

# The Amazing Authority of Jesus Christ

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Preacher: Mike Salvati

[0:00] You know, one of my favorite features of the Gospel of Matthew is how it starts and how it finishes. It's got bookends. And Matthew chapter 1 starts with Jesus being identified as Emmanuel, God with us.

And then at the end of Matthew chapter 28 in the Great Commission, Jesus is commissioning all of His disciples of all time to go make disciples of the nations. He says, go baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Teach them to observe all that I commanded you. And then He drops this promise on us. And lo, I am with you always. So the Gospel of Matthew starts with God with us and ends with God with us. God is with you, Christian. He is forever with you. He's with you today, and He's with you tomorrow, and He's with you on Inauguration Day, and He's with you all the way through.

So there's never been a point throughout your day in which Jesus has not been with you. Now, if you're not a Christian, you haven't bound the knee to Jesus, you haven't responded to Him in repentance and faith, Jesus' promise to be with you doesn't mean much, does it?

[1:24] You need to realize that He does promise you one thing, and that is to one day be your judge. And so please listen as you learn something of Jesus today.

Now, if you are a Christian and either you're young or you've been away from the Lord and you're coming back and you have a diminished view of Jesus, you have a little view of Jesus, an atrophied view of Jesus, this promise that Jesus is with you, that might not mean much to you either.

And so what you need is a big dose of the real Jesus. Now, if you're a Christian in the room, and you have a growing realization of all of who Jesus is in all of His authority, you've come to the point of realizing that this promise, that I am with you always, it makes all the difference in how you go about your day.

He's with you. He's with me. Emmanuel, in all His unrivaled authority, goes with you, Christian. He's with you.

So you're not walking into school alone tomorrow. You're not stepping into your place of employment by yourself tomorrow. Emmanuel's with you. If you're going to go to your doctor's office and you realize there's bad news waiting, you're not going in by yourself.

[2:50] If you're a parent who's struggling with parenting and things can go crazy, you're not alone. If you're a mom and you're entering the laundry room with a 20th load of laundry, you're not alone.

You're not alone. And it's not just us personally. Whatever we encounter as a church, who knows what 2017 holds for us?

The Lord knows. And whatever we encounter, He is with us. He is the storm pacifier.

He's the demon defeater. And He promises to be with us. If you would open up your Bibles to Matthew 8, we're going to be looking at verses 23-34, which is a little bit of an adjustment.

I was going to try to tackle all the way through 9-8 this morning, but yesterday in writing, I realized there's no way. And so this morning, the passage we're looking at contains two distinct episodes from the life of Jesus, and we're traveling with Jesus.

[3:59] Matthew has us getting in a boat with Him in Capernaum, and we're going to cross the Sea of Galilee. And while we're crossing the Sea of Galilee, Jesus does something marvelous. He's the storm pacifier.

And then when we land on the other side, the east side of the Sea of Galilee, He does something amazing as well. Two demon-possessed men come out to Him, and He does something extraordinary.

He's a demon defeater. So, and then next week, what we're going to do is we're going to get back in the boat with Jesus. We're going to come back to Capernaum, and we're going to end up in this crowded house where these people bring this paralytic to Jesus, and once again, He does something phenomenal.

He's the sin forgiver. So the next two weeks, we're going to be traveling with Jesus, and in each episode that we see Him, He is going to exercise His authority in a frankly amazing way.

This morning, as we look at Him calming a storm and casting out demons, I want you to remember that this same Jesus that we're looking back on 2,000 years ago is the same Jesus that is with you today.

[5:15] We're going to travel with Him, but He's traveling with us. Jesus has unrivaled authority over nature and demons, and He leverages that authority for you as He expands His kingdom of disciples on this planet.

He's all authoritative. He's all authoritative over nature. He's all authoritative over the demonic world. And He's with you always. So let's look at episode one.

On the sea with Jesus, the storm pacifier. Read with me verses 23 through 27. Could just imagine being on this 27-foot Galilean fishing boat with Him.

And when He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea so that the boat was being swamped by the waves.

But He was asleep. And they went and woke Him, saying, Save us, Lord, we're perishing! And He said to them, Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?

[6:32] Then He rose and rebuked the winds in the sea, and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, What sort of man is this that even winds and sea obey Him?

In verse 23, Jesus gets into the boat, and His disciples follow Him. In verse 18, we read that He has just told His disciples, Get a boat ready.

And then there's a couple guys that come up to Him. They want to follow Jesus. This is what Billy preached on last week. And he's like, Okay, there's a cost to following Me. And then in verse 23, He gets in the boat, and He's followed by His disciples.

And what lay before them was the crossing of the Sea of Galilee. And where they were going, it would have taken about two hours to make the crossing. And like I just mentioned, they're most likely in a 27-foot Galilean fishing boat that had one main sail to it.

So it wasn't row, row, row your boat. It was set your sails. And just by way of reference, the Sea of Galilee is 13 miles long, 8 miles wide, roughly 64 square miles.

[7:42] Just as a point of reference, Geneva Lake and Lake Geneva, that's about 8 square miles. And so the Sea of Galilee is 8 times larger. Now, in verse 24, you read these two words, And behold.

And behold. These two words are some of Matthew's favorite words to signal something vivid is about to happen. And in the three episodes we're going to look at over the next two weeks, Matthew uses this introduction to And Behold five times.

There's a lot to behold. It's a way that Matthew keeps the narrative moving, and he keeps the emphasis going. And in verse 24, Matthew writes, And behold.

There arose a great storm on the sea so that the boat was swamped by the waves. Another thing you need to know about the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is 600 feet below sea level.

And so, in one sense, it's like a big pothole with water in it in the middle of the ancient Near East. And so what would happen is, as the hot air would rise over the Sea of Galilee, what would take place is the desert air would be pulled in and drawn down.

[8:56] And so when that air was drawn down, it creates winds, and those winds would come upon the Sea of Galilee and churn that baby up. And so when we read, And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea.

Storms weren't that surprising on the Sea of Galilee. It was the intensity of this storm that was unusual. And Matthew uses a very interesting Greek word to describe the intensity of this particular storm.

He says, And behold, there arose a great storm. Now that word, it's the word seismos in Greek. Do you hear the word seismic?

It's a word that generally you describe earthquakes. The waves of an earthquake that happened when there's a move and plate tectonics and waves of earth are sent out and a seismograph machine registers the waves.

There are waves. Big waves on the Sea of Galilee. The swamping of this 27 boat means that there were high crests and low troughs.

[10:10] They were rising up and dropping down low. Now I used to own a sea kayak and I would bring that mama out onto the Lake Michigan.

And I brought it out a couple times when it was windy and wavy. And man, was it scary. You'd be going up and down on these five to seven foot waves. You'd go down, you couldn't see anything and then you'd come back up.

Waves would come in behind you or you'd paddling out and it comes right at you. When you drop down, your whole inner being drops with you. Or maybe you've been up to the Wisconsin Dells and you've been in one of the wave pools.

I know when my family and I would go to the wave pools, we would get as close to the wave maker as possible to experience the greatest sized waves possible. And there was always this sense of happiness and fear because I'm kind of holding on to my babies and we're all squealing with delight but we're very aware of these lifeguards looking to jump in and stop the wave maker whenever someone goes under.

You know what I'm talking about? What the disciples were experiencing on the Sea of Galilee was a far greater intensity than any wave pool you've ever experienced.

[11:34] How do you know? Well, if you look at verse 25, you read that they eventually seek Jesus. They wake Him up and say, we are perishing, do something. But what you've got to realize is we don't have land blubbers in the boat.

At least four of the men on the boat who were disciples of Jesus, they were fishermen. Simon, Andrew, James, John, they grew up on the Sea of Galilee fishing its waters.

They knew this body of water and they're freaking out! So if you were on that boat and you have these weathered fishermen freaking out, what do you think it's going to have an effect on you?

Fear can be contagious, can't it? You don't have to be on a fishing boat in a crazy storm in the Sea of Galilee 2,000 years ago to know what overwhelming, disorienting fear is.

many of you this morning came into this building and you're exercising seismic circumstances of life that are stirring up fears in you.

[12:48] But look who's asleep on the boat. Verse 24, and behold, there arose a great storm on the sea so that the boat was being swamped by the waves, but he was asleep.

Mark's gospel tells us that Jesus was asleep in the stern, the back of the boat on a cushion. Now, why was Jesus sleeping? How could someone be sleeping through this? Well, to be the son of man and to be teaching and preaching and healing daily will take something out of you it turns out.

But, is that all that explains his ability to sleep in these seismic waves? Yes, he's physically exhausted, but there's more.

The simple answer to how this man can sleep so soundly in the midst of this seismic storm is that he knew who he was. And he knew the work that God had for him wasn't complete yet.

He's not threatened by this storm. He's not afraid that the boat is about to disintegrate. He's not concerned that the lives of the disciples were in jeopardy. He's fully aware that he is in appointment with two demon-possessed men on the other side of the lake.

[14:09] He's asleep, fully knowing who he is and the work yet to be done. But evidently, his disciples aren't as clear on who he is as he himself is.

They're freaking out. Verse 25, they wake him up. They say, save us, we're perishing. In Greek, it's only three words. Lord, save, perishing.

It's a stark contrast between two states of being. Jesus is asleep and his disciples are frantic. So they wake him up apparently to make him aware that they are perishing.

And Jesus responds with two rebukes. The first is to the disciples. Look at verse 26. He says, why are you afraid, O you of little faith?

That word afraid that Jesus uses there, it carries some sense of cowardice, of timidity, of a fearful shrinking back. He's like, why are you so timid?

[15:15] And then Jesus puts his finger on the source of their timidity. You of little faith. D.A. Carson in his commentary sums up it very well by saying, either fear will drive out your faith or faith will drive out your fear.

And since these disciples had such a little faith, they were being ruled by fear in their hearts. Very aware of the seismic circumstances they're in the middle of. But Jesus says, O you of little faith. Faith in what? Faith in Jesus. Jesus is essentially rebuking them for not trusting in Him. He's like saying, why are you freaking out?

Do you know who I am? Apparently not. And after that comes the second rebuke. Jesus gets up and verbally rebukes the winds and the sea, the waves.

He commands creation. And creation immediately and completely obeys.

[16:33] Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea and there was a great calm. In the Gospel of Mark, Mark actually records the words Jesus said, Peace, be still.

And instantaneously, there was a great peace. A great calm. You had just heard the dripping of the water off the disciples in the boat.

Jesus exercised His authority to accomplish His will and it happened like that. This whole episode moves from a great storm to a great peace because of the great authority of this great man.

And in verse 27, we see the great effect. The men on the boat, they marvel. It's the same word used of Jesus' response to the centurion in Matthew 8, 10 when Jesus was amazed at the centurion's faith.

These disciples are astonished at the authority that Jesus has over creation that has just been demonstrated right before their eyes. What sort of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey Him?

[17:52] When the disciples got in the boat with Him in Capernaum, they didn't realize fully who they're getting in the boat with.

But this episode demonstrates to them the scale of His authority and it shows us to us as well. When many of us first start following Jesus, we're just happy to have our sins forgiven.

We know that He died and He was raised, that He's God in the flesh, but we don't fully realize the scale of His authority. These men put words on the awe that they are experiencing.

So when you encounter the storm pacifier, it makes sense that you would marvel at Him. That you would have this sense of awe. They're left asking, who is this guy?

That He can do that? The key word here is in verse 27. It's the word obey. Even the winds and sea obey Him. Obedience implies authority.

[18:57] Who is this guy? This is the guy who has authority over the winds and the sea. He has authority over all creation. This past December in getting ready for Christmas, we preached through John 1, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1.

It all points to this huge, great Savior we have in Jesus. And one of the things that got repeated through it is Jesus is the agent of creation. He created it all and He sustains it all.

And on account of that, He is able to, with just words, bring peace to a crazy storm. He is authority over all creation.

And it doesn't stop here. You see, what happens here in the Sea of Galilee, it's like a little appetizer. It's a little preview of what Jesus is going to do when He comes back.

When He comes back, He is going to set free all creation from its bondage to decay, to corruption. In 2 Peter 3.10, we learn that when Jesus returns, He's going to recreate the heavens and the earth.

[20:07] When He comes back, imagine Him coming back and saying, peace be still to the whole cosmos and everything is made right. No more cancer. No more flooding.

No more wildfires. No more earthquakes. What we see Jesus doing on this boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee is Him exercising His authority over creation.

What does that do in you? It should cause your heart to rise. It could cause your heart to rise with hope.

Here we are looking at something Jesus did way back then and it's having an effect on our hearts to rise in hope now for something that's going to happen when Jesus comes back in the future.

Jesus has presently authority over all all of creation. He is the storm pacifier and He is awesome.

[21:22] Now, you may have come in here and you could have fallen into that OU of little faith category. Maybe, maybe the seas, the storms of your life have driven out faith.

This morning, I just want to remind you that the storm pacifier is with you. Who He was back then is who He is right now and He has promised to be with you in your circumstances.

There's nothing that you're experiencing right now that is overwhelming your Lord and Savior, Jesus. Nothing. There's nothing in your life that is not under His authority. All things have been put under His feet.

Jesus is the storm pacifier. He has authority over it all and He should inspire awe in your heart.

That's who's with you. Let's move to episode two.

To the other side with the demon defeater. Verses 28-34. And when He came to the other side to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met Him coming out of the tombs so fierce that no one could pass that way.

[22:39] And behold, they cried out, What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time? Now a herd of many pigs were feeding at some distance from them and the demons begged Him saying, If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.

And He said to them, Go. So they came out and went into the pigs and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. The herdsmen fled and going into the city they told everything especially what happened to the demon-possessed men and behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus and when they saw Him, they begged Him to leave their country, their region.

A little surprising turn of events there, don't you think? Now, in verse 28, Matthew just brings us quickly to the shores of the east side of the Sea of Galilee to the country of the Gadarenes which is Gentile country.

We're not told of anything that happens in the boat in between after Jesus calms the sea and when they arrive and so just imagine with me a possible scenario. And by the way, before I share this with you, this is hypothetical and I know that telescopes were invented in the 1600s just to let you know that.

The disciples are still in awe at what Jesus has just done on the sea. And from thinking that they were about to die, they now realize they need to come ashore somewhere. So Peter pulls out his telescope in order to start scanning the shore of the country of the Gadarenes.

[24:22] Jesus asks Peter, Peter, what do you see? Peter responds by saying, well, hey, I'm looking up from the shoreline and I see a bunch of tombstones. It looks like there's a cemetery there, Jesus.

Should I veer left or should I veer right of that? Because we're not going to land anywhere near that, right? Jesus says, you make a beeline right to those tombstones.

Peter's still looking through his telescope. He still looks through Jesus. I see a large herd of pigs relatively close to where we're supposed to land and we all know that pigs are unclean animals and we shouldn't be close to them.

Keep on target, Peter. Jesus, you know that the Gerardines, it's Gentile country.

There's Gentiles. Come on, Jesus. Stay on target. Jesus, I'm just kind of focusing in on the tombs right now and I see two naked crazy men running around.

[25:29] They're probably Gentiles too. They're all cut up. Oh, and Jesus, they have seen us and Jesus, they are starting to make our way down to where we're going to come ashore.

Peter, my father, has an appointment for us today with these two men. Jesus heads straight for the demonic den of death.

that's our Savior. The country of the Gadarenes is a part of the Decapolis, a ten-city Gentile region and Jesus has already encountered a Gentile in the centurion earlier in Matthew chapter 8, but now

he goes to Gentile country.

And in verse 28, these two demon-possessed men, they come to meet him. And when he came to the other side to the country, the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him coming out of the tomb so fierce that no one could pass that way.

They were coming to meet him. Now, Matthew doesn't go much into demon possession, but we do know that there are fallen angels who will control men and women in a destructive manner.

[26:57] Demons are set against the purposes of God. And we read that there are two men here in Matthew's account, and if you're familiar with Mark and Luke, they only speak of one man.

And so the way to explain that discrepancy is just by saying there's most likely two men there, just one was more prominent than the other. And we also read that they came from the tombs. These guys lived among the dead.

And to be among the tombs, a Jew would be repulsed by that. The demons who were possessing these men were seeking to defile, distort, destroy these men.

This is modus operandi of demonic activity. Demons seek to distort and destroy the image of God. Now, they must have been, this cemetery must have been by a path, because apparently they would not let anybody go on this path.

We learn from Mark that they had superhuman strength, that several attempts had been made to bind and shackle these men, but they were unable to subdue them. And here they are making a beeline to Jesus.

[28:12] Verse 29, and behold, the people they cried out, what have you to do with us, O Son of God? It's very ironic. These disciples know who Jesus is.

Coming right off of being in the waters, and his disciples not being too clear on who he is. The Son of God. What have you to do with us, O Son of God?

Have you come here to torment us before the time? The time is a reference to judgment. judgment. These demons are aware of the one who's just come ashore is the one who will eventually judge them and cast them into the lake of fire.

That's what they know. They know quite a bit about Jesus, and they're wondering why he has come. Has he come to make them suffer before the time of judgment?

And in verse 30, if you just notice, Matthew just kind of puts a little narrative piece of information in our minds. He lets us know that there's a herd of pigs within eyeshot. And Mark again tells us it's a herd of 2,000 pigs.

[29:20] It's a large herd of pigs. They're considered an unclean animal. And so what you need to understand in this episode is that we have got a major pileup of unclean stuff.

Demons, Gentiles, tombs, pigs! Are you kidding me? And Jesus goes straight at it.

Jesus is definitely on the other side. But the other side is not outside. His saving purpose.

He must be there. He meant to be there. In verse 31, the demons beg Jesus to send them into the herd of pigs. It appears as though they knew they were going to get cast out.

And so they're saying, hey, send us over to the pigs. And why they would prefer pigs, we're not told. But evidently, demons can possess an animal. And at this point, I would just like to make a pastoral note that this explains a lot about cats.

[30:31] Back to the text. Back to the text. Notice that the demons begged Jesus. Jesus isn't begging the demons.

The demons are begging Jesus. And this begging is a clear demonstration that the demons are actually under the authority of Jesus, the Son of God, who just pulled up on shore.

Jesus is all authority over every demon. Every demon, including Satan. Do you know why? He's God, and He created them.

So in verse 32, with one word, go, Jesus exercises authority, casts out these demons, and allows them to enter the pigs. So He accomplishes His will by His authority immediately.

The demons come out. They occupy the pigs with devastating results. They destroy this herd of 2,000. They rush headlong into the Sea of Galilee and drown.

[31:39] And there's no question that this would have been a huge financial loss for whoever owned these pigs. 2,000 pigs. In verse 33,

having seen everything, the herdsmen who are riding herd over these pigs, they bolt.

They run into the town and they tell everything that happened. Guys, you wouldn't believe it. Our 2,000 swine are dead. The crazy guys, they came down. This guy came up on a boat. He cast out the demons from them. They showed up in the pigs. They ran down the hill. They drowned to death. They were out 2,000 pigs. What are we going to do? And everybody's like, let's go check this guy out.

It would have been a mix of shock, outrage, amazement, fear. Nobody has been able to subdue these demon-possessed men. In verse 34, like the demon-possessed men in verse 28, there is this coming out to meet Jesus.

And behold, they come out to meet Jesus. They're seeking Jesus. But unlike the demons, they don't know who He is.

[32:53] All they know is that He's cast out these demons and now their pigs are floating in the Sea of Galilee, dead. Dead. But they beg Jesus. Please leave us alone.

You turned our world upside down. Please get out. We don't want you here. Please leave. You've cost us too much.

Please leave. The key word in verse 30 and 34 is the word beg. Begging reveals authority. The demons beg Jesus because He's authority over them.

And in verse 34, the Gentiles beg Jesus. They have this sense that this man is unlike anyone else that they've ever encountered. He's brought peace to craziness.

They don't know that He's the Messiah, but they do know that He has now upended their financial world. Instead of being seen as the peacemaker He is, He's probably seen more like a troublemaker.

[34:03] So fearing Him, they beg Him to leave and they do. One would think that such a display of authority over the demonic world would result in joyous, welcome, and humble submission.

Oh Lord, boy, man, these guys were crazy and you cast them out. You are unlike anybody else we know. We come, tell us everything you know. We will follow you wherever you go.

No, the townsfolk don't want His authority. It's costing them too much.

Jesus is the demon defeater. What we see Him doing here is just a foretaste of that final and forever victory that He will bring about when He casts the whole demonic world into the lake of fire when He comes back.

and He's with you. The storm pacifier is the demon defeater and He's with you. But we can't miss the fact that He has a tendency to turn worlds upside down, doesn't He?

[35:08] There are collateral costs to following Jesus. The Gentiles in the Gadarenes, Gadarenes, got experience of that.

The deliverance of these two men cost them 2,000 swine. That was the collateral cost. For those Jesus delivered, it cost the community 2,000 pigs.

And they didn't want any more of it. It makes you have to ask the question, okay, were these townsfolk, were they happy that these men were delivered? I'm guessing that they were. Do they think that it was worth 2,000 pigs that they lost?

It doesn't seem like it. It cost too much. Get out, Jesus. Jesus, what would happen?

What would happen in 2017 in our city if there was a clear, sustained outpouring of God's Spirit on the city of Kenosha? People from all walks of life coming into, encountering the living Christ, repenting, believing, meeting with Him, following Him, lives would be changed.

[36:25] Worlds would be upended. And there would be collateral costs. People who have found life in Christ coming out of a variety of destructive lifestyles.

Would we make room for them? Would we make space for them here? Would we incorporate them into our body, into our life groups, into our youth groups, into our children's ministry?

Would we find meaningful ways to come alongside of these people to help them find shelter, help them find work, transportation, food and clothing? Would we do that?

when the risen Christ moves to dismantle a demonic stronghold and there are demonic strongholds in Kenosha, when He moves, there will be collateral costs.

It will affect us. Would we do something like these townsfolk did? Jesus, this is too much for us. [37:32] It's too much for us. We're glad you're delivering people, but it's too much of an inconvenience for us. It's too much of a cost. Stop delivering people, Jesus. It's too messy.

No way. No way. If Jesus would move in such a way, and we pray that He does, we would make space. we would bring in.

We would learn how to come alongside. It's about His work. It's about His glory. It's about Him delivering people. The point of this story is that Jesus has authority over all things.

And He's shown that authority over nature. He's the storm pacifier. He's shown that authority over demons. He's the demon defeater. He was that then, and He is that now.

Jesus isn't a hard tyrant who uses His authority for personal gain. He is the Son of Man. He is the suffering servant and the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

[38:42] And He exercises His authority with a servant's heart. And nowhere is this more clear than when the Son of Man humbly went to the cross.

For sinners like you and me, He exercises authority to forgive sins. What I want to point out to you right now is this.

That the blood He shed on the cross not only forgives sin, it sealed our pardon, it also seals the promise that He is with us always.

So yes, He is the storm pacifier. Yes, He is the demon defeater. Yes, He's awesome. Yes, He upends worlds. And yes, He is with you.

He has bound Himself to us and sealed it with the blood of the cross. He is with us always. Now, if He is all that and He is all that with us, do you know what that means for us?

[39:49] We've got nothing to fear. Even when our worlds get upended, even if He should move in profound ways, we fear not.

He's with us. Christian, there will never be a point in time when Jesus is not with you. Jesus says at the end of Matthew, I am with you always.

Even to the end of the age. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we have gotten a glimpse of you this morning.

You are the glorious Christ. We've seen you calm the storm. We've seen you cast out demons. You're marvelous.

You turn worlds upside down. And we love it. You're awesome. Lord Jesus, would you press this into our hearts today that that you are this and that you are with us this way.

[41:08] God, would you help us to leave this building today in the confidence that you'll never leave us nor forsake us. we would ask that Lord Jesus that you would pour out your spirit and that God, you would assault the demonic strongholds in our city.

God, set the prisoners free and would you add them to our number. In Jesus' name, Amen.