**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**MARK-019**. **THE STORM STILLED by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"35.* *And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. 36. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. 37. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? 39. And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? 41. And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?."*

*Mark 4:35-41*

Mark seldom dates his incidents, but he takes pains to tell us that this run across the lake closed a day of labour, Jesus was wearied, and felt the need of rest, He had been pressed on all day by a very great multitude, and felt the need of solitude. He could not land from the boat which had been His pulpit, for that would have plunged Him into the thick of the crowd, and so the only way to get away from the throng was to cross the lake. But even there He was followed; other boats were with Him.

**I. The first point to note is the wearied sleeper.**

The disciples take Him, ... even as He was, without preparation or delay, the object being simply to get away as quickly as might be, so great was His fatigue and longing for quiet. We almost see the hurried starting and the intrusive followers scrambling into the little skiffs on the beach and making after Him. The multitudedelights to push itself into the private hours of its heroes, and is devoured with rude curiosity. There was a leather, or perhaps wooden, movable seat in the stern for the steersman, on which a wearied-out man might lay his head, while his body was stretched in the bottom of the boat. A hard pillowindeed, which only exhaustion could make comfortable! But it was soft enough for the worn-out Christ, who had apparently flung Himself down in sheer tiredness as soon as they set sail. How real such a small detail makes the transcendent mystery of the Incarnation! Jesus is our pattern in small common things as in great ones, and among the sublimities of character set forth in Him as our example, let us not forget that the homely virtue of hard work is also included. Jonah slept in a storm the sleep of a skulking sluggard, Jesus slept the sleep of a wearied labourer.

**II. The next point is the terrified disciples.**

The evening was coming on, and, as often on a lake set among hills, the wind rose as the sun sank behind the high land on the western shore astern. The fishermen disciples were used to such squalls, and, at first, would probably let their sail down, and pull so as to keep the boat's head to the wind. But things grew worse, and when the crazy, undecked craft began to fill and get water-logged, they grew alarmed. The squall was fiercer than usual, and must have been pretty bad to have frightened such seasoned hands. They awoke Jesus, and there is a touch of petulant rebuke in their appeal, and of a sailor's impatience at a landsman lying sound asleep while the sweat is running down their faces with their hard pulling. It is to Mark that we owe our knowledge of that accent of complaint in their words, for he alone gives their Carest Thou not?

But it is not for us to fling stones at them, seeing that we also often may catch ourselves thinking that Jesus has gone to sleep when storms come on the Church or on ourselves, and that He is ignorant of, or indifferent to, our plight. But though the disciples were wrong in their fright, and not altogether right in the tone of their appeal to Jesus, they were supremely right in that they did appeal to Him. Fear which drives us to Jesus is not all wrong. The cry to Him, even though it is the cry of unnecessary terror, brings Him to His feet for our help.

**III. The next point is the word of power.**

Again we have to thank Mark for the very words, so strangely, calmly authoritative. May we take Peace!as spoken to the howling wind, bidding it to silence; and Be still!as addressed to the tossing waves, smoothing them to a calm plain? At all events, the two things to lay to heart are that Jesus here exercises the divine prerogative of controlling matter by the bare expression of His will, and that this divine attribute was exercised by the wearied man, who, a moment before, had been sleeping the sleep of human exhaustion. The marvellous combination of apparent opposites, weakness, and divine omnipotence, which yet do not clash, nor produce an incredible monster of a being, but coalesce in perfect harmony, is a feat beyond the reach of the loftiest creative imagination. If the Evangelists are not simple biographers, telling what eyes have seen and hands have handled, they have beaten the greatest poets and dramatists at their own weapons, and have accomplished things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

A word of loving rebuke and encouragement follows. Matthew puts it before the stilling of the storm, but Mark's order seems the more exact. How often we too are taught the folly of our fears by experiencing some swift, easy deliverance! Blessed be God! He does not rebuke us first and help us afterwards, but rebukes by helping. What could the disciples say, as they sat there in the great calm, in answer to Christ's question, Why are ye fearful?Fear can give no reasonable account of itself, if Christ is in the boat. If our faith unites us to Jesus, there is nothing that need shake our courage. If He is our fear and our dread, we shall not need to fear their fear, who have not the all-conquering Christ to fight for them.

Well roars the storm to them who hear

A deeper voice across the storm.

Jesus wondered at the slowness of the disciples to learn their lesson, and the wonder was reflected in the sad question, Have ye not yet faith?--not yet, after so many miracles, and living beside Me for so long? How much more keen the edge of that question is when addressed to us, who know Him so much better, and have centuries of His working for His servants to look back on. When, in the tempests that sweep over our own lives, we sometimes pass into a great calm as suddenly as if we had entered the centre of a typhoon, we wonder unbelievingly instead of saying, out of a faith nourished by experience, It is just like Him.