

## The Storm and the Stillness

Let's look at the unexpected behaviour of Jesus in Mark 4:35-41—sleeping on the boat during a dangerous storm and then scolding the disciples for waking him. He certainly shook everybody up. Why did he do it?

The scene on the Galilean Sea feels almost cinematic. Darkness closes in, waves crash violently against the boat, and the disciples are in full-blown panic. They're seasoned fishermen, but even they recognize that this storm is beyond their control. And then there's Jesus—calm, utterly unbothered, fast asleep on a cushion. The contrast couldn't be starker. Fear and faith collide in this tempest, a moment that exposes both human fragility and the unshakable trust of the divine.

At first glance, Jesus' behaviour seems almost offensive. How can he sleep while His closest friends are convinced they're about to drown? It's easy to imagine their frustration: *"Doesn't he care? Is he really so indifferent to our suffering?"* But the calmness of Jesus is not neglect; it's something deeper, an invitation to trust.

The disciples' cry, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" feels deeply human. It's the kind of question we've all asked in our darkest moments. When the storms of life batter us, when we feel abandoned or unheard, we wonder where God is. Yet Jesus' response turns the question on its head. He rises, speaks to the storm, and suddenly the chaos becomes still. His words to the disciples, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" are not just rhetorical; they are a call to reflect.

Faith, as Jesus seems to reveal here, is not



about the absence of fearfulness in the face of danger. It's not even about pretending the storm isn't terrifying. Instead, it's about knowing where to anchor ourselves when fear takes hold. Jesus challenges His disciples to trust—not just in His power to calm the storm, but in His unwavering presence, even when he seems silent or distant.

### *The Quiet Lessons of Jesus' Sleep*

On the surface, Jesus' sleep might look like indifference. But through a contemplative lens, it becomes something much more profound. His ability to rest in the middle of the storm reflects a deep trust in the Father's care. It's a living example of the peace that faith can bring—a peace that doesn't come from perfect circumstances but from an unshakable connection to God.

Jesus' expectation that the disciples should remain calm might seem unreasonable at first. After all, he was asleep while they faced a life-threatening crisis. But think about it: the disciples had already seen Him perform miracles. They knew he had authority over sickness, demons, and even nature itself. His slumber surely wasn't a sign of neglect but an invitation for them to trust and believe in the security of His presence—even when he seemed distant.

This moment wasn't just about calming the sea; it was about shaping their faith. Jesus wanted them to see that His "silence" wasn't the same as absence. His sleep was a lesson in trust, an opportunity for them to anchor their faith in something deeper than what their eyes could see.

## ***God in the Chaos – The I of the Storm***

When Jesus finally rebukes the storm, it's not just nature that obeys—it's the disciples' understanding that begins to shift. His command, "Peace! Be still!" carries a dual meaning. On one level, it's a directive to the wind and waves. But on another level, it's a call to the disciples' hearts.

The same peace that calmed the sea is available to calm their fears. This is surely a call for us to trust and believe in the security of His presence—even when he seems distant.

In this moment, Jesus is teaching more than trust. He's revealing who he is. The storm listens to Him because he is more than just a teacher or prophet. His authority over creation is a glimpse of His divinity, an unmistakable sign that he is the Lord of all.

The lesson isn't just for the disciples; it's for us, too. Life is full of storms—moments of uncertainty, pain, and fear. Like the disciples, we often find ourselves crying out, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" But the story reminds us that God's presence is constant, even when it feels hidden.

There in that depth, always with God who abides there, is a level of I, though not the usual small self or ego. Like the disciples, we must learn to keep open, and widen, the access to this "I" which, with God, says "I Am" at the centre of the storm.

## ***Faith Anchor***

So what was Jesus trying to teach? First, he wanted His disciples to learn to trust. Not a blind trust that ignores fear, but a deep, steady trust that endures even when he is felt to be absent, or far away. He wanted them to see that His calmness wasn't indifference—it was an invitation to share in His peace.

Second, he was modelling the kind of serenity that comes from total surrender to God. His stillness in the storm wasn't just about Him; it was a living example of what faith can look like in the face of chaos.

Finally, Jesus used this moment to transform their fear into faith. By allowing them to experience the storm and then calming it, he gave them a chance to confront their doubts and grow in their trust.

And, perhaps most profoundly, he revealed His divine nature. His power over the wind and waves wasn't just a demonstration of authority; it was a declaration of who he is. The storm obeyed because it recognized its Creator.

This story isn't just about a storm on the Sea of Galilee. It's about the storms we all face, the storms we all *are*, in a sense. Our ordinary selves or egos are often stormy, trying to keep up with our addictions to security, respect, and control, and trying to cope with the same addictions in other people. Humanity as a whole—families, communities, nations, generations—is an unquiet storm

The Gospel episode is a reminder that peace isn't the absence of trouble—it's the presence

of God. And that presence, even when it feels silent, is enough to anchor us through any tempest. The episode can serve us also as a reminder that you and I exist also on a deeper and more mysterious level, always in the presence of God.

He's teaching trust, modelling a kind of peace that goes beyond circumstances, and inviting His disciples—and us—to transform fear into faith. And in doing so, He's not just calming storms; He's revealing the heart of God. With God, humanity, and all creation, there in "the still point at the centre of a turning world" (T.S. Eliot) there is calm and oneness in the I of the storm that is a person.

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## Wisdom From Various Traditions

These voices of wisdom call us to a universal truth: within the chaos of storms, we can access a profound peace—not by controlling our circumstances, but by releasing ourselves into a trust greater than fear. The world's great spiritual traditions converge on this wisdom, offering us the tools to navigate life's tempests with faith, love, and stillness.

### *The Sea of Galilee Storm Scene*

Mark 4:35-41 (parallel accounts in Matthew 8:23-27 and Luke 8:22-25)

"Do you not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38)

"Peace! Be still!" (Mark 4:39)

"Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" (Mark 4:40)

Compiled Quotes on Trust, Faith, and Stillness

### *Trust Beyond Circumstances*

Christianity (Thomas Merton): "My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end."

Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*, 1958.

Buddhism (Thich Nhat Hanh): "Fear keeps us focused on the past or worried about the future. If we can acknowledge our fear, we can realize that right now we are okay."

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Fear: Essential Wisdom for Getting Through the Storm*, 2012.

Sufi (Rumi): "Be like a tree and let the dead leaves drop."

Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks, *The Essential Rumi*, 1995.

Hinduism (Bhagavad Gita): "Set thy heart upon thy work, but never on its reward. Work not for a reward, but never cease to do thy work."

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 47.

Judaism (Hasidic Wisdom): "The world is a narrow

bridge, and the important thing is not to be afraid."  
Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Likutei Moharan.

### *Deeper Insights*

Christianity (Julian of Norwich): "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, 14th century.

Judaism (Hasidic Wisdom): "There is nothing more whole than a broken heart."

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, as quoted in Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim*.

Islam (Hafiz): "I wish I could show you when you

are lonely or in darkness the astonishing light of your own being."

Hafiz, translated by Daniel Ladinsky, *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz the Great Sufi Master*, 1999.

Sikhism (Guru Granth Sahib): "One who sings the Glorious Praises of the Lord is carried across the terrifying world-ocean."

Sri Guru Granth Sahib, 1354.

Taoism (Lao Tzu): "Be content with what you have; rejoice in the way things are. When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you."

Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 44.

The Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin thought that love is the most mysterious and unknown energy



Teilhard (de Chardin) thought that love is the most mysterious and unknown energy in the universe. It is *this* center drawn to *that* center; *this* person drawn to *that* person. There is no logical explanation for this core energy of life; it is deeply personal and yet whimsical; ... an energy field that is somehow entangled with an infinite energy of divine love—for God alone, who is absolute love, is completely personal and ineffable intimacy. Love is rooted in the fundamental nature of reality itself....

Love forms every star, atom, leaf, daffodil, bird, earthworm, cat, giraffe, tiger, and human; everything that exists is born from love. Even consciousness is born of love so that mind is not intellect alone but includes the body and senses and emotional life. Love makes the world go around because love makes the world; matter is formed by love.

Ilia Delio, *Birth of a Dancing Star: From Cradle Catholic to Cyborg Christian* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019), 195, 196, 200.

in the universe. It is *this* centre drawn to *that* centre; *this* person

### **Facing Inner Storms**

Hinduism (Swami Vivekananda): "You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul."

— *Swami Vivekananda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora, 1897.*

Christianity (St. John of the Cross): "In the evening of life, we will be judged on love alone."

— *St. John of the Cross, The Spiritual Canticle, 16th century.*

Baha'i Faith (Baha'u'llah): "Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be a lamp unto those who walk in darkness, and a home to the stranger."

— *Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, 1891.*

Buddhism (Pema Chödrön): "Nothing ever goes away until it has taught us what we need to know."

— *Pema Chödrön, When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times, 1997.*

Stoicism (Epictetus): "It is not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters."

— *Epictetus, The Enchiridion, 1st century CE.*

### **Divine Presence in Chaos**

Sufism (Ibn Arabi): "Be aware of your breathing. Glorify the One who holds your soul and releases it."

— *Ibn Arabi, The Meccan Revelations, 13th century.*

Hinduism (Ramana Maharshi): "Silence is the language of God. All else is poor translation."

— *Ramana Maharshi, Talks with Sri Ramana Ma-*

*harshi, 1935-1939. Also attributed to Fr Thomas Keating.*

Judaism (Psalmist):

"Be still, and know that I am God."

— *Psalm 46:10, The Hebrew Bible.*

Christianity (St. Teresa of Ávila): "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things are passing; God never changes."

— *St. Teresa of Ávila, The Way of Perfection, 16th century.*

Buddhism (Thich Nhat Hanh): "Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I smile. Dwelling in the present moment, I know this is a wonderful moment."

— *Thich Nhat Hanh, Peace Is Every Step, 1991.*

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### **The Storm and I** (a song)

A century of greed, or more,  
storms rage, the season of solitary need.  
The eye of the storm sees only itself,  
turmoil and flying debris.

*Chorus*  
*But the deep I, the deep I,*  
*a stillness within the storm.*  
*A heart wider than the universe,*  
*sees abundance, sees peace reborn.*

Deadly tornadoes cast their shadow,  
strike terror on rich and poor alike.  
In their wake, the cries of despair,  
a world unravels in the fight.

(Chorus)

Listen to the silence, hear its call,  
beneath the chaos, there's love for all.  
A deeper seeing, a kinder place,  
a vision of abundance, a world of grace.

(Chorus)

tony macelli

View it on YouTube, sung to music, at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sa-9lzd2ZUs>

### **Faith as Anchor:**



## Trust Reborn within the Tempest

Life often feels like a whirlwind, right? The news blares with stories of political unrest and environmental collapse, and we're left wondering if the ground beneath us is as shaky as the headlines make it seem. Relationships enter crises caused by our own imperfections and those of others. And all the while, the weight of it all can feel overwhelming—anxieties stacking up, frustrations bubbling over.

Yet, even in the chaos, something deeper stirs, doesn't it? It's like a quiet expectation inside—a longing for something greater, something steady, something eternal. Have you felt it? Maybe the storms of life haven't only shaken your trust but also sharpened your hunger for something more profound. People who have suffered deeply may have touched these mysterious depths. Think about it. For some, the noise and confusion drown out anything sacred. But for others—maybe even for you—it sparks this rest-

less search for meaning. When the institutions and systems that we've leaned on crumble, some of us get a little hint, a subtle intuition, that somewhere in the depths a solid foundation exists. Funny how despair can plant the seeds of hope. When famine strikes, don't you notice how prayers multiply? Where corruption festers, cries for justice ascend to heaven; and where the earth falters, new stewards rise, arms open to both creation and Creator.

Still, let's be honest: not everyone feels that way. Some of us get stuck—paralyzed by fear or weighed down by anger. If that's you, you're not alone. It's hard, isn't it, to hold on to faith when life feels like a never-ending storm? St. Teresa of Ávila had it right when she said, "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you." But seriously—how do you hold onto that wisdom when everything's falling apart? But the fact is, while the storms rage, there are individuals encountering peace amid despair, and entire movements rekindling their commitment to

*Violent storms can occur in our thoughts and emotions. Doubts, difficult emotions, insecurities, addictions can destroy our inner peace. But it doesn't have to be so.*

love, justice, and stewardship, individuals and small groups seeing the peace of contemplative spirituality. In the experience of Elijah in 1 Kings 19:11-13, "Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'"

People who do not know the peace of contemplative practice may not understand what this passage is about. But God is there, underneath the chaos, in the still small voice.

When we look closely, there's evidence of trust being reborn all around us. Have you seen it? People finding peace in the middle of despair. Communities coming together in prayer. Movements reigniting their passion for justice, love, and care for the world. Faith isn't disappearing—it's being reshaped, reimagined, just like ancient stones weathered by time but still standing.

So here's the question: where's your anchor? When the storms rage—inside and out—can you hear the same voice the disciples heard: "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" It's the same storm, the same question, and the same invitation to trust.

Faith doesn't promise to erase the storms. It's not about escape—it's about anchoring yourself to something steady. It's that still, small voice that whispers through the chaos, inviting us to trust again. Will I listen?

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## The Cycle: Stillness and Service and More Stillness

*"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." Isaiah 61:1*

Jesus echoes this by reading this passage in the synagogue at the start of His public ministry:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight*



*for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." Luke 4:18-19*

Both passages emphasize the mission to care for the broken-hearted, the poor, and the oppressed, making it central to the call for compassion and service in Christian life. Various other passages show the importance of healing the broken-hearted and those in trouble.

However, you may have heard the phrase "you can't pour from an empty cup." It's simple but so true—especially when it comes to serving others. Whether you're comforting a friend, volunteering, or just showing up for someone in need, or working through your helping profession, there's this delicate balance between giving and keeping yourself grounded. wholesome, whole, and a channel of the divine within. That's where stillness comes in.

Take the story of Jesus calming the storm. It's not just about His divine power over nature; it's also a masterclass in how peace and action go hand in hand. He's not scrambling to fix everything when the disciples panic. Instead, He's anchored in trust, calm enough to sleep through the chaos. When he acts, it's with clarity and authority—not out of fear or restlessness.

### *Recharging Your "Divine Batteries"*

Compassion takes energy. It's beautiful, but let's be real—it can also be draining. That's why people like Thich Nhat Hanh and Henri Nouwen remind us that we need to return to our centre often. Nouwen calls it remembering the shared source of life we all come from. Thich Nhat Hanh describes it as nourishing our inner peace so we can keep showing up for others without running dry.

It's not about being selfish; it's about keeping yourself connected to that deep well of stillness inside, the place where God (or whatever you call the sacred) renews you. Rumi says it beautifully: "Be like a tree and let the dead leaves drop." That's the recharge—letting go of what doesn't serve you, so you can give from a full heart.

### ***Stillness and Action Go Together***

Here's the thing about stillness: it's not about checking out or retreating from life. It's about pausing long enough to see clearly, to figure out, in openness to the divine, what really needs doing and how to do it well. St. Ignatius of Loyola sees it this way: "Act as if everything depended on you; trust as if everything depended on God."

Contemplation—whether it's prayer, meditation, contentless "contemplatio" or just a quiet moment—grounds us. It shows us what matters and how to move forward without losing that inner peace. The Bhagavad Gita says it's about action guided by a calm mind, where wisdom and work flow as one.

### ***Serving Without Fragmenting Yourself***

When we help others, especially those who are broken-hearted, it's easy to absorb their pain. But true service isn't about carrying someone else's burden alone; it's about being present with them in a way that connects both of you to something bigger. Julian of Norwich's "all shall be well" isn't just hopeful words—it's the kind of assurance you can bring to others only if you've found that peace yourself.

And let's not forget — sometimes helping others is what helps us heal, too. Pema Chödrön

talks about how struggles teach us what we need to know. When we show up for someone else with a calm, open heart, it often deepens our own sense of connection and purpose.

### ***Let Stillness Guide the Way***

Here's the magic: when you make space for stillness, the right actions start to reveal themselves! Lao Tzu's advice—waiting for the mud to settle and the water to clear—isn't just poetic; it's practical. It's about not rushing into every storm but letting the calm guide your next step.

Stillness isn't just for you or me. It's a gift you bring to the people around you. It allows you to serve without burning out, to comfort others without losing your own centre. And when your actions come from that place of harmony, they carry a power that words alone can't match.

So, the next time life feels chaotic, take a beat. Find your stillness. From there, step into the world with a calm heart, ready to serve and heal in a way that uplifts everyone—including yourself.

### ***Serving Others & Returning to the Centre***

Christianity (Henri Nouwen): "Compassion is born when we discover in the centre of our own existence not only that God is the source of life, but also that our neighbour shares the same source."

— *Henri J.M. Nouwen, Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life, 1983.*

Buddhism (Thich Nhat Hanh): "When you are a mindful presence for someone who is suffering, you are offering them the most precious gift: your true presence. But to sustain this gift, you must regularly return to yourself and nour-

ish your inner peace."  
— *Thich Nhat Hanh, Peace Is Every Step, 1991.*

Sufism (Rumi): "When the soul lies down in that grass, the world is too full to talk about. Ideas, language, even the phrase each other doesn't make any sense. Stay there. It will guide your service to others."  
— *Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks, The Essential Rumi, 1995.*

### ***Action and Contemplation are Complementary***

Christianity (St. Ignatius of Loyola): "Act as if everything depended on you; trust as if everything depended on God."  
— *St. Ignatius of Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, 16th century.*

Hinduism (Bhagavad Gita): "The wise see knowledge and action as one; they see truly. Take action with a mind that is balanced in the silence of the self, for that is the way to peace."  
— *Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 5, Verses 4-5.*

Taoism (Lao Tzu): "Do you have the patience to wait till your mud settles and the water is clear? Can you remain unmoving till the right action arises by itself?"  
— *Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Chapter 15.*

Judaism (Maimonides): "Every person must see himself as though the entire world depends on his actions. But let him temper this with the wisdom of stillness, for it is in stillness that God's ways are revealed."  
— *Maimonides, The Guide for the Perplexed, 12th century.*

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