

To Seek and To Save the Lost

Jesus Calms a Storm

Luke 8:22-25

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Scripture

We are studying the life of Jesus as Dr. Luke recorded it in *The Gospel of Luke*. Luke's purpose was to show that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He wanted his readers to understand that Jesus was God in human form who had come on a mission to rescue those for whom he would give his life.

Luke was a master historian and theologian. He carefully assembled his material about Jesus so as to paint a vivid picture about the person and work of Jesus. There are all kinds of connections between pericopes so that his readers might have a very clear understanding of who Jesus really is.

In chapter 8 Luke recorded two parables by Jesus: the parable of the sower and the parable of the lamp. Jesus wanted his disciples to know that there are different responses to his message. Some do not respond at all. Others respond, but fall away because of testing, or cares, or riches, or the pleasures of life. Finally, there are those who respond to Jesus' message by hearing him responsively and obeying him demonstrably.

In the next pericope, the narrative we are going to examine today, Luke wanted his readers to notice what happened when Jesus' disciples experienced a personal, real-life test.

By now the disciples had been with Jesus for about 16 months. They sat at Jesus' feet and heard his message about the kingdom of God. They witnessed first-hand many astonishing miracles that Jesus had performed. Surely, one would expect them to trust Jesus fully as God in human form. No doubt they would have nodded approvingly about hearing Jesus responsively and obeying him demonstrably – even in times of testing.

Well, let's see how well Jesus' disciples did when they found themselves at the center of a very personal test.

Let's read about Jesus calming the storm in Luke 8:22-25:

²² One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side of the lake.” So they set out, ²³ and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. ²⁴ And they went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵ He said to them, “Where is your faith?” And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?”
(Luke 8:22-25)

Introduction

My maiden sailing experience was around the Cape of Good Hope about 33 years ago. We started in completely calm waters. But, as we rounded Cape Point the wind picked up and soon we were in very rough waters. It was quite a frightening experience for a novice sailor like me.

However, my maiden sailing experience – and I should add that it is my *only* one – pales in comparison with what the disciples experienced with Jesus one night on the Sea of Galilee.

Lesson

The analysis of Jesus calming the storm in Luke 8:22-25 will teach us about the power of Jesus over nature.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Setting (8:22-23a)
2. The Storm (8:23b)
3. The Screams (8:24a)
4. The Command (8:24b)
5. The Questions (8:25)

I. The Setting (8:22-23a)

First, let's look at the setting for the miracle.

Luke said in verse 22a that **one day** Jesus **got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake."**

Matthew, Mark, and Luke recorded this miracle in each of their Gospels. Therefore, we should pay attention to it because the Holy Spirit has recorded it three times for our edification. And so by noting what has been recorded in each Gospel we get a fuller picture of what took place that **one day**.

Mark tells us that they actually sailed "when evening had come" (Mark 4:35). Matthew tells us that "when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave the order to go over to the other side" (Matthew 8:18). We know that Jesus had an exhausting ministry schedule. And so, in order to get a brief rest before the crowds caught up with him, he ordered his disciples to **go across to the other side of the lake**.

John MacArthur tells us the following about **the lake**:

Known today as Yam Kinneret and variously called in Scripture the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1), the Sea of Chinnereth (Numbers 34:11; Joshua 13:27) or Chinneroth (Joshua 12:3), and the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1; 21:1), the Sea of Galilee is a large (approximately thirteen miles long by seven miles wide) freshwater lake that is the most significant geographical feature of Galilee. The Jordan River, which arises from several sources near Mt. Hermon and flows into the lake from the north, is its main source of water. At about 680 feet below sea level, the Sea of Galilee is the lowest freshwater lake on the planet.¹

So, Luke said, they set out, and as they sailed Jesus fell

¹ John MacArthur, *Luke 6-10* in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 208.

asleep (8:22b-23a). Several of the disciples had been fishermen before becoming disciples of Jesus. Peter, James, and John were partners in a fishing business, and perhaps a number of the other disciples were experienced sailors as well. While the disciples got the boat under sail, Jesus was so tired that he quickly **fell asleep**. Mark tells us that Jesus “was in the stern, asleep on the cushion” (Mark 4:38).

Notice that Jesus **fell asleep**. John MacArthur points out that “along with being fully God, Jesus was fully human, therefore subject to hunger (Matthew 4:2; 21:18), thirst (John 4:7; 19:28), and fatigue (cf. John 4:6). This is the only place in Scripture that pictures Jesus sleeping.”²

Don’t miss the serenity of the Lord of creation, so utterly exhausted in his humanity that he quickly falls asleep, while his chosen disciples launch the boat to sail across **the lake**, something they had done countless number of times over the years.

II. The Storm (8:23b)

Second, notice the storm that came upon the disciples.

Luke said in verse 23b that **a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger**.

The Greek word for **windstorm** (*lailaps*) is “whirlwind” or “squall.”³ Mark says that “a *great* windstorm arose” (Mark 4:37). Matthew says that “there arose a *great* storm on the sea” (Matthew 8:24), and the word that he used for “storm” is the word *seismos*, which means “violent shaking, earthquake.”

Luke gives the detail that the windstorm **came down on the lake**, and that helps us understand what happened that night. Commentator William Hendriksen says,

² John MacArthur, 208.

³ James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 44.

[The Sea of Galilee] is a depression surrounded by hills, especially on the east side with its precipitous cliffs. When cool currents rush down from Mt. Hermon (9,200 feet) or from elsewhere and through narrow passages between the steep hills collide with the heated air above the lake basin, this downrush is impetuous. The violent winds whip the water into a fury, causing high waves that splash over bow, side rails, etc., of any vessel that happens to be plying the water surface.⁴

The **windstorm** that the disciples encountered that night on the Sea of Galilee is not uncommon. Commentator William Barclay, quoting a modern-day traveller, describes it thus, “The sun had scarcely set when the wind began to rush down towards the lake, and it continued all night long with increasing violence, so that when we reached the shore next morning the face of the lake was like a huge boiling caldron.”⁵

Luke says that **“they were filling with water and were in danger.”** These experienced sailors were **in danger** of losing their lives on the lake in the windstorm struck that night.

Before we go on to what happened next, I want you to notice the contrast between Jesus and the disciples. Jesus was sleeping through a hurricane-like windstorm, while the disciples were fighting for their lives to keep the boat afloat.

III. The Screams (8:24a)

Third, note the screams of the disciples.

At some point, the disciples realized that they were losing the battle with the windstorm, and so **they went and woke Jesus, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!”** (8:24a).

⁴ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 11, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 439–440.

⁵ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 125.

Now, it is important to catch the emotion and tension of the moment. They did not go to Jesus, quietly tap him on the shoulder, and say something like, “Jesus, sorry to trouble your sleep, but we have a bit of a problem. And we hope you can help us out here. Would you mind giving us a hand?”

No, that’s not what happened at all. And by including what Matthew and Mark tell us, we learn that all pandemonium broke out as different disciples screamed, “**Master, Master, we are perishing!**” (Luke 8:24a), “Save us, Lord; we are perishing” (Matthew 8:25), and, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (Mark 4:38).

The disciples by this point were frightened and frantic. They knew that they were about to lose their lives. They were seasoned sailors and they knew that this powerful windstorm had got the better of them.

Tim Keller makes an interesting point about the screaming disciples going to Jesus. He says:

The most encouraging thing about this miracle is that . . . they go to him so badly. Do you notice how badly they go? They say, “Jesus, wake up! Are you trying to drown us?” That’s a bad way to approach the Lord. Let me put it this way. That’s a poor prayer. That does not get an “A.” It doesn’t get a “B.” That’s sort of a “D-minus prayer.” But do you know why I don’t fail it? Because Jesus didn’t fail it.⁶

Keller’s point is that we should go to Jesus when we encounter the storms of life. We may go badly and weakly, but the important thing is to go to Jesus. Because Jesus will respond.

Let’s see how Jesus responded to the disciples’ screaming.

⁶ Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

IV. The Command (8:24b)

Fourth, observe the command of Jesus.

Luke said in verse 24b that Jesus **awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.**

Mark tells us that Jesus said, “Peace! Be Still!” (Mark 4:39). And both Matthew and Mark tell us that after Jesus spoke, “there was a *great* calm” (Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:39).

Now, don’t miss what actually happened. Normally, when the wind dies down after a storm, the sea still churns for a long period afterwards, as if trying to follow the example of the wind. But in this miracle **both the wind and the raging waves. . . ceased, and there was a calm.** Commentator William Hendriksen expressed it exquisitely in these words, “But in *this* instance winds and waves synchronize in the sublime symphony of a solemn silence.”⁷ The wind was instantly gone. And, astonishingly, the lake was instantly as smooth as a mirror.

I wonder what the people on the shore of the lake must have thought to themselves. “Wow! What happened? One minute a ferocious storm, and the next minute complete calm. That is really weird.” But, of course, they did not know that Jesus had spoken.

Jesus did not have to say anything, of course. But, as Alistair Begg said in his sermon on this miracle, Jesus spoke as an accommodation to his disciples. He could have simply raised his arms or thought it in his head, and the wind and waves would have died down and become calm. But he *spoke*. Why? So that the disciples would be absolutely clear that it was by *his* power that the wind and waves became utterly calm.

Just as God spoke the entire creation into existence, Jesus wanted to show his disciples that he could speak the storm into complete and absolute calm. Why? Because Jesus is not only

⁷ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, 441.

human; he is also divine. He is God in human form. He is the God of creation. He who created nature demonstrated that he has power over nature.

V. The Questions (8:25)

Finally, look at the questions that were asked. Two questions were asked.

A. *The Question Jesus Asked (8:25a)*

First, notice the question that Jesus asked the disciples.

He said to them, “Where is your faith?” (8:25a).

Jesus gently rebuked the disciples. Notice that Jesus does not say, “You do not have any faith.” Instead he says, **“Where is your faith?”** In other words, Jesus wants his disciples to exercise their faith. He wants them to put their faith into action.

Our *Westminster Confession of Faith* says that “this faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed, and weakened.”⁸

R. C. Sproul says that “our faith is always mixed with some measure of doubt, and our fidelity is always mixed with some measure of infidelity. None of us possesses a perfect faith. If our faith were perfect in this world, our obedience would also be perfect.”⁹

Jesus’ question is designed to get them to exercise their faith in him, to grow in their trust. After all, they had already so far seen Jesus heal a centurion’s servant from a distance and raise a widow’s dead son back to life.

It is easy to believe in Jesus when things are going well, isn’t it? But Jesus is calling his disciples to trust him even when

⁸ *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

⁹ R. C. Sproul, *Truths We Confess*, Vol. 2 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 126.

life itself seems to hang in the balance.

And why should his disciples trust Jesus? Contrary to the disciples wondering whether Jesus cared about them perishing, the truth is that Jesus really does care about his disciples.

He loves us so much that he eventually died in the storm of God's wrath to take us safely to heaven with him.

Jesus' disciples are not exempt from trial and suffering and difficulty. But Jesus' disciples should never wonder if Jesus cares about them. He does care about his disciples, and he sometimes allows them to go through trials and difficulties and suffering because he knows that it is for their ultimate good. Jesus proved his love for his disciples by dying to pay the penalty that his disciples deserved.

B. The Question the Disciples Asked (8:25b)

And second, notice the question that the disciples asked one another.

One would think that after Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples (who were frightened and frantic during the storm) would be relieved and happy it was all over. But Luke recorded a different reaction. Luke said that **they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"** (8:25b). Mark says, "And they were filled with *great* fear" (Mark 4:41). If they were fearful during the storm, they were now utterly terrified after Jesus calmed the storm.

Why? Previously, the disciples thought that Jesus was sent from heaven. They thought that he was someone special. But now they realized that they were standing in the very presence of God himself. And it absolutely terrified them.

Perhaps they recalled the words of Psalm of 107:23-30:

²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,

doing business on the great waters;
24 they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
26 They mounted up to heaven; they went down
to the depths;
their courage melted away in their evil plight;
27 they reeled and staggered like drunken men
and were at their wits' end.
28 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.
29 He made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
30 Then they were glad that the waters were quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.

The disciples realized in a fresh new way that Jesus really is God in human form. He who had power over nature is the God of creation. And his name is Jesus!

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the miracle of Jesus calming the storm as set forth in Luke 8:21-25, we should exercise faith in all the tests of life.

Friends, Jesus is God. Jesus is God in human form who came on a mission to rescue those for whom he gave his life. The miracle of Jesus calming the storm is just one demonstration that he really is God.

Know that he cares for you. Know that he is not oblivious to the trials and tests you are going through right now. Trust him even in the midst of your storm. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

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PRAYER:

Jesus, you are Lord of the storm. You are Lord of creation. You are Lord.

Thank you that you love your own, even if at times it seems that you are sleeping. Help us to trust you, even when we are in the midst of the storm.

And for this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!