James 1:12 says, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under _____; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." It doesn't say, "Blessed is the man who has _____ troubles," but "blessed is a man who perseveres under trial." He's the man who won't _____ on God when things get rough. Because he loves God even in tough times, God will _____ him with a crown of life.

The Lord demonstrates that He cares in _____ ways. You might ask, "Well how?" First, He shows He understands suffering in that He himself suffered for our _____. He Himself endured the punishment that was rightfully _____. First Peter 2:24 says, "That He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might _____ to sin and _____ to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

God loved His Son, Jesus, but He didn't _____ the crucifixion. Jesus prayed with _____ in the Garden to let this cup pass, but God sacrificed His Son because He loved you and me, just as He loved His Son. Jesus also prayed, "Your will be done." Atoning for sin was _____ important to Jesus than freedom from suffering. Have you considered how _____ our Father suffered in sacrificing His Son? No one has grieved more over human evil than God has. No one has suffered more than Jesus who bore the cross for our sins. He showed unmistakably how much He loved us. This loving God asks us to _____ Him when we cry out for help.

Read what 1 Peter 2:21-23 says. This is what the disciples in the boat needed to do, and what we need to do: and that is to entrust our _____ to God! First Peter 5:7 urges us to cast "all our anxiety on Him, because He _____ for you."

God inspired Paul to write the book of Romans at a time when the Roman Christians began _____ great persecution. Paul asked, "Who shall _____ us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we're being killed all the daylong; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered'" (Romans 8:35-36). Paul answers this question in verses 37 to 39, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who _____ us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the _____ of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Their problems did not separate them from the love of God and my friend, your _____ won't separate you from His love either. God didn't stop the apostles from being _____, Stephen from being _____, or James from the _____. God didn't keep

Paul from imprisonment or remove his _____ in the flesh. Yet, not one of these men ever _____ God's love. They knew God would never put more on them than they could _____.

God isn't hiding when our _____ come. He's faithful! You can _____ Him! Nothing that you'll encounter today, tomorrow, or at any time will ever be _____ than what God and you together can handle. He doesn't _____ all our problems; but God does give us the _____ to bear those burdens and challenges. When that problem gets so big that we can't handle it _____, God steps in so we'll never get overcome by it. Remember the promise of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you _____. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your _____. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

God sometimes uses the physical struggles that we face to keep us from doing ourselves spiritual _____. God gave the apostle Paul some tremendous, miraculous revelations to _____ him in his ministry. But God didn't want Paul to _____ himself, and so He gave him that "thorn in the flesh" to torment him and keep him from exalting himself (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul prayed _____ times for the Lord to take away his "thorn in the flesh"; but God refused and said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for _____ is perfected in weakness."

Paul had to understand that this thorn was not going away. Was he bitter? No! He _____ something valuable: God's power is perfected in weakness. **Read what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.** Struggles remind us of our need for God and how God can powerfully work in our lives.

God's grace is indeed sufficient. Suffering may torment your _____, but it can't take away your _____. Suffering may open up for you an opportunity to see the great power of God to _____ you sustain yourself even in times of great weakness. Jesus does indeed _____. Just as Jesus _____ with Mary and Martha at the death of Lazarus, so He weeps with us. The Lord knows when we hurt and He provides _____.

Some continue to ask, "Why doesn't the Lord just stop all evil _____?" If the Lord stopped all evil, wouldn't that evil also _____ you? If we ask God to stop all evil, we need to _____ the evil things that we do. Your sin _____; it hurts God; it hurts you; and it hurts other people. The Lord loves you enough to show you a _____ way and asks you to _____ your life by repenting.

Repentance is not some punishment, but it's how we _____. The Lord knows that there's a _____ person inside of you, wanting to come out. He knows that your repentance will not only bless your _____ but bless all the people that you touch. When you come to Christ and you stop that sin, you bless people that you formerly _____. He graciously gives us _____ to repent; He's patient. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

Jesus loved us enough to give us a righteous _____ to follow. He showed us how to _____ and how to be forgiven. He gave us his Word to _____ our lives, and He answers our _____. He says, "And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask Him anything according to His _____ He hears us. And we know that He _____ us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5:14-15).

Times of crisis call for the _____ in people. Bravery, heroism, love, self-sacrifice—all of these things flourish in times of crisis. People who exhibit such traits are cherished and are honored as having gone “above and beyond the call of duty.” Was this not the very point Christ made: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his _____”? (John 15:13).

The most important question is not “why did this happen to me?” but rather “what shall I do _____?” Some reject and abandon God when _____ comes their way. Some turn inward in self-pity. Others exercise their faith and find that God has _____ forgotten them. They entrust their souls to Him and find His promise is true: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Not everything that happens to us is _____, but let’s not assume that the only way God can care for us is to _____ our troubles. God also shows His care and His power by taking the hardest things in our lives and using them for _____, to bless us and to bless others. God has the power to _____; and we have no idea all the harm from which He has protected us already. But God also has the power to take things at their _____ and make good out of them.

So, instead of blaming God for our pains, let’s look to Him for _____. Struggles remind us that God never intended this world to be our _____. We’re pilgrims, and our lives here are brief. Paul said, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be _____ with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). So, we too must learn to see with the _____ of faith and trust. The last chapter of our lives has not yet been _____. When Jesus comes again, He will bless and comfort His own.

Jesus cares about you. He wants to be your friend. He cares about your physical welfare, your finances, your family, your soul, and your future. More than anything, He cares about your _____. The Lord Jesus knows all about you, the _____ and the _____. He even knows the number of _____ on your head. In spite of it all, He loves you and cares greatly about every detail of your life.

Sometimes we concentrate so much on our longing for God to _____ that we forget God is longing for a relationship with us. The Lord deeply desires that we _____ _____ to Him. When we forget Him or get caught up in _____, He yearns for His people to come back to Him. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for sinful people, yearning to have a relationship with them.

Do you have a close, loving relationship with God? Does the Lord see you as someone who is truly _____ to Him? In your quiet moments as you look into your _____, do you see yourself as a friend to God?

If you haven’t given yourself to the Lord, today is the right day to come to Him. Come to the Lord in _____, trusting in Him and in His Word. Confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. In repentance, make Jesus your Lord; and let Him _____ your life. Having done these things, be _____ in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. In baptism, the Lord will cleanse you from sin (Acts 22:16); He’ll cause you to be born again (John 3:5); and He’ll give you newness of life (Romans 6:4). In baptism, the Lord will add you to His church (Acts 2:47).

When you become a Christian, you’ll find the strength and the grace to deal with all of life’s struggles. God cares enough to give us the strength to bear what He does not take away. Trust Him! Trust Him!