



GRACE

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli † Deo † Gloria

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Jesus Calms the Storm

Sermon Notes

Luke 8:22-25

May 27, 2012

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?”

- There is, perhaps, no aspect of God’s creation that is more powerful and potentially terrifying than the seas.
 - This realization and truth goes back to antiquity, with mythical stories of sea monsters and other creatures of the deep that were believed to be responsible for the great storms, waves, and apparent chaos of the oceans.
 - Even the Scriptures contain stories that reflect the power of the waters that God created. Consider Noah’s flood, the Red Sea crossing and collapse, as well as the Book of Jonah.
- In fact, history is full of stories that bear witness to the unimaginable power of the waters God created. Perhaps one of the most dramatic, and chilling account actually occurred in the twentieth century.
 - ❖ The date was July 9, 1958, and the location, Lituya Bay in southern Alaska.
 - One historian once wrote of the bay, “Lituya bay is a paradise always poised just on the edge of violence. And when that violence comes, it is overwhelming.”

- This picturesque bay is a seven-mile long, two-mile wide T-shaped inlet with a small teardrop—shaped island (Cenotaph Island) in its center.



- Located on one of the most active faults in the world, surrounded by 15,000 foot mountains and glaciers that rise 7,000 feet straight up from the water, the bay (as deep as 722 feet), as a “disaster” waiting to happen.
- Such a disaster occurred in July of 1958, when, as Susan Casey, author of *The Wave* wrote, “[This was the day Lituya Bay] went postal.”
- It was a “stunning day” – clear and beautiful, which is somewhat rare for these parts of Alaska.
- Salmon fisherman Howard Ulrich was with his seven year old son, Howard Jr., and the two were anchored in their boat, the *Edrie*, that evening at the southern side of Cenotaph Island, the island in the middle of the bay.
- Just before 10:00 p.m., Howard Jr. went to bed (in the boat) and his father stayed up.
- At 10:17 p.m. (still light outside in the Alaskan summer), Ulrich felt a tug on his anchor chain, and went out on his deck to see if he could figure out why.

- The Ulrich's lived nearby and knew this area (and its waters well). However, what Ulrich saw that Alaskan evening was something he has never forgotten. To his utter amazement, he looked up at the mountains surrounding the bay (some over 15,000 feet high), and he said they were twisting.

“[The mountains] seemed to be suffering unbearable internal tortures. Have you ever seen a fifteen-thousand-foot mountain twist and shake and dance?” He later said.

- Then, avalanches began to pour into the bay, 300 million cubic meters of rock and ice plunging thousands of feet to the water.”
- Then, suddenly, he saw “a gigantic wall of water, eighteen hundred feet high” engulf the northwestern edge of the bay, ricochet to the east side, and then head directly – at more than one hundred miles an hour - for Cenotaph Island and the *Edrie*. In a desperate attempt to save the lives of himself and his son, Ulrich threw a life jacket to his son, telling him to put it on and pray, and then let out his anchor and opened the *Edrie*'s throttle, heading straight toward the wave.
- He then yelled a Mayday into the radio, his last words being, “I think we’ve had it...Goodbye.”
 - Miraculously, the Ulrich's survived and lived to tell their unbelievable tale (obviously meeting a wave head-on in open water is better than when it reaches land).
 - What they later found out was that Lituya Bay had experienced yet another earthquake – this one registering “8.0 on the Richter Scale and being felt (as far south as Seattle (where it knocked the needle off a seismograph at the University of Washington) .”
 - Not only this, but it “had shoved Alaska hard: fourteen feet laterally and three feet vertically.”

- Although not as dramatic, the disciples of Jesus Christ experienced a similarly terrifying ordeal on the Sea of Galilee – an event recorded in all three of the Synoptic Gospels.
- Furthermore, like the 1958 event in Lituya Bay, this event demonstrates the power of God's creation to overwhelm man. Yet, we observe something greater in the event recorded in the Scriptures, and that is the authority of Christ to rebuke and calm the seas. Or to put it another way, to establish peace in His Creation that is so often seemingly chaotic.

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| I. | Before the Storm |
| II. | In the Midst of the Storm |
| III. | After the Storm |

I. Before the Storm

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.*

- We know that Jesus has been traveling throughout Galilee teaching and healing. Crowds gather wherever He goes, and rather than retreating from them, He engages them, healing the sick and even raising the dead.
- There can be no doubt; therefore, that given all that Christ is doing, even He – the human Christ – became tired.
- And, so, here Christ decides to call His disciples to go with Him across the Sea of Galilee. This will allow them some time apart from the pressing crowds, and will give Christ time to rest.
- The text makes it clear that Jesus led the disciples into the sea.
- Then, immediately we read “as they sailed he fell asleep.”
 - Once again, Christ was no doubt, exhausted.
 - But, then, something happens – “a windstorm came down on the lake...”

II. In the Midst of the Storm

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.

- Luke writes, “And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger.”
- This *type* of event was not uncommon on the Sea of Galilee.

Leon Morris writes, “The Lake of Galilee is subject to sudden storms, situated as it is some 700 feet below sea level and adjacent to mountainous regions. Cold air from the heights is apt to sweep down through the precipitous gorges to the east and it can whip up the seas in a short time.”

- Located precisely 680 feet below sea level, the Sea of Galilee is the lowest freshwater lake on the earth.

- It is approximately thirteen miles wide by seven miles long. It is also about thirty miles from the Mediterranean Sea. Darrell Bock writes, “The hills on the east side are particularly steep. Cool air rushing down the ravines and hills around the lake can collide with warm air above the lake and create an instant storm in the confined quarters.”
 - In fact, in 1992, winds coming down from the hills created a storm on the sea such that wave ten feet high damaged the City of Tiberias, situated on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.
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- What is noteworthy here, however, is not that there was a storm on the Sea of Galilee, for this was quite common, but the intensity of the storm.

²⁴ *And they went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!”*

- In Mark’s account of this event (Mark 4), we read that the disciples went to Christ and, waking Him, said, “Master, do you not care that we are perishing?”
 - It would be similar to someone crying out, “How can you sleep in a time like this?!”
 - The answer to Mark’s question is simple: Jesus is at peace.
 - He had faith in His Father, and therefore, had no care in the world, so to speak.
 - Like I so often do, I think of my own children. When there is a violent storm outside and I hear a loud boom of thunder, Kimberly and I know that it is only a matter of minutes, even seconds, until at least one of our children will be in our bedroom, wanting to crawl in bed with us.
 - When they do, the storm doesn’t cease, but they immediately fall fast asleep, because they are in the protection of their parents, and the whole world is right.
 - Such was the case with Christ on the Sea of Galilee.

Keith Nickle wrote that “[Jesus] modeled for them the tranquility that comes from perfect trust. He went to sleep in the shalom of God. It was not that he had overlooked the gale warnings in the weather reports, nor that he was such a landlubber that he did not grasp the perilous vulnerability of being out on the sea in an open boat. It was, rather, that he knew God was in control, and he was willing to rely on that knowledge absolutely.”

- Another point here is that these were **not amateur fishermen**. These disciples had made a living on the Sea of Galilee. Like Ulrich in 1958, they lived there and knew the sea

well. They, no doubt, knew of the storms that were common there. Certainly they had experienced them as well.

- However, **this storm was different, it seems.**
 - The waters were taking over the boat and they were about to sink.
 - Not only this, but Matthew explains that the storm struck without warning (Matthew 8:24). Although this, too, was not uncommon on the Sea of Galilee, **the suddenness and intensity of the storm terrified even these seasoned fishermen.**

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- Luke tells us that the disciples then woke their Master and who “*rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.*”
 - We read in Mark’s account that Jesus said, “Peace, be still!” Luke writes that then, the raging seas “**ceased, and there was calm.**”

Is with all of Christ’s miracles, there is an **anticlimactic element here that is profound and should not be overlooked. Jesus does not go through some ritualistic incantation or attempt to make a dramatic display of His power. He simply speaks, and there is peace.**

III. After the Storm

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 ends with presenting two questions that get to the heart of this passage: one question on the lips of Jesus, one from the disciples.
- Jesus simply asks, “**Where is your faith?**”
- The disciples as, “**Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?**”
- The first question is a mild rebuke to the disciples, the other, a statement concerning the true identity of Christ.
- Regarding the first, there are actually two ways to consider it, both of which are likely true.
 - The first is to take it in the same way that we take the statement by Christ, “Oh, you of little faith.” Or as Mark writes: “**Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?**”

- They have been with Christ and seen His power. They know He is sent by God the Father, and that God is in control.
- Yet, they are still terrified.

Norval Geldenhuys asks, “How could they have feared that they would perish as long as He was in the ship? Even although He was asleep, He is the Almighty Lord who watches over the safety of His followers. How could they have feared that God would allow His Son, the promised Redeemer, and His disciples to perish?”

- The answer is clear – they could not see past their immediate crisis. They did not fully understand the identity and mission of Christ.
- Yet, the other interpretation is what I opt for in this passage (although the first is certainly true). When Jesus asks, “**Where is your faith?**” It is as though He is asking, “**Who or what is the object of your faith?**”
 - Biblical faith always has an object, and that object is Jesus Christ.
 - It may very well be that the disciples had tried to “fight” the sea and the waves, trusting in themselves to save the ship, and Christ says, “Where is your faith?”
 - In the “storms of life” we do the same thing. We attempt to solve all of our problems on our own (especially us men), rather than immediately turning to Christ and trusting His provision.
- Either way, Christ calms the storm, and there are smooth, glassy seas again.

APPLICATION

- There are two ways of applying this passage, both of which are likely correct.
- 1. The first is to understand that this is a picture of the “storms in our own lives.”**
 - Each one of us will have seasons of struggle and difficulty. Consider the words of Christ in John 16:33:

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”
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- In the passage in John, as well as here in Luke 8, the idea is **not that we won’t have problems in life, but that we can have peace in the midst of the storms.**

- Like, the storm recorded here, our problems often strike without warning. One minute life is great, the next we are fighting for our very lives.
- But in the midst of these unexpected storms, may we turn to Christ, who brings peace in the midst of storm.

Psalm 107:23-31:

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.
³¹ Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
 for his wondrous works to the children of man!

- About twenty years ago, one of my favorite Christian singers, Scott Krippayne, wrote a song, entitled, *Sometimes He Calms the Storms*, in which he writes:

Sometimes He calms the Storms
 With a whisper, "Peace, be still"
 He can settle any sea
 But it doesn't mean He will
 Sometimes He holds us close
 And lets the wind and waves go by
 Sometimes He calms the storm
 And other times He calms His child

- Because of this truth, we can often learn more in storms than we do in times of joy.

J.C. Ryle writes, "By affliction He teaches us many precious lessons, which, without it we should never learn. By affliction He shows us our emptiness and weakness, draws us to the throne of grace, purifies our affections, weans us from the world, and makes us long for heaven. In the resurrection morning we shall all say, 'it is good for me that I was afflicted.' We shall thank God for every storm."

- Ryle’s quote echoes the truth of one of my favorite, extra-biblical proverbs (an African Proverb) that states:

“Smooth seas don’t make skilled sailors.”

- It is, indeed, true that many of our problems are brought about by our own sin, but may we never think that Christ promised us a “stormless” life as Christians. He did not.
- Therefore, as Phillip Ryken states, “We can be ‘right in the center of God’s will,’ as people say, and yet still find ourselves at the center of the storm, as the disciples did.”
- Author Donald Hagner writes that this miracle by Jesus was “a mysterious, supernatural calm that testified to the sovereign power of Jesus but also the deep peace and security that belong to those who follow him.”

Psalm 89:9: “You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.”

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- With the disciples and Christ Himself in the boat, we also see a picture of the Church, led by the Master, Christ.
 - Throughout the past two thousand years, the church has weathered storm after storm, yet she still sails on.

Charles Spurgeon once preached, “I scarcely know of an apter picture of a church than a ship upon the treacherous Galilean Sea with Jesus and His disciples sailing in it...Every sail of the good ship which bears the flag of the High Admiral of our fleet must be beaten with the wind, and every plan in her must be tried by the waves.”

- With His Church and His people, Christ is ever-imminent.

Isaiah 43:1-3:

¹ But now thus says the LORD,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.

² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.

³ For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in exchange for you.

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- Another truth regarding this “**storm of life**” the disciples faced was that it was Jesus who led them into the boat onto the sea.

Michael Wilcock writes, “We cannot avoid the fact that Jesus was altogether in control of the whole chain of events in this passage. He took his disciples across the lake, where a storm was going to burst upon them.”

- Although we know that God is never the author of evil, we must also affirm that He was in control and this even was within His will for His disciples.
- We so often try to “**let God off the hook**” for the troubles we face in life that are not the direct result of our sin.
- Perhaps it is a disease we face or a car accident involving a child.
- When such “stormy trials” arise, we have a choice to make: either we (1) say that this was not God’s will (and He is not in complete control of His Creation); or we say (2) God is unable or unwilling to assist us.
- Neither answer is acceptable or biblical. Rather, in our finite wisdom we do not understand why God leads us into “seasons of storms” but we know it is always for our ultimate good as those who “love Him and are called according to His purposes.”

1 Peter 4:12-16: “¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.”

2. The second application of this Scripture is perhaps the most comforting, and that is that by understanding that it reveals the grand and glorious power of Christ.

- Christ’s mission in this world was not just to save souls, but redeem Creation. He was the agent of Creation in Genesis 1, and he will be the Head of the New Creation at the eschaton.
- It is unfortunate that so often we view Christ’s work as purely spiritual. And, although, His work is absolutely spiritual in nature, it is in no way solely spiritual.

- Christ's work not only foreshadowed the salvation of our souls and the redemption of our bodies, but the **redemption of His Creation**.
- Creation itself is at enmity with man. Yet, this will not always be the case.

David Gooding writes: "We live in a universe that is lethally hostile to human life... Within our earth itself wind, wave, lightning, storm, flood, drought, avalanche, earthquake, fire, heat, cold, germ, virus, epidemic, all from time to time threaten and destroy life. Sooner or later one of them may destroy us. The story of the stilling of the storm is not, of course, meant to tell us that Christ will never allow any believer to perish by drowning, or by any other natural disaster. Many believers have so perished. It does demonstrate that He is Lord of the physical forces in the universe, that for him nothing happens by accident, and that no force in all creation can destroy his plan for our eternal salvation or separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

- But trusting in Christ, we trust in the **only One** who is able and willing to give true peace. His disciples were in panic and chaos, but Christ was calm, rebuking the wind and water and giving us a foretaste of what He will one day do.

Psalm 65:5-7: "By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness,
 O God of our salvation,
 the hope of all the ends of the earth
 and of the farthest seas;
⁶ the one who by his strength established the mountains,
 being girded with might;
⁷ who stills the roaring of the seas,
 the roaring of their waves,
 the tumult of the peoples,"