

Jesus Calms a Storm

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me again this morning to Luke chapter 8 and from verse 22 to 25. Luke 8, 22 through 25.

Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your greater glory our supreme concern through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. They say that every day is a school day, that we're always learning. But what exactly are we learning, and is what we're learning making us better people?

Many of the things we learn make us more cynical, but what about the things we learn that make us healthier and more human? For the Christian, every day is a school day where we're growing in our knowledge about, and our knowledge of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

Every day we learn something new about Him, and it makes us healthier and more human. If you're not yet a Christian, can I invite you to begin the journey of knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus for yourself.

[1 : 22] Now, Luke chapter 8, verse 22 through 25, with its story of Jesus calming the storm, is the first in a series of miracles Jesus performs designed to help us to grow in our knowledge of Him and how important it is and how important it is and how important it is and how important it is that we trust in Him and have faith in Him.

This passage follows three passages in which Jesus has been teaching how crucial it is for us, not just to casually listen to what He says, but to carefully listen and then to diligently obey.

What Jesus commanded us to do by hearing His powerful word with our ears, in this passage and the following miracles, He's now commanding us to do by watching His powerful works with our eyes.

What does it say about Jesus that He calms a vicious storm? And how are we to respond to the lesson Jesus is teaching us here?

Let me suggest that we can approach this passage by observing two things. First, the Jesus in whom we have faith, the Jesus in whom we have faith, and secondly, the faith we have in Jesus.

[2 : 51] The Jesus in whom we have faith and the faith we have in Jesus. The Jesus in whom we have faith, first of all. Many years ago, I asked a senior Christian minister friend of mine what, after all the years and decades of serving Christ, he now thought of Jesus.

I'll never forget his answer. He said, Jesus is my hero. He is my hero. Now, he could have used a thousand other words to describe Jesus.

He's a very well-respected and well-known Christian author. But he chose to speak of Him in this way. Jesus is my hero.

The longer we go on in the Christian life, the more times we've experienced His loving, restoring, and sustaining grace at work, the more the more the hero Jesus becomes to us.

I tell you this memory because, you see, Jesus was Luke's hero too. Every passage in Luke's gospel is about Jesus. And our passage today is just one of them.

[4 : 11] It's not as much about the faith of the disciples as it is the Jesus in whom they have faith. The Jesus who calms the storm on the Sea of Galilee is the hero of the story.

A Jesus who, because He is still alive today, is the hero of our stories too. Well, in verse 22, for His own reasons, Jesus commands His disciples to take Him on a boat across the Sea of Galilee.

He says, Let us go over to the other side of the lake. Many of His disciples were very experienced fishermen who had spent their lives on boats in the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus, exhausted by the demands of a busy day, settled down in the stern of the boat and fell asleep. I wonder, I wonder what it must have been like to gaze on the sleeping face of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There He is, our beloved Master. And He's so exhausted, He just must sleep. And we, His disciples, must also rest when we're exhausted and sleep with His peace.

[5 : 25] Up to this point, everything's normal. The sea is calm. The disciples are making good progress. But everything is about to change. I want us to see the following two aspects about the Jesus in whom we have faith.

The lessons Jesus teaches us about Himself in how He calms the storm. First of all, the authority of Jesus. The authority of Jesus and then the identity of Jesus.

The authority of Jesus, first of all. The authority of Jesus. The Sea of Galilee is fairly unique in the world in that it is located 700 feet below sea level.

You've come through the Clyde Tunnel on a bus this morning. The Sea of Galilee was located 700 feet below sea level. In Scotland, we're used to lochs being well above sea level.

But the Sea of Galilee was well below sea level. Which meant it was uniquely vulnerable to unpredictable storms. On one side, the Sea of Galilee is sided by very high cliffs.

[6 : 31] And warm air, as it slips down these cliffs, meets with the cold water of the lake and generated strong winds. It could whip up the waves and it could make sailing conditions treacherous all within the space of just a few minutes.

And that's what happened this night. Because many of them were from that area, the disciples were used to unpredictable storms. But this one was particularly ferocious.

We read, The word that ESV translates here as windstorm could also mean typhoon or hurricane. We've seen the incredible damage a hurricane can cause. Imagine being caught out in the middle of the Sea of Galilee on a wee boat with a hurricane raging around us.

No wonder Luke records that they were in danger. Imagine with me the sights and the sounds of a hurricane. The monstrous waves crashing in upon that boat.

[7 : 39] The disciples fear for their lives and they cry out, Master, Master, we are perishing. The wind and the waves are destroying them and their boat. They're in danger of being swamped and going clean under.

Master, Master, we're perishing, they cry. Because for all their skill with boats, they've come to an end to themselves. And their only hope is in Jesus.

There are times in all our lives, I'm sure, when we've cried out exactly the same. Master, Master, I'm perishing.

But we read, He awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves. There is here a remarkable economy of words.

Having woken up, Jesus rebuked the wind and the raging waves. Imagine any of us had done the same thing. Would others watching on not thought we were mad?

[8 : 41] It's like standing on a boat and commanding the Corrievraechean whirlpool to stop twisting. Or standing on the shore of the Pentland Firth and commanding it to stop flowing.

Surely Jesus has finally lost His mind for who can do such a thing as simply to rebuke the wind and the rough seas. But then we read, And they ceased, and there was a calm.

And they ceased, and there was a calm. With just five words in the original Greek language, Jesus performs one of His mightiest miracles. He opens His mouth, and He speaks words, and the wind and the waves ceases, and a great calm descends.

The Sea of Galilee, which until a few minutes previous had been a roaring storm, was now as flat as a mill pond, because a man opened his mouth, spoke a few words.

Can I do this? Can you do this? Has there ever been another man or woman who could do this?

The power involved is beyond our imagining.

[9 : 57] At best, we've learned to harness some of the power of the natural world through our hydroelectric schemes, our wind turbines, our tidal power.

But to control these powers will always be beyond us. Jesus is here exercising an authority and power which goes beyond anything the world has ever or can ever see.

Something altogether supernatural. Supernatural. Luke here wants to emphasize the great power of Jesus over what we call nature. There is nothing in the natural order, if we may use terms like such, over which Jesus has no power or authority.

There is nothing greater than Jesus. Even the mighty power of the wind and waves are powerless before the authority of His Word. The hurricane is hushed.

The tornado is silenced. The storm is stilled. And all because Jesus opens His mouth and speaks. There are certain passages of Luke's gospel that tend more toward us having to take our time to process them.

[11 : 09] And this is one such. These aren't verses we should read, skim over, and forget. These are words we really need to think about.

To put ourselves, if at all possible, in the boat with these disciples. To feel the force of the typhoon. To experience the boat being tossed like a cork on the stormy waters.

And then to watch Jesus rising. And His voice rebuking the wind. And stilling the waves. And then finally to experience the calm and tranquility of the mill pond.

All we're left with is this overwhelming impression of the power and authority of Jesus. And it's almost like Luke is saying to us, You need to think about this.

You need to think about this. The second aspect of the Jesus in whom we have faith is His identity. His identity. Because there's something deeper at play here than just power.

[12 : 22] Naked power. It's revealed in the question the disciples ask at the end of verse 25. Who then is this that He commands even the winds and the water and they obey Him? Indeed, that's the question, is it not?

The disciples were all brought up in the Jewish tradition. And so they knew their Old Testaments. We often sing Psalm 93 at the beginning of our worship services.

Listen to verse 3 and 4 of that Psalm. The floods have lifted up. O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice. The floods lift up their roaring.

Mightier than the thunder of many waters. Mightier than the waves of the sea. The Lord on high is mighty. What again in Psalm 104 verses 5 through 7.

He set the earth on its foundations so that it could never be moved. You covered the deep as with a garment. The water stood above the mountains.

[13 : 28] At your rebuke they fled. At the sound of your thunder they took to flight. Or again in Psalm 106 verse 9.

Where the psalmist is telling the story of Israel's redemption from their slavery in Egypt. He rebuked the Red Sea and it became dry. Or once more in words many of us who have been brought up next to the sea.

Find powerfully emotional in Psalm 107 verses 23 through 30. Well, how I wish we could sing it to Loch Brune. Some went down to the sea in ships.

Doing business on the great waters. They saw the deeds of the Lord. His wondrous works in the deep. For He commanded and raised the stormy wind. Which lifted up the waves of the sea.

They mounted up to heaven. They went down to the depths. Their courage melted away in their evil plight. They reeled and they staggered like drunken men. They were at their wit's end.

[14 : 33] Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble. And He delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still. And the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet.

And He brought them to their desired haven. Psalm 107. I wonder whether the disciples sang that psalm after what had happened to them that night on the Sea of Galilee.

The point's this. The Old Testament points to God and God alone as having power over the storm, the wind, and the waves. But now in Luke 8, 22 through 25, Jesus wields such power.

It's a logical system called a syllogism. A syllogism. Good word, that. Syllogism. Only God has power to command the wind and the waves.

Jesus commands the winds and the waves. Therefore, Jesus is God. Only God has the power to command the wind and the waves.

[15 : 43] Jesus commands the winds and the waves. Therefore, Jesus is God. Our passage points to the ultimate identity of Jesus as the God of the Old Testament of whom the psalm writers speak so powerfully.

The God who divided the Red Sea to let His people pass on dry ground is the same God as who rebukes the Sea of Galilee that day. This is who Jesus is.

This is the Jesus in whom we of Christians have faith. A man exhausted by the labors of a busy ministry, but a God whose power can't be measured. The Jesus against whom the Pharisees and the religious establishment rages is the God they claim to love and worship.

The Jesus whose message is one of love, forgiveness, and mercy is the Jesus whose power is limitless and whose identity is divine. And ultimately, the Jesus who dies on the cross to take away our sin and shame is God Himself.

And Luke's saying to us this morning, he's saying, you need to think about this. Even as you receive the words of Jesus through your ears and hear.

[17 : 06] So receive the works of Jesus through your eyes and see. Don't waste these miracles, but to use the words of verse 15.

See the miracle. Hold it fast with an honest and good heart and bear fruit with patience. Believe and trust in Him. The Jesus in whom we have faith.

Well, secondly this morning, and more briefly, the faith we have in Jesus. The faith we have in Jesus. Luke wrote this gospel to the early church.

It was a church which was rapidly expanding throughout the whole world, but was also facing persecution at the hands of both Jews and Romans. Hostile Roman emperors made living as a Christian a capital offense, resulting in exile, imprisonment, and even death.

All the disciples on the boat that day with Jesus would die for their faith in Him. Every one of them on the boat that day would die for their faith in Jesus.

[18 : 15] Luke is carefully arranging his material to cater for the needs of the early church. So, having clearly proclaimed the Jesus in whom the early church had faith, he now turns to the faith the early church is to have if it wants to thrive and grow in the first century Roman world.

What's good for them is good for us as Christians living in a secular 21st century Scotland. There's two aspects, briefly, to that faith that Luke draws our attention toward.

First, it's a faith that grips, and second, it's a faith that grows. This may not be where we're at today, but it's at least where we aspire to be at today, right?

And to this we pray, that my faith would grip onto Jesus, and that my faith would grow in Jesus. A faith that grips, first of all.

A faith that grips. Having seen the great miracle, we read that Jesus said to His disciples, Where's your faith? We further read that the disciples were afraid, and they marveled.

[19 : 28] It's a good question to ask of ourselves at times, is it not? Where's your faith? When times get tough in life, and we're in danger, where's your faith?

The troubles that confront us are many. We remember the classic words of Job, chapter 5, verse 7. Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upwards.

How true. They could be personal troubles with physical illness or mental health challenges. They could be family troubles.

They could be anxiety, depression. They could be greater still. Many of the early Christians faced the troubles of exile, imprisonment, and execution.

But ours is a faith that grips onto Jesus at times like these. It might seem to us that in an hour of greatest danger, Jesus is asleep and unaware of what's going on in our lives.

[20 : 30] It might feel that while the storm is raging all around us, God's doing nothing to help us. But this passage assures us that while our grip on Jesus is at times very weak indeed, His grip on us is at all times very strong indeed.

Such a truth strengthens our grip on Him.

For as the Apostle Paul will later say, If God be for us, who can be against us? Later in that chapter in Romans 8, Paul writes, I'm convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor anything else in all creation, including storms on the Sea of Galilee, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In His love and wisdom, God may not always save us from the storms, but He will in His grace and mercy sustain us through the storms. This passage calls upon us to tighten our grip on Christ, and in dangerous and difficult times when we don't know the answers to the questions we've got for Him, to cry out, Master, Master, I'm perishing.

It may sometimes feel that we're clinging to Him with our fingertips, and that the slightest touch more will cause us to lose our grip altogether, but nevertheless, we'll keep on clinging, and we'll grip tight to Him, and we'll keep calling out to Him for His help.

[22 : 24] It's a faith that grips. But the other aspect of our faith is it's a faith that grows. It's a faith that grows.

Earlier on this year, students graduated from their respective universities. Congratulations to you all. We do not expect a five-year-old child, just starting in primary one, to know as much as these university graduates.

It is the same in the Christian life. We are never more saved than when we first believe in Jesus, and yet as time and life go on, we grow in our knowledge about and of the Lord Jesus.

The miracle here in Luke 8, 22 through 25, is the first in a group of miracles, which will lead to Peter's famous confession of Christ in Luke 9, 20.

I believe you are the Christ of God. The point is that Peter's faith is growing over a period of time. The more he experiences Jesus' words and Jesus' works, the more he becomes convinced that Jesus is the Christ of God.

[23 : 36] The more he went on, the more his knowledge about God and about Jesus developed and matured, the deeper his faith grew. That doesn't mean from this time on, Peter didn't make any mistakes.

We all know he did. But the point is that his is a faith that grows even through the traumatic situations like what happened on the Sea of Galilee that night.

In the same way, our faith in Jesus grows as time goes on. As I said, we are never more saved than the moment we first believe in Jesus, but then we're never more married than the moment we say, I do.

But over the years, we get to know our partners better, and our love for them develops, matures, deepens, and grows. What this passage teaches us is that sometimes, sometimes, this is really hard for us, sometimes Jesus teaches us more about himself by placing us in challenging and uncomfortable situations.

After all, remember, it was Jesus' desire to get to the other side of the lake that caused the disciples to take him there in the first place.

[24 : 58] Sometimes Jesus puts us in situations we find difficult so we might learn more about him, how loving and powerful he really is, how resourceful and reliable he really is, in short, how in our weakness his grace is all sufficient to meet all our needs.

And that ultimately is why every day with Jesus is a school day, because whether he's calming a storm in our lives or speaking truths into our lives, he is teaching us more about himself, and we're growing as Christians.

And so we close with this question, just like my old ministerial friend, he wouldn't thank me for calling him old, just like my ministerial, mature ministerial friend, is Jesus more and more your hero? Who else is so loving and powerful? Who else is like Jesus, our Lord and Master? And the ultimate truth is that surely we'd rather be with Jesus, the God of creation and redemption, if we happen to be on a stormy sea than by ourselves, right?

Which is all the more reason why the wisest thing that any of us can do is to ask him into our lives today and to commit ourselves to becoming his disciples.

[26 : 30] Are we less willing to do that? Let us pray. Lord Jesus, there are many of us today who, although we seem to be all with it on the outside, are crying out in our hearts, Master, Master, I am perishing.

It feels to us perhaps like we're clinging on with our fingertips. Lord, will you sustain us in these times? Will you grant us grace all sufficient?

Will you teach us more and more about yourself so that our love for you deepens and grows and matures? Will you show us, oh Lord, just how amazing a thing it is to be loved by you?

We pray for any here today who have not yet begun that amazing journey of loving and being loved by Jesus. And we ask, oh Lord, that you would do something in their lives even at this moment in time to bring them to that point of decision that they'd rather be with Jesus on a stormy sea than by themselves.

we ask these things in his name. Amen.