

The Gospel According to Luke

February 24, 2019

Reading: Luke 8:22-25

(Matthew 8:23-27 and Mark 4:35-41)

Sermon #34
Luke 8:22-25

Calming The Storms

Authority Over Storms

In verse 23 we read, “A windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger.” I did some research and discovered sudden storms are a characteristic of the Sea of Galilee. This is similar to some of New Mexico lakes that go from calm to dangerous in a few minutes. There have been a few times when on a lake a storm has come up suddenly and I was not sure I could make it back to shore. The Sea or lake of Galilee can change quickly due to the lake being surrounded by mountains except in the south where the Jordan flows down to the Dead Sea. Winds blow in from the Mediterranean from the south-west and create violent squalls known to every fisherman on the lake, but this particular storm was so horrendous that even fishermen thought they were lost. Four of the men in the boat were seasoned sailors who had earned their living as fishermen on this lake. Peter, Andrew, James and John had known the Sea of Galilee and its unexpected squalls from their youth. The sight of Christ commanding the winds and the wind obeying him would have particularly impressed these fishermen. So, the conclusion of this extraordinary voyage is the fear and amazement of these men who knew Jesus best and knew the lake well is found in verse 25 in their response, “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?”

This storm is recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and reveals the distinctiveness of Jesus Christ. What other person in history speaks to the winds and waves and they obey him? Some people have made claims, but without witnesses. That is why we worship Jesus and not any other so-called

messiahs or men. King Canute ruled Denmark, Norway and England in the 12th century and as powerful as he was, he was nothing compared to God. The king took his nobles and courtiers to the sea shore to demonstrate that his secular power could not stop the incoming tide and secular and human power is less than a shadow of God's power. The king told those there, "You need to know the one with whom you have to deal with and all of you will have to deal with this Jesus because he says in the Sermon on the Mount that one day you and all the world will stand before him to be judged." Yet, the problem then and today is the world does not want to spend time or effort to know Jesus. One will ask about and seek the reputation of the auto mechanic before taking their car in for repairs. A woman wants to know who a man is before she agrees to marry him. Parents want to know about the person that babysits their children before they entrust their children to someone else. It is with this same purpose that Luke wrote his gospel account of Jesus and addressed it to Theophilus as stated in the opening of Luke's gospel, he wrote so that Theophilus would know the things Jesus taught and accomplished and know who he is. Luke is saying Theophilus you want to know how unique Jesus is, let me tell you a quick story about when the disciples were sailing across the lake. Like Theophilus who would suddenly come to attention so should we. Jesus wants us to learn about him, be familiar with what he did and to this end he set up this demonstration not only for his disciples but for those he knew would read of it. Why do I say he arranged this demonstration of his power? Because he says, in verse 22, to the disciples, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." Jesus knew full well what would unfold on this trip. This trip would reveal another dimension of Jesus and his power over the world just as King Canute demonstrated man's power is so very little compared to the unlimited power only God possesses.

It began so simply, a short journey across the lake, but soon the journey was interrupted by a growing wind which was worse than anything these fishermen had

ever seen. The waves beat into the boat and the men could not bail out fast enough; verse 23, says, the boat was “filling with water and *they were in danger.*” These men were afraid and while their fear grew Jesus slept. The frightened disciples wake Jesus saying in verse 24, “*Master, Master, we are perishing!*” Jesus arose “*and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.*” With the sea now calm he turns to the disciples and says, “*Where is your faith?*” As suddenly as this violent storm came upon them, just as suddenly it is over.

J. C. Ryle lived in the 19th century and was a pastor and bishop greatly respected. In his book “Holiness” he wrote of this storm under the title of “The Ruler of the Waves”. I will use some quotes from Ryle, you should consider reading his book entitled “Holiness”. You will find the title and publisher in the notes posted on the Canyon Bible website.

Storms Will Come

The disciples were in the midst of the lake and the storm because of Christ for it was He who had said, “*Let us go across to the other side of the lake.*” (v.22). If he had not asked them to cross, they would have been back in Capernaum that evening; smelling the supper being cooked, looking forward to a night’s sleep, but Jesus had said, “Let’s go” . . . and they went. Every day the disciples accompanied him to the lakeside or mountain where he preached and taught, and on the Sabbath, they went with him to a synagogue. They had been drawn to him and they followed him, no matter what the scoffing Pharisees said about Jesus. For these men Christ had become their example, their teacher, their lord, and they had faith in him. He had summoned them from mending their nets, from the tax office and they obeyed. They had given up everything for him and soon they discovered it was not all easy sailing. There were times when Jesus took them into a storm.

At this point I do not think they even imagined they would in the future be occupying places of authority in Jesus' new kingdom or that soon they would be raising the dead, healing the sick and feeding multitudes with a few loaves and fishes. They had no idea they would be able to cast out demons with a word by the power of Christ. Yet, this evening they were staring into the face death by drowning and possibly more scared than at any time in their lives. James and John had been in their boat hundreds of times with Zebedee their father and they had never been afraid as they were now.

My point is this, that when we follow Jesus, he may take us into painful encounters and even death. On May 27, 2001 Gracia Burnham and her husband Martin were kidnapped for 376 days by Muslim terrorists in the Philippines. They had gone to the Philippines at the call of God to make Jesus Christ known and there in the Philippines they were abducted at gun point and after almost a year Martin was shot dead. Gracia speaks of her husband's courage and quiet wisdom through their abduction but speaks disparagingly of her own weak faith; "Martin learned what an emotional wretch I am," she said. "Poor guy! Yeah, we found out a lot about each other. He just stayed steady. I became miserable and I cried all the time." Really, she was no different from any of Christ's disciples who in the storm were gripped by fear.

J. C. Ryle wrote, "If you are a believer, you must reckon on having your share of sickness and pain, of sorrow and tears, of losses and crosses, of deaths and bereavements, of partings and separations, of vexations and disappointments, so long as you are in the body. Christ never undertakes that you shall get to heaven without these. He has undertaken that all who come to him shall have all things pertaining to life and godliness; but he has never undertaken that he will make them prosperous, or rich, or healthy, and that death and sorrow shall never come to their family" (J. C. Ryle, Holiness, "The Ruler of the Waves," James Clarke and

Co., London 1956, page 198). As God's people living in the world, we face suffering from various fronts.

Just because we are believers does not make us immune to suffering, in fact, because we have become the enemy of the prince of this world sufferings should be expected. As Christians we should expect to be targets, as William Shakespeare wrote, “**the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune**” will be aimed at us. They will become part of our testimony and example to the world of living in adversity with the hope and grace of Christ. As Christians we should expect to face the hostility of the world which denies Christ. The devil may be allowed to torment us for a time but in the end, we have Jesus and heaven. One may ask, if there is no persecution in my life, am I being faithful? Am I a soldier of Christ and an enemy of the evil one? Am I a shining light for Christ in this dark world?

The disciples in that boat are suddenly faced of fear of death and Jesus calms the storm and then asks, “**Where is your faith?**” Jesus is preparing them for soon they would be traveling from place to place preaching Christ raised from the dead and this would bring persecution. James who was in the boat that night would soon be martyred for his faith by Herod. These disciples, like Martin and Gracia, were being prepared to stay true to their calling in spite of persecution and sufferings. How about you? Are you preparing and strengthening for battle? Remember what Jesus said about Saul of Tarsus and as he changed him into Paul the Apostle, “**I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.**” (Acts 9:16) Paul's conversion began with suffering, he suffered greatly for his faith and ministry and yet he impacted the world for the cause of Christ and the salvation of mankind.

I am not saying, as Christians, we are to be superhuman, the disciples were not. The Bible teaches that we were weak at times, the disciple's faith failed at times

when the storms of life blew hard. Just like the disciples we get sick, our bodies feel the stain of life, we feel physical, emotional and spiritual pain, and we grow weary. Our minds are susceptible to fear, regret, sadness and anxiety. But, our hope is superhuman for it is in Christ and he gives us the gift of God the Holy Spirit to live within us and it is the Holy Spirit that makes it possible for one to deal with “**the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune**” of this world by faith.

The disciples had not been given the Holy Spirit at this point during this storm and if I had been with them, I am sure I would have been fearful, just like I would have stood in the crowd and yelled crucify him. Jesus wanted the disciples to feel the stain of the storm to teach them their need to trust in him and have faith in him. Learning to trust and having faith in Jesus allows his followers to bend in the storms but not break. Working with believers in Muslim countries they recognized there would be a cost for believing in Jesus and they are willing to pay the cost and this strengthens their faith. In America up to this point there has been very little cost to being a Christian. We need to prepare for the storms and thank God for the storms for they will strengthen our faith.

Suffering The Storms

Luke introduces Jesus to his readers in chapter 1 with the angel telling Mary, “**behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.**”³² **He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.**” (Luke 1:31-32) Matthew’s gospel introduces Jesus this way, “**Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us).**” (Matthew 1:23) Mark begins simply and to the point, “**The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**” (Mark 1:1) John says it differently but with the same result, the “**Word was God. ...**”¹⁴ **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**” (John 1:1 & 14) The gospels all begin with the

deity of Jesus because he was God before he became man of flesh. Jesus is of the Triune Godhead and he will always be God. Jesus is God from eternity past to eternity future.

Jesus is true God, but he also at a specific time and place in history became human. Jesus was truly a man, he is a man who needed nourishment, sleep, breathed air and bled. He suffered as all humans do and he was tempted as all human experience, but he did not sin as all humans do. In his human form he was just like you and me; same bone structure, digestive system and on and on. Physically Jesus was just like you and I with one exception – his DNA was only half human. Jesus could grow weary and lay down and slept as he did during the storm. Jesus was a man, he grew from a boy to manhood but because his soul was one with God, he truly walked with God the Father. Jesus hurt when Peter denied him, his love John was genuine and special and he experienced joy and sorrow, peace and fear. Nothing human was alien to him except sin. He needed the Holy Spirit and it was given, and confessed his faith at his baptism, he read the Scriptures and committed them to memory, and he prayed and sought God the Father's will in all things. We must never forget that Jesus is God in human flesh and gave his life that people might live spiritually.

We must keep in mind the Word was with God and was God and was also truly man who could become weary and fall asleep on the cushions of the boat. If Jesus was perfect as God and was a perfect man as God originally intended man to be and then Jesus is a permanent man. Jesus did not take on his humanness for a little while otherwise he would have no scars as he showed Thomas. He is exalted and at the right hand of God the Father but he does not cease to be God or man. As an exalted man he neither hungers or sleeps. His glorified body is different than the Jesus who sleep in the boat during the storm. But Jesus knows what you and I are going through, the struggles of life for he experienced them. He has all power

in the universe but he remembers being human. This is God's grace that he became human to experience the storms faced by humans in this world, to die as a human and to rise as the atonement for all human sin. Jesus defeated death – yet, did he not die? Yes, he died a physical death like all humans but he rose to life as the God and human to defeat death. We too shall die a physical death but because of Christ we will also rise to eternal life with God in heaven. This is why the humanity of Jesus is important and why the writers of the New Testament begin with Jesus as God and move to Jesus as man.

Here is God the Son, and what a strange place to see him, sleeping in exhaustion on a cushion in a boat. But there will be a stranger place where soon he will be found, nailed to a cross between two thieves. It is a man killed on Golgotha. He is the perfect man who was made sin. He is a man who became the anathema or curse for all human sin. He is a man who became obedient unto death. He is a man who cries at last, “**It is finished.**” (John 19:30) He dies there as the last Adam. In his manhood he obeys, and as a man he offers the glory of perfect human obedience. His righteousness is human as well as being divine.

I am saying lay hold of this humanity, Jesus sleeping on the Sea of Galilee. Do not underestimate it. It is because he is both God and man that there is example for us to walk in his steps. He is the atonement for our sins and the compassion for us.

Power Over Storms

Up to this point Jesus has performed miracles over men, but here he demonstrates his power over nature. In verse 24, “**he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.**” This is divine power! No man possesses this kind of power. I am reminded of the power demonstrated in the Old Testament by prophets like Elijah and Elisha, they were

given power by God to raise the dead. In the Sermon on the Mount it is full of Old Testament references. God gave power to men to show his power, but Jesus possessed unlimited power on his own. It is Jesus who is spoken of in Genesis creating the universe, the earth, the light separating day from night, all the creatures and giving life to Adam. As God's creations they are dependent on God to exist and continue. This Christ in the boat, this man, as God, was present at the creation and it is all dependent upon him and he commands the storm to stop and it stops.

As I pondered these things I thought of the great flood of Noah. It destroyed the corruption of the world. This too, was an act of God and Christ will act again to bring a complete end to this earth and the universe and rebuild it by his mere word. This is beyond me to understand, but I believe it. This is the same God who became man who calmed the storm.

The Jews were enslaved and bound in Egypt for 400 years and God sent the angel of death to kill the first born and Passover the Jews. This is divine power over all creation and this is the same God who became man that was in the boat with the disciple on that stormy night. This is the same Christ that we worship and have given our lives to. Then why do we hesitate at times to submit and be obedient? Because Jesus was the only perfect man and we are saved but remain sinners to remind us of our desperate need for our Savior. Remember, my beloved, if there is one rogue molecule in the universe then Jesus is not God. If Jesus does not hear the prayers of billions and interact, then is his not God. The Jesus of the storm is the Creator and he is here and just as close as he was to the disciples that night on the boat. Sit back and think of this. Does it not overwhelm you, excite you and humble you?

Loved in the Midst of Storms

We are told that Christ slept through this raging storm and it was necessary for the men to rouse him: “**Master, master,**” they shouted, without tenderness. That is why he was with them, because he loved them and was going to save them from the storm, but they did not understand how deep was his love, just like we do not. They allowed the storm to come between them and the assurance of their Master’s devotion. He had said to them, “**Let’s go over to the other side**”. That is where they were going, because he had said it. Think about this statement, “**to the other side.**” They were not going into the depths of the sea. They had failed to hang on to his words he had said; they would arrive on the other side. They had forgotten so soon their Master’s power and care for them. All they thought of was their present peril. The noise of the wind and waves had silenced the voice of Jesus. What are the winds that silence Jesus in your life?

J. C. Ryle says, “**The apostles believed in Christ, loved Christ, and gave up all to follow Christ, and yet you see in this storm the apostles were afraid. Learn to be charitable in your judgment of them. Learn to be moderate in your expectations from your own heart. Contend to the death for the truth that no man is a true Christian who is not converted, and is not a holy man. But allow that a man may be converted, have a new heart, and be a holy man, and yet be liable to infirmity, doubts and fears**” (J. C. Ryle, page 206). This you and me and we need to be compassionate of others.

How tender was Christ! He did not say to the disciples, “You disappoint me! Have I been with you so long and you think I do not care? Shame on you.” Before he said a word to them, he calmed the sea and then when there was a complete calm, he asked them a question: “**Where is your faith?**” (v.24). What you observe here and all through the New Testament in our Lord’s behavior towards these

disciples You see nothing but unchanging pity, compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, and love. He does not cast them off for their stupidity. He does not reject them for their unbelief. He does not dismiss them forever for their cowardice. He teaches them as they are able to bear. He leads them step-by-step, as a mother does an infant when it first begins to walk. He sends them kind messages as soon as he is risen from the dead. He restores Peter to his place, and bids him “**feed my sheep**” (John 21:17) Just as Jesus restored the disciples and made them his apostles, he will restore you. He may let you suffer through some trials because they will strengthen you and be a testimony to others of His power to transform lives.

Jesus is talking about our trust. Do you trust Jesus? There is a great principle in Scripture; “**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ...³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.**” (Hebrews 11:1 & 3) I recommend you read the entire chapter 11 of Hebrews for it is encouraging and it is all about faith. Those spoken of in chapter 11 trusted God and this gave them faith. How is it with you? When Charles Wesley was sailing back to England across the Atlantic after time without much success in America a great storm struck the ship and he became terrified. There were Moravian missionaries and Christians on board and they gathered, they prayed and sang psalms during the storm. Wesley wrote in his dairy, “Alas, I have a fair-weather Christianity” because of his fear during the storm. How do you react when the storms of life buffet you? Do you fall to your knees in prayer and trust in the Lord? Do you cry out to God for more faith because your faith is weak? Do you trust him?

Let me end by reminding you of 4 things taught this morning.

- First, for those that follow Christ you will not be kept from the storms of life. They are to be expected and they are meant to strengthen your faith and be a witness to the unbelieving world.
- Second, that Jesus is fully God from eternity past and he became fully man. This gives him compassion for us fallen humans as his plan of redemption is completed for the world.
- Third, Jesus as God has all the power over every molecule of the universe and yet he knows you intimately and cares for you.
- Fourth, Jesus loves and cares for his people. As Paul taught, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

If you remember these lessons, you will have learned much. Better still, read more of the Gospels. Become better acquainted with Christ. Let those of you who are not yet Christians know more about the Lord Jesus Christ that you may have eternal life through believing on him. Let those of you who know him get to know him and trust him far more than you do, that you may possess greater joy and become ever more holy and ready to be with him for evermore. Come to the point in your walk of faith that you can say with Paul, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21) Amen and amen!