

The King In The Storms Of Life

Matthew 8:23-27

Introduction

Matthew records a series of miracles beginning in chapter 8 through chapter 10. The prophet Isaiah (chapter 35) promised that in the Kingdom age the blind would see and the lame walk (see vv.5-6). Jesus has healed leprosy (vv.1-4); palsy (vv.5-13); fever (vv.14-17); but now Jesus reveals he also has power over nature (vv.18-27). Jesus has left the crowds to take leave with his disciples. Some in the crowds wanted to see more miracles—and remained curious about whether Jesus was the Messiah. Some Bible teachers suggest that the storm that came that day was satanic in origin. The ferocity of the storm and the fear in the seasoned fisherman—we do not know—but we know storms on the Galilee were not uncommon. Jesus remains calm—the kind of calm that no matter how terrifying the storm—produces peace—as Jesus is not simply in the center of the lake—he is in the center of God’s will. The Lord Jesus can calm the sea. The terrified disciples go from a “great tempest” (v.24) to a “great calm” (v.26) because of a great Savior (See Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines; p.39).

How about you? Have violent storms produced great fear in your life? Or is your life marked by a great calm because you are in the center of God’s will and experience the fellowship of Jesus?

People everywhere want happiness; but what I think they really want is peace. Peace with God and peace in their world. It is possible to have peace with God. We live in a broken world—but Jesus has redeemed that world. The world remains filled with phobias and fears (redundant).

During WWII a military governor met with General George Patton in Sicily. When the governor praised Patton highly for his courage and bravery the general replied; “Sir, I am not a brave man—the truth is, I am an utter craven coward. I have never been within the sound of gunshot or in the sight of battle in my whole life that I wasn’t so scared that I had sweat in the palms of my hands.” Years later, when Patton’s autobiography was published, it contained this significant statement by the general: “I learned very early in my life never to take counsel from my fears.”

To whom or what will you listen to when the furious storm hits (vv.23-24)? A few fearful sailors in desperation will awaken the faithful Savior (vv.25-26)! And watch how quickly the storm becomes an ocean of calm waters much to the amazement of His astonished disciples!

Following The King Into The Storm (vv.23-24)

Matthew 8:23 (NKJV) 23 Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him.

The Sea of Galilee is about 13 miles long and about 6-7 miles wide—and in antiquity a little larger. The body of water is about 680 feet below sea level. North of the Galilee is Mount Hermon which is about 9280 ft. above sea level. In the winter the mountain is sometimes covered with snow. Cold air descends from Mount Hermon and continues through a small ravine in the northern part of the valley that funnels the Sea of Galilee. Sudden storms are not uncommon. Waves have been observed as high as 25 feet. Jesus knew the storm was coming.

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Jesus had the ability to stop the storm before it ever began. Why permit the storm? Perhaps for some of the reasons Jesus permits the storms in our own lives.

(v.18) “Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side”. The disciples obeyed the Lord. Why would Jesus command them; lead them into a storm?

This storm prompts the question “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey him!” Clearly the storm strengthened the belief of Jesus followers; strengthened the belief of His personal care and concern; the kind of care and concern that can deliver in the violent storms of life; the fearful trials and fearful experiences. But not only that the ability to produce a calm assurance.

24 And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.

The word ‘tempest’ or storm is the Greek noun “*seismos*”. Our English borrowed words include seismic or seismology—earthquake words.

“...so the boat was covered with the waves” means the waves were so high that the boat was hidden from view. It would not take long for a full scale disaster to take place.

Some fearful experiences are quite visible—and others invisible to the naked eye.

“...But He was asleep”. Why was he asleep? The most obvious reason is Jesus was tired! Jesus was a human being. In His humanity He grew weary and tired; but also confident in the will of God.

The storm is mentioned first. How does Jesus stay asleep in the storm? How can he not hear the crashing waves—and feel the roller coaster ride as the boat rises and falls on the swells? Can’t he hear the oars or the groans or smell the fear? Why wasn’t that sufficient to waken Him?

You may be going through a difficult storm and feel like Jesus has fallen asleep in the boat—if He is even in the boat! Have you ever cried out; “Where are you God?” Where is Jesus?

Relax. Jesus is not worried or agitated. He is not pacing in Heaven in a panic—freaking out over your situation. He is in control. Some people have the strange notion; “If I don’t feel the presence of Jesus—He is not there”. One of the great central themes in the story of Jesus is His presence. God has the ability to see us and protect us and preserve us in life’s storms.

Many people are gripped by fear. They worry about their job, their health, their future. What frightens you? The winds of change? Political incompetence? The lightning of disaster? The thunder of a crashing economy? The implosion of our country? The zombie apocalypse?

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Isaiah 26: 3; “You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.”

Trusting The King In The Storm (vv.25-26a)

25Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!”

In Mark’s gospel (4:35) we read; “Let us cross over to the other side.” Chuck Smith was fond of saying; “Jesus said cross over, not sink under”. We can trust Jesus when He gives us a promise. We are going to make it.

What will you do with God’s promises? Peter would later write (2 Peter 1:4 NRSV) “He has given us . . .his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature.”

The disciple’s prayer is short and sincere.

But the disciples were afraid. They were seized with a fear that seemed beyond their control. “Lord save us. We are perishing (destroyed). In a disaster we need a Lord not a teacher. The disciples are not looking for intellectual insight on tidal waves! Tidal waves are not overcome by education. They are not simply looking for a solution to climate change—they are looking for salvation.

And there it is—sometimes our fearful experiences lead us to a terrifying discovery; we are unable to control the situation.

When the wind is howling and the waves are crashing how do you control your fear? The disciples can’t control the weather. They are seasoned fisherman and they are terrified. We can’t control natural disasters—but we can chose to live next door to a volcano. But is there a place on the earth—absent tornados, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, electric storms—take your pick. Where on the earth do we find a location that is risk free?

Have you picked a spot where the waves are very large and the boat is very small?

A Few Words About Fear

A French existentialist said that each century can be summarized by one word.

17th century	mathematics
18th century	natural sciences
19th century	biology
20th century	fear

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What about the 21st century? What world would you offer? Technology? More fear? Do we still have time to find a new word? Perhaps “revival”?

I read some where that a wife’s number one fear is that of being used and abandoned. A husband’s number one fear is that of failure.

Have you ever been so afraid that you thought you might die? Or perhaps someone you love dearly might die? We are all in the same boat and our lives are subject to the same storms and sometimes we want to abandon ship and bail out. **Fear intensifies the storm.**

There was a crusty old sea captain who used pretty colorful language. He was also an outspoken atheist. One night in a storm he was washed overboard. His men heard him crying out to God for help. When he was finally rescued one of the men asked him, “I thought you didn’t believe in God!” The captain replied, “Well, if there isn’t a God, there ought to be for times like this”!

Indeed. In the storm sometimes people are willing to ask questions; what do I really believe?

Fear can also bring paralysis.

Fear always involves loss.

1 John 4:18; “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”

The opposite of fear is love. And the solution to fear is love. I am not talking about sentiment—emotion without commitment. I am talking about the Biblical definition and the Biblical view of love. Love that has its origin in God and modeled in Jesus and spoken about in 1 Corinthians 13; the kind of love that looks for opportunities to give. Fear always looks with suspicion and wonders what will he or she do to me? Love thinks no evil. Fear thinks of nothing else but evil. Love labors in daily tasks—but fear puts off or does not accomplish because of paralysis.

Love is willing to give—fear protects self. Love moves towards others—fear shrinks away. Remember love casts out fear—so love has greater expulsive power.

A woman threatened by a bug or a rodent or a snake will go up against a bear to save threatened children. Her love for her children becomes greater than her fear. A man who had a fear of bridges made the decision to cross that bridge when he heard that his children were involved in a car accident on the other side of the bridge.

Love produces boldness. Loving God expels fear. The more we love, the less we fear. We never find Jesus afraid of anything or anyone. No wonder Jesus can say “Fear not” with no hypocrisy whatsoever.

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In the little Epistle of John he writes; that fear brings torment or punishment. Fear stems from the consequences of what either God can do or man can do—to you! All fear is rooted in what someone or something may or may not do to us. The fear of consequence can often be more powerful than the consequence. The Bible says, “The wicked flee when no man is pursuing.”

Some fears are rooted in reality. Robert (not his real name) believed he was being followed all the time. Robert was a drug counselor turned drug dealer. He lived a double life, always fearing getting caught, and the consequences of being caught.

26But He said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?”

Matthew Henry offers this excellent insight; “He does not chide them for disturbing him with their prayers, but for disturbing themselves with their fears.”

The expression; “O you of little faith” is used here and about five other times in the Greek NT (6:30; here; 14:31; 16:8; Luke 12:28). Is Jesus upset because of their lack of faith? Why are you fearful? Jesus has healed the leper, the centurion’s servant, and many others. He has cast out demons. “Haven’t you seen enough of my power and experienced enough of my love to know that you are perfectly safe with Me?” (John MacArthur p. 35).

And there’s the rub! If we say it out loud it sounds shocking! Am I safe with Jesus? Jesus asks the question while the storm is raging! Why are you fearful? Jesus don’t you see the waves? Have you forgotten how deep the water is? Have you forgotten how far it is to shore? Does Jesus really expect faith in the storm? I think the answer is yes.

What is the solution to fear? What is fear’s antidote? Faith. Faith helps us cope with our fears. Faith is trust in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ. **When we have problems beyond our powers we need a power beyond our problems! We need the power of God and the presence of a living Savior. We need Jesus.**

Jesus uses three basic methods in his earthly ministry; miracles; teaching and training. But all these were to have the net effect of strengthening faith and building trust.

Believing The King In The Storm (vv.26b-27)

Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

In the earlier verse Jesus said; foxes have holes and birds have nests but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. The homeless King has absolute authority over the wind and waves. Jesus continues to rebuke the winds and the seas and bring great calm. Jesus stills the storms of our lives.

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In Mark's gospel we read "hush—be still". Jesus speaks to the weather as if it were a wayward child. The winds ceased. The waves became like glass. The crisis passed as quickly as it came.

Is there a great storm in your life or a great calm in your life?

Calm is a great word. It means motionless, stillness, it carries the idea of composure, self-possession (we have our wits about us).

What brings calm? The absence of the storm? The innocence of heart? Confidence in God?

Faith brings calm. Do you doubt the Divine wisdom—or His power or His love?

Is Jesus on board—this boat you call your life?

Petition and prayer bring calm. What have you told Jesus about your storm?

Prayer keeps us close.

In Isaiah 30:15; it says; "For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel:

In returning and rest

you shall be saved;

In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

But you would not,

And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses"—

Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift!

Return and rest or run away from God!

27 So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

Does it surprise us that the Creator has power over His creation? The universe is subject to God. There is not a single renegade molecule anywhere in the universe. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus sustains the world "by the word of his power" (Heb.1:3). Colossians 1:15; "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through him and for him". Jesus has power over things external. He has power over things internal. Jesus is God. Jesus has the power that Jehovah has in the OT.

Psalm 89:8-9; "O Lord God of hosts,

Who is like You, O Lord? Your faithfulness also surrounds You.

You rule the raging of the sea. When its waves rise, You still them."

Who is this Jesus? Who can He be? Is He the Sovereign Lord? Is He Israel's Messiah? Does His care and power include me? **The storm leads to a greater revelation about the nature and ability of Jesus.**

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Conclusion

What have we learned? Storms come—even when we follow Jesus in obedience. Things happen and we have no control. The disciples cry in fear and panic for Jesus to save them. Jesus asks about fear and faith. Faith leads to a greater revelation about Christ's nature and ability. Jesus is present in the storm. We have resources in the storm. No matter how fierce the storm, no matter how frightening the experience; the Lord Jesus invites us to exchange faith for fear and trust Him!