

## Facing the Storm (Matthew 8:18, 23-27)

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I want to talk about a time in the life of Jesus and His disciples when they were facing a storm.
2. I want to talk about it because when I read it this past Wednesday morning it struck me how applicable it is to the uncertainty, and maybe even fear, we as Christians may be feeling right now with all the crazy going on in Washington and around the country.
- 3. As I worked on this sermon and the day progressed and the crazy increased, I realized how important it is to talk about facing the storms.
4. And I saw that this event is recorded in three of the four gospels with each providing unique and meaningful details I want to share with you.
  - A. Matthew 8:18, 23-27 – “<sup>18</sup> Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side of the sea... <sup>23</sup> When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. <sup>24</sup> And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. <sup>25</sup> And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing!” <sup>26</sup> He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. <sup>27</sup> The men were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”
  - B. Mark 4:35-41 – “Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. <sup>37</sup> And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. <sup>38</sup> Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” <sup>39</sup> And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. <sup>40</sup> And He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” <sup>41</sup> They became very much afraid and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”
  - C. Luke 8:22-25 – “Now on one of those days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” So they launched out. <sup>23</sup> But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger. <sup>24</sup> They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm. <sup>25</sup> And He said to them, “Where is your faith?” They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?”
5. It is my hope that as we examine this event that we will leave from here with a better understanding of life as a disciple and of Jesus as our Messiah.

### BODY:

- **I. Those who travel with Jesus will face storms.**
  - A. This trip happened by Jesus’ command (Mt. 8:18 – “Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave **orders** to depart to the other side of the sea.”).
    1. He commanded this because being fully human and having been teaching and healing all day He was **tired** and wanted to get away from the crowds and **rest**. **He knew fatigue and the frailty of life in this human form!**
    2. He also commanded this because being fully God he **knew that storm was coming** and there were **lessons about discipleship** that it would most properly teach!
  - B. The disciples followed Jesus (Mt. 8:23 – “When He got into the boat, **His disciples followed Him.**”).
    1. This is what faithful disciples do. To do otherwise makes discipleship meaningless (Lk. 6:46 – “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”).
    2. Jesus never promised that following Him would be without earthly peril (Matt. 10:24-26, 28 – “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. <sup>25</sup> It is enough for the

disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, **how much more will they malign the members of his household!**<sup>26</sup> “Therefore **do not fear them**, for there is nothing **concealed** that will not be **revealed**, or **hidden** that will not be **known**...<sup>28</sup> **Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul**; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”).

- a. Jesus never told them that if they obeyed Him nothing would ever happen, that there would be no danger, that there would be no harm.
  - b. He said **not to fear because**...
    - i. The **scheming of men** will one day be **known** and **addressed** (in Judgment).
    - ii. The worst this world can do to the body, which is to kill it, **commands no fear compared to God** who can cast both body and soul into hell fire!
- C. Because they followed Jesus, they encountered the storm.
    - 1. Make no mistake, they were in **danger** and **they knew it** (Lk. 8:23 – “But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a **fierce gale of wind** descended on the lake, and they began to be **swamped and to be in danger**.<sup>24</sup> They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, “Master, Master, **we are perishing!**”).
      - a. Many of them were seasoned sailors that knew what to do in a boat on the sea in a storm!
        - i. This one was different. Their wisdom and strength were not getting the job done.
        - ii. There was no doubt in their minds (and mine) that if the storm continued, the boat would sink, and the disciples would die.
        - iii. And I believe that would have left Jesus to walk away on the water.
      - b. It is fundamental to understanding this passage to know that if this peril had meant a watery grave for the disciples, God’s plan would have continued, His purposes fulfilled, and everything that Jesus was about to say to them **would have still been true!**
    - 2. As Christ’s disciples we will face the storms as well!
      - a. Storms with towering waves that threaten to overwhelm our lives will come.
      - b. Danger and difficulty a reality for those who travel with Jesus.
  - **II. Jesus was sleeping!**
    - A. Despite the wind, the tossing of the boat, and the waves pounding, Jesus slept (Matt. 8:24 – “And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep.”). This extraordinary detail tells me two things.
      1. Jesus was truly *exhausted*.
        - a. This was not a spacious, comfortable boat where Jesus could go below deck and relax.
        - b. Typical fishing boats of that day had no lower deck and precious little room to lay down.
        - c. He was sleeping where he could feel the wind blowing and the waves crashing, which surely says Jesus was completely exhausted!
        - d. When life is wearing you out, when you think you have nothing left to give, know that Jesus knows, that He gets it, that He can empathize.
      2. Jesus was at *peace despite the storm*.
        - a. I believe Jesus as God knew this storm was coming. Yet He was able to sleep in peace!
        - b. Jesus tells us this will be the life of His disciples as well (Jn. 16:33 – “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world **you have tribulation**, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”).
    - B. Jesus’ sleep caused the disciples to *question whether He cared* (Mk. 4:38 – “Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, **do You not care that we are perishing?**”).
      1. I do not know for sure what they wanted Jesus to do, but it appears to me they thought that if he cared He would be helping bail the water out.
        - a. Whatever they expected, it was far less than what Jesus could do, seeing they were completely shocked by what Jesus actually did.

- b. Is that not typical of us frail, limited, disciples? We have the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world with us, and what we ask of Him is to bail water out of our boat!
  - c. Our perception, expectations, and desires concerning Jesus are often so small and limited, even when God wants “the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will **know what is the hope of His calling**, what are the **riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints**,<sup>19</sup> and what is the **surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe...**” (Eph. 1:18-19).
  - d. How it must pain God when He has offered so much to us in Jesus and the gospel and we just want Him to “bail water out of our boat!”
2. Were the disciples right? Did Jesus’ sleep mean He was unaware and did not care?
- a. I understand why they might think so. Sleeping seems to indicate a disconnect, a lack of awareness of one’s surroundings!
    - i. Have you never heard someone shout, “How can you sleep at a time like this?!”
    - ii. The answer to the question is **no**. They were wrong. But that answer is easy.
    - iii. The real question is why. Why were they wrong?
  - b. I could say that they were wrong because Jesus **knew he was going to wake up and calm the storm**, but that would not fit this context or that of scripture.
  - c. To find the answer we need to look further because what Jesus does next is astounding.
- C. Jesus then **rebuked their fear and lack of faith** (Matt. 8:25-26 – “And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing!”<sup>26</sup> He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” **Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea**, and it became perfectly calm.” – ASV, ESV, HCSB, NET, NASB, NIV, NKJV).
  - 1. Jesus rebuked them *before* they saw Him calm the wind and the waves!
    - a. This can be easily missed because the accounts of Mark and Luke say “**And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea**, “Hush, be still.”...**And He said to them**, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” and we think of this as sequential.
    - b. But the proper sequence is opposite of how we think it should be.
    - c. Should not Jesus have waited until after he saved them from the storm to rebuke them for fearing and lacking faith? Jesus’ answer to that is “No!” That is not what it is about.
  - 2. Why Jesus rebuked them here is **not** because they knew Jesus was the *Messiah* and *could do miracles* and should have known *He could fix this*.
    - a. I do not believe that is the point of Jesus’ rebuke.
      - i. They had never seen Jesus do anything like what He was about to do. And, to assume that they should have known this is asking too much of the disciples at this point.
      - ii. At other times, like in Matthew 16:5-12, Jesus did reference previous miracles as reason for His rebuke of their lack of faith. But He does not do so here!
    - b. Yet, that Jesus could end the storm is the answer **I** like best...because it secretly justifies my fears.
      - i. Of course, *they* should not have feared because Jesus was with them and could do miracles!
      - ii. But, things are different now because Jesus is not with us in the flesh and is not going to miraculously calm my storms. So, harboring my fear is okay!
    - c. But that is the wrong answer because faithful Christians, including the apostles, were never promised a “get out of life’s storms free card” (Rom. 8:31-32, 35, 37-39 – “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?<sup>32</sup> He who did not **spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all**, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?...<sup>35</sup> **Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...<sup>37</sup> But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.<sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither **death**, nor life, nor angels, nor **principalities**, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,<sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, **nor any other created****

**thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”).**

- i. Note, again, that God did not promise safety, or physical deliverance, or a long life.
- ii. What God promised is enduring, un-separable love in Christ Jesus our Lord no matter what we face in this life.

- 3. Why rebuke them now? Because they assumed that **their peril meant He was disconnected, that He did not care!**

- a. That is why Jesus asked, “why are you afraid?” and “where is your faith?”
- b. For, whether being a disciple means we must face hardship, danger, death, loss, etc., we should **never assume Jesus does not care**, that He does not see, that He is not touched!
- c. Jesus is telling us here that whatever we face in life on this broken planet, we can and must face it with faith and without fear *because He cares!*

### ● III. Jesus calms the storm.

- A. It was after danger was upon them and after the rebuke that Jesus calmed the storm (Matt. 8:25-26 – “And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing!”<sup>26</sup> He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” **Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.**”).
  - 1. Confident faith is not about Jesus calming all of life’s storms, about Him making sure your life is lived without peril, danger, death, loss, or pain.
    - a. I wonder if I, if we, truly embrace these words as our rule of life.
    - b. When it comes to following Jesus during scary times, uncertain times, do we remember Jesus’ words that asked, “Why are you afraid? Where is your faith?”
  - 2. As disciples we trust that Jesus to calm the storms **after this life is over** (Rev. 14:13 – “And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may **rest from their labors**, for their deeds follow with them.”)!)
- B. (I promise to give you a short lesson next week) But, we still need to note the results of Jesus’ salvation on these disciples (Lk. 8:25 – “They were **fearful and amazed**, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?”).
  - 1. This does not end as we might expect, with cheering and hugs.
    - a. Instead, Mark’s account says they **greatly feared** Jesus and were **amazed**.
    - b. The calm brought fear when what we want is *relief!*
  - 2. They feared because they began to understand they were in the presence of God!
    - a. For, only the Lord God of hosts can still the sea (Psa. 89:8-9 – “O Lord God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty Lord? Your faithfulness also surrounds You.”<sup>9</sup> **You rule the swelling of the sea; when its waves rise, You still them.**”).
    - b. Those who come into the presence of Jesus come into God’s presence and must fear!
  - 3. This **fear was important** because it is needed to lead us to fully trust God **no matter what**.
    - a. Israel (Ex. 14:30-31 – “Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.”<sup>31</sup> When Israel saw the **great power which the LORD had used** against the Egyptians, **the people feared the LORD**, and they **believed in the LORD** and in His servant Moses.”).
    - b. When we **fear God** as we should, we along with Paul who after being persecuted, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, imprisoned, and now awaiting his death, will be able to say, “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (2 Tim. 4:18).

### CONCLUSION:

1. So, brethren, **have faith and do not fear** because **God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ care!**
2. No matter what being a disciple might cause you to face or what the end might be, you can endure it because God knows, and He cares for you!
3. Will you come to Jesus today?