

When Sea Billows Roll

Luke 8:22-25 (07-07-19)

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When Jesus commanded the wind and waves to stop and they instantly obeyed, His disciples asked in fear and astonishment, "Who then is this?" In Matthew's account they said, "What kind of man is this?" It took the early church 400 years to answer that question. False teachers said He's not God, He's not man, He only has one nature. Some even said He wasn't really there in a body; He just looked like He was there. So church leaders gathered in councils to agree on Who He really is. At the Council of Nicaea in 325 they said He is truly God. In 381 they met in Constantinople and agreed He is truly Man. Fifty years later in 431 in Ephesus they agreed He is one Person. And finally, in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon they concluded He is truly God and truly Man, two natures united in One Person and those two natures being without confusion, change, division, or separation. That's where we get the doctrine of the hypostatic union of Christ. This has been the orthodox teaching of the Christian church ever since.

Right here in our text we have Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man. Truly man sleeps in the boat. God never sleeps. At the same time He is truly God, commanding the wind and the waves to instantly cease and desist. No human being can control the weather like that. We're still trying to seed clouds to change the weather, but the experts are uncertain about its effectiveness. But these men in this storm saw Jesus sleeping and Jesus commanding the storm and it blew them away. They responded with fear and astonishment, and so would you. Jesus is awesome.

Jesus has just ended a day of exhausting ministry. It's evening and He is now on a divine mission to minister to someone on the other side of this Lake of Galilee in the country of the Gerasenes. In the meantime we have this sea to cross. Galilee is considered one of the most beautiful bodies of water on the earth. Its shape resembles a pear with the wide part to the north, where we're going to cross in a bit. It is about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide. The part Jesus chose to cross is probably six miles across, about from here to the new Costco. It lies 682 feet below sea level with high hills and deep ravines all around. So let's join these fellows and Jesus in their evening boat ride across the Lake of Galilee. As we do, let's apply to your life seven lessons from this true, historical account.

Launch out undergirded with Jesus' promise to get you to the other side, wherever you are going.

Luke 8:22, 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.

One day Jesus gets in this boat, probably a fishing boat, with His men. He has a mission in mind. Being together in a boat on the Lake of Galilee isn't just by chance, but the men don't know it. He assures them, though, "We're going to the other side of this lake."

Let's make a quick application right up front. Hopefully, you have launched out in the "boat of salvation" with Jesus and know His promise to you, "I'm going to save you and love you to the end. You'll never perish." To the thief on the cross He promised, "I'll see you today in Paradise" and you can be sure He did. Paul says "Examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith." Do you realize you can't swim six miles across the lake? You can't do it on your own. Then do you recognize Jesus' provision of a boat, of a way to the other side? He provides it all, but you must believe that His boat will take you to the other side and step into the boat. Have you stepped into this spiritual boat with Jesus, trusting Him to save you from the penalty of sin? If so, you launch out into a new life with Christ, assured He'll take you all the way to the other side to be with Him in Heaven.

For believers there are many launches in life. You launch out into a new job, into marriage or a family or a new church. Maybe you are launching out into a new career, going to a new college or graduate school. As a believer you have Christ's promise in your launches that He will never leave you nor forsake you, regardless of what comes (Heb.13:5). So off you launch with Jesus right beside you in His boat, following His ways and believing His promises.

Your life with Christ often goes very smoothly for a while.

Luke 8:23a, But as they were sailing along He fell asleep.

Everything was lovely as the disciples got into the boat and set out in the dusk, just sailing along. The stars appear and everything is wonderful. Life is good. The disciples are with Jesus and the voyage couldn't be better. They've heard about hard times, but all is good tonight. Jesus was really tired from His vigorous schedule of ministering and teaching, so He went below, laid down on a cushion, and fell into a deep sleep. This is the only time we're told He fell asleep. He's truly human and knows man's weariness and fatigue. Everything is peaceful, for a while.

This is your life. You've come to Christ. He's blessed you with a whole new set of friends. You are thrilled that your sins are forgiven and you're on your way to heaven. Life is good. Your marriage is going really well. You love your job and they are treating you so well. You've been getting victory over those old sinful habits and you're wondering why people warned you about the trials and tribulations of the Christian life. You've been sailing along smoothly. You're finding joy serving at the church, maybe in the kitchen or as a greeter or even in the nursery changing diapers. You so look forward to Sunday mornings. All these people are so nice and loving; you've not met one mean one. You've enjoyed serving in VBS, maybe at Camp Reveal. It's been a good ride. All you hear is the comforting lapping of the water on the side of the boat. Jesus is sleeping and all is calm.

Suddenly a massive storm hits your life.

Luke 8:23b, And a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger.

A violent storm suddenly breaks out with furious gusts of wind, driving rain, flashes of lightening, and heaving waves. They say this happens quite regularly on this lake as colder air from the highlands around the lake come rushing through deep ravines like wind funnels down onto this deep basin of a lake. The cold air mixes with the warmer air above the water creating severe turbulence and a swirling storm of danger. Waves begin crashing into the boat, filling it up to the point that these men, some of whom were professional fisherman, knew they were in grave, deadly danger.

Now imagine if you were on that boat. This storm hits unexpectedly, just when all was going so well. There were no weather reports to warn them not to set sail. So here they are in torrential rain, gusting winds, and huge waves pounding into the boat. What do you learn about storms for your life right here?

Storms will come into your life. There's no avoiding them in this world. We live in a fallen world and your life is not always going to sail along hunky dory. There will be storms; don't be surprised. You may not be facing any right now, but you've seen them in others' lives – storms in marriage, a dreaded medical report, a rebellious child, an unexpected tragedy.

Storms often come unexpectedly. You never dreamed this would happen, but sure enough, you are right in the middle of a heart-wrenching fierce gale that has crashed into your life.

Storms may come that are bigger than you ever thought. This storm was too big for these fellows. They were in danger. They were manly men, but this storm has scared them witless. You may feel that way, too. Will I survive this trial God has brought into my life? Your spouse has hurt you deeply. A friend betrayed your trust. A loved one is taken in an accident or through a disease. Your child is involved in something you never would have imagined. How can I bear it?

Storms can make you fearful, anxious, even angry. Why me? Where are you God? Do You even hear my prayers? Storms test your faith. Corrie ten Boom's faith was tested that evening in Munich after she spoke about God's help in the internment camp Ravensbruck. As she was exiting the door, a Nazi guard she recognized from the camp stuck out his hand, expressing the blessing of forgiveness in Christ. Corrie immediately experienced a storm in her heart. He and others had done horrible things to her and

her sister. Could she forgive? She cried out to God for help to forgive. Only with His help could she extend her arm to shake his hand.

Maybe you think there is no solution to this trial that is blasting away at you right now. You wonder if 1 Corinthians 10:13 is really true. No storm has overtaken you but such as is common to man. Storms will come. But God is faithful. He won't allow you to be tested beyond what you are able, but will in the storm provide a way for you to handle it. These men in the boat will find out God's promise is true. But for right now they are consumed with their own danger and are convinced they are about to sink. They have lost hope.

God uses storms to drive you to Jesus.

Luke 8:24a, *They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"*

This is truly amazing. They are out in the middle of a large lake in a vicious storm. Waves are crashing against them and filling the boat with water. They're on the verge of sinking. And Jesus is sleeping. Now just feed on that for a while. What does that teach you about Jesus?

They wake Him with cries of sheer terror, "Master, Master, mayday, mayday, we're going down!" I wonder what they expected Him to do. Master means the one who is in charge, the boss. Jesus is their Master, but He's sleeping! They figure He needs to know what is going on, so they shout out to Him. "Are you aware of the dire straits we're in? Do you realize we're about to drown?" In Mark's account they yell, "Don't you care that we are about to perish?"

Here's the beauty of storms of any kind that God brings into your life. They should send you to Jesus. Whether it is cancer or a dreadful accident or a relationship that's just blown up, run to Jesus and cry out! You can't handle this. You need help. Go to Him.

John Newton, author of the song "Amazing Grace," was seven when his mother died. But during that short time she had with him, she made sure Johnny heard plenty of gospel. His unbelieving seaman father took John to sea at age eleven. Over the years John became an immoral blasphemer, "I not only sinned with a high hand but tempted others also." At one point John's father asked a sea captain to help find him and by the good providence of God, John was found and brought on board his father's ship, the *Greyhound*. On March 10, 1748, when John was 22, a violent storm in the North Atlantic Ocean hit the *Greyhound*. The crew of twelve believed it was the end and they would all drown. John was manning pumps to get water out of the ship. Suddenly thoughts of how he had mocked and cursed God filled him with fear of dying and facing judgment. His mother's teaching came to his mind along with deep conviction about all his wickedness and immorality and blasphemy. After the storm he found a Bible and begged Christ for forgiveness. When the ship touched land again, John was a changed man. (from *Fistful of Heroes* by John Pollack)

The storm pushed John Newton to his God, just as any storm in your life and mine should push us to our Lord for forgiveness, strength, and help. Isaiah 41:10, "Fear not, I am with you. Don't anxiously look about you, I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. Surely I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." The storm pushed these men to Jesus. What did they learn about their Lord that night on the lake?

Everything right now depends on who Jesus is. If He isn't the Messiah, they are all going down. If that was Joseph Smith or Mohammed or the pope, they would have sunk that night. Is He truly God? Is He your all-sufficient Lord? Does He have the power to help you in your storm?

You have an all-sufficient Lord and Savior who is able to handle every storm that bursts into your life.

Luke 8:24b, *And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm.*

Jesus gets up and rebukes the wind and waves. Hush. There is instant calm. No gusting wind. No streaks of lightening. No torrential rain. No crashing waves. Not a gradual lessening, but instant, right now calm.

Only Jesus, truly God and truly Man, can do this. What a display of His power. He's got the power of deity. He spoke and the vast universe appeared out of nothing. He formed and filled the earth in six days. He has the power to send a flood to cover the entire earth as He did in Noah's day, send fire down from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah, open the Red Sea and the Jordan River and let His people go through. Hebrews 1:3 says He upholds all things by His powerful word. He spun the earth into its orbit, the moon into its orbit around the earth, made sure the sun would burn just enough to keep all the people on earth from frying or freezing to death. This is your God! Your Lord and Savior is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we can ask or think. Count on it.

You have a powerful and all-sufficient Savior who can still your storms. This doesn't mean all the seemingly bad stuff in your life will instantly cease, but He is in control of it. "When peace like a river attends my way, or sorrows, like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, you have taught me to say, it is well, it is well, with my soul." He rules the storms and uses them for His purposes.

You have a faith that Christ expects you to use.

Luke 8:25a, *And He said to them, "Where is your faith?"*

You would expect Christ to say something comforting or assuring while they are all standing around Him. Instead He gently reproves them, "Where is your faith?" What did He mean? First, "You have been with Me long enough to know I am more than human. You've seen me raise the dead and heal lepers and other diseased people." Second, "You heard Me say we're going to the other side. You should have used your faith in Me and My word to conclude that this boat couldn't possibly sink."

The disciples did the same thing you and I do. They let the circumstances control them rather than their faith in who Christ is and what He said. They had faith, but they didn't use it. They didn't take it with them into this storm. That's what we so often do. We have faith, but we don't take it with us. We leave it in our quiet time journal. We do this all the time. We learn all about God's sovereignty and how great and marvelous and all-powerful He is. He has given us great and precious promises and He expects us to take our theology with us right out there into the storm and use it.

"Where is your faith?" Martyn Lloyd Jones has a chapter on this account in his book *Spiritual Depression*. He says there is never a circumstance in the believer's life in which he should be filled with fear and anxiety. We shouldn't be, but we are because we don't use our faith in the crisis. What were those early believers thinking when the Romans herded them into the coliseum to feed the lions? What were people like Polycarp and William Tyndale and so many others thinking when they were tied to stakes and burned like torches? Some took their faith with them. One martyr said as he and others awaited execution in the morning, "Our breakfast will be bitter, but our supper will be sweet."

You and I have the promise, "Greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world." Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulations. Storms will come, but take courage, I have overcome the world."

Be amazed at who Jesus Christ really is as He goes with you through the storms.

Luke 8:25b, *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?"*

Fearful and amazed! Not fearful of the storm any more, but utterly awestruck and astonished, blown away by who this Man is, this One they have been following. This is just something to ponder daily. God almighty humbled Himself and took on the nature of a man and lived on this planet for those 33 years. Be struck with fearful awe and complete astonishment to consider this. Even the wind and waves obey Him. And He is able to calm and bring peace to the heart of any sinner who repents of their sins and trusts in Him. He went through the storm of the cross and then rose up from the dead to bring us a salvation far greater than this night on a stormy lake.

SO WHAT?

1. You can't avoid storms in this fallen world, so don't be blown away when they come.
2. You have an all-sufficient Savior to either calm the storm or take you safely through it.

3. You need to make sure you are using the faith God has given you by applying Bible truths.
4. You should live every day in the profound awareness of who your Savior is: truly man and truly God, two natures in one Person.