

The Ruler of the Storm - Pre Communion Service

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Date: 02 December 2017

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn this evening to Luke chapter 8 and the passage we read and especially the words from verse 22 to 25. And in verse 24 we read, He awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.

He said to them, Where is your faith? And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, Who then is this that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?

Now one of the obvious things that you find in the passage here and in the similar passages in the other Gospels is that Jesus was always in charge of these events.

It's obvious here that it was he who took the initiative in going into the boat, and then his disciples actually followed him. It's even clearer if you look at the similar incident or the version of the incident in Matthew.

You'll find it in Matthew chapter 8. And before this incident itself is mentioned, actually you'll find that in verse 18 of Matthew chapter 8, Now when Jesus saw a great crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side.

[1 : 2 3] And then that's interrupted by this man who came, this scribe who came and said, Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus dealt with that. And then it's picking up this same theme again, where he says, When he got into the boat, his disciples followed him.

So there in Matthew, although it's interrupted by this man who came to put this point to him, it did say, first of all, now when Jesus saw a great crowd, he gave orders to go over to the other side.

He instructed them to go over to the other side of the lake. And that's what you find in Luke as well, when it says, One day he got into the boat with his disciples.

He took the initiative. He actually is in charge of the situation. And whatever happens in these events, this is in fact what lies behind them. And that's how it is throughout the course of our Christian life, of course it did.

He leads and we follow. He calls and we respond. He commands and we obey. But it is always him who goes first. And then we follow as he grants us by his grace, the ability, the grace, the faith to do so.

[2 : 3 1] Now the great question, as we mentioned on other occasions in Luke, the great question all the way through, dotted throughout the Gospel of Luke, is this question. And it's designed, in the way Luke has put his Gospel together, it's designed to bring out the identity of Jesus.

Because at various stages, you'll find different people asking this question, or a similar question, Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?

That's really what the Gospel is designed to bring to the fore, the identity of Jesus. Who he is, what he's doing here, why he's in these circumstances, what that is leading to, and of course as the Gospel ends, with his death and following that, his resurrection, you can see the whole purpose of the question, that his identity is, in fact, the Son of God incarnate, who came into the world to die, to rise from the dead, and to be exalted to glory.

And he answers that question, or that question is answered here, in this passage itself. Because the identity of Jesus is clearly brought before us, in this passage, and it has two aspects to it.

Because on the one hand, you find the identity of Jesus brought out, in the way that shows, that he was truly human. Jesus, here is shown to be truly human.

[4 : 0 0] And then the other aspect of it is, that Jesus exercises his authority as God. So as much as he is truly human, indeed, in every sense of being human, that's what he is.

But he is also at the same time, in every sense, God, fully God, who can command the elements of the creation, and they instantly obey him.

And these two aspects of Christ, and the identity of Christ, are so important to us at all times, but we also take account of them, as we come to prepare, to take the Lord's Supper, to take communion, because they are both aspects, of the one we remember.

That he is truly human, and was at the time, and is continuing from there on, from the time he came, to take our human nature, to be born into this world, and following his ascension, to continue with that humanity, in his exalted state.

So let's see, first of all, how that humanness, is brought out for us. One day he got into the boat, and he said to the disciples, let us go across to the other side of the lake. So they set out, and as they sailed, he fell asleep, and a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in danger.

[5 : 21] Jesus fell asleep. Now that shows us, of course, that the human side to him, or his human nature, is really what's to the fore, at that point.

It doesn't mean, of course, that he has stopped being God, or stopped being divine, but then this is what, the gospel here is bringing out, so as to emphasize, this aspect of his identity now, before it goes on to speak about, or show his identity as God.

And of course, the two things, are almost there, at the same time, in this one person. But here it is, he fell asleep. And it shows, that the Lord, was prone to tiredness.

That he was prone to weariness. And when you read about, what had been going on, just in the previous chapters, you can begin to understand, how that weariness came about.

You see, it's a great point to remember, that the fact that he was God, did not interfere with, the weakness, and the proneness to, and the need for him to sleep, and the proneness to tiredness.

[6 : 29] The fact that he was God, did not interfere with that. And that's part of, the situation that he's in, as the servant of the Lord. He is there, as he depends upon, the spirit of the Lord, in his ministry, as he comes to, follow the word of God, as he gleans from it, and takes it into his own experience, as day by day develops.

Well, he cannot, borrow from his, deity, from his almightiness, in order to prevent, that weakness from happening, in terms of his humanness. And that's one of the things, that we are so, privileged to remember.

That the Lord, did not come into this world, as a human being, but not subject to weakness, and subject to the infirmities, that you and I, that you and I are subject to.

It's the very opposite. He came into this world, as a true human being, subject to tiredness, to the need to rest, subject to requiring, to be by himself for a time, subject to the pressure, of the crowds, and the work that he was doing, and the opposition, that he faced.

The Lord, was tired. He needed to sleep. And that's the Lord, you remember, in the Lord's Supper. Yes, it's his death, of course, that particularly, you remember.

[7 : 50] But as you remember, how here, he fell asleep, in this boat, along with the disciples, who were with him, but he fell asleep, and he was fast asleep. It wasn't just, dozing quietly, or the kind of sleep, that you could actually, very easily be roused out of.

He was fast asleep, fully asleep, slumbering. He needed that rest. And it's part of what brings, what the Gospel brings to us, to assure us, that when we need to express, our weakness, and our need of help, to him, we come to one, who understands.

And he doesn't just, just understand, as it were, from the top, downwards, as God, as he is omniscient, and knows all things, as he does, as he looks at us, in our humanity, and our frailty, and our weakness.

He doesn't just look upon us, as God, and says, yes, I know as God, what it is, you're experiencing. As you go to him, and I go to him, without weakness, and present that weakness to him, and ask for his help, while we come to one, who is indeed, marked by the infirmities, the weakness, the humanness, that you and I know of ourselves.

And when you're tired, and worn out, when your mind, needs to rest, when you find the pressure, of this life getting to you, aren't you thankful, that you have a God, and a Lord, who understands.

[9 : 26] Even if nobody else, understands what you're going through. Even if you find it, and when you find it difficult, to just explain to others, what it is, you're experiencing, what your thoughts are, how you feel under that.

It doesn't really matter, at the end of the day, though, human support is important. What's really important, is that you have, a savior, who fully understands, your weakness, your need of help, who

comes, from his own experience, to stand alongside you, and to say, it's all right, I know, I've been there, I can help you with this.

And of course, that's where, as we'll see, his deity, also comes to the fore. But then, for the theologians among you, there's a point here, that you can open up, for yourselves, and it's profound, I'm not in any way, pretending, to understand it myself, or to be able to enter, into the depths of it, but it is, a profoundly important point, as well as being, a profound point.

Who is this, who's asleep, in this little boat? And it's not enough, to tell us, for us to say, it's Jesus, and it's Jesus, in his humanity. Because that's, that's true, of course, but that just gives, the impression that, what is asleep, in that boat, is a human nature.

And that's not, the identity of the Lord, though he does possess, a human nature, and has that human nature, proper to himself. It's the person, of the Son of God, who's asleep, in that boat.

[11:02] It's a person, the person of the Son of God, who's taken, this human nature, to facilitate, the weakness, that he needed, to experience, in order to actually, be a faithful, high priest, to his people.

You mustn't just say, well, ah yes, but that's the human nature, of Jesus, that's asleep. No, it is the Son of God, who through his human nature, in his human nature, came to experience, the need for rest, the tiredness, of mind, and of body, through which he's able, to minister to you too.

In other words, you can really say, that this passage, tells you, when you say it carefully, and when you say it, nonetheless, as you must say it, bluntly, God, is asleep, at the back, of this little boat, in the person of Jesus, in his human nature.

God, the Son of God, God himself, in his Son. And you see, the greatest miracle, in the passage, is actually not, the Lord stilling the waves, that is a miracle, undoubtedly a miracle, and worthy of being called, a miracle, when he stilled the waves, and the wind, and they became instantly, obedient to him, and there was a great calm.

That's not the greatest miracle. The greatest miracle, is the incarnation, the person who's there, the state he's in, the fact that it is God, actually God, really God, who through the human nature, that he has taken to himself, experiences this weakness, and need of rest.

[12:42] But it doesn't change, the fact that he's God. So you have to be careful, how you actually put it. And isn't that, one of the great wonders, really, as you come to remember, the Lord and his death, this is who you're remembering.

You're not just coming to say, the human nature of the Lord, experienced death, death, and suffering, and was obedient unto death, the Son of God did.

The Son of God came, and was born, and obeyed, in his human nature, the command of the Father, and experienced this weakness, the wonder of the incarnation, the miracle of the incarnation.

That's the great miracle. And that's what you find there, set out in verse 23, as they sailed, he, he, fell asleep.

Secondly, he exercises, his authority, as God. Now understandably, the disciples are terrified.

When they came and saw, that the boat was filling up, with water, remember these men, or most of them were fishermen, they knew, what this lake was like, they knew the danger, they were in.

[13:56] They were filling up, with water, and it says there, they were in danger. And, realizing that the danger, was very acute, they came to him, in his slumber, and they woke him, and said, Master, Master, we are perishing.

And of course, from their point of view, that's what, that really was, as they saw it, that's what was happening. They were just liable, to sinking, and going under. But then, the Lord, when he awoke, immediately, spoke to them, rather sharply.

Well, he first of all, rebuked the wind, and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. Now, it's interesting, that it says there, he awoke, and rebuked the wind.

He didn't say anything, to the disciples, first of all. What he wanted to do, was really, to bring them to sea, that there was no need, of them to be afraid, because they had him, with them, in the boat. And who was in the boat, with them? Well, he's going to demonstrate that, because he speaks, here, he rebukes the wind, and the raging waves. He doesn't just speak to them, he rebukes them, and only the creator, can rebuke the creation.

[15:10] Only the creator, can give, that sort of, startling rebuke, to stormy weather, to the stormy seas, and the wind that's blowing, and instantly, there is a calm.

Now, the Bible sometimes, uses the elements, of the creation, to represent, opposition to Jesus, or to the church, or to God.

You'll find it all the way, through the Old Testament. You'll find that, the winds, and the lightnings, and so on, that they represent sometimes, these powers, these forces, that stand for, or represent, opposition to God, God, and to the work of God.

So, if you take it, that that's part of, what's built into that, and we could easily, conclude that is, really intended here, as well, keeping with much, of the Old Testament passages, that are like that.

And, what Jesus is demonstrating, is that, whatever you feel, at the moment, that the moment, he's saying to the disciples, is really putting you, in danger, or under threat, or thwarting your advancement, to the other side, which is where I ordered you to go, be assured, that I'm in charge of it.

[16:23] Be assured, that I can deal with it. Be assured, that it's not going to, actually overtake you, and that it's not going to, actually be, the means, of your perishing.

And how important, that itself is, when we come to, our own situation, because it says here, there was a great calm. Now you've, you've seen the, I'm sure you've heard of this, before, and thought about this before, but when you see a storm, if it's a really stormy day, it's just so stormy, or the waves are so big, the ferry can't go, for a day, or part of a day, it takes at least a day, or so, for that sea to quieten down, and certainly, at least that, if not more, for it to become a flat calm.

But here, it's instant. As soon as the Lord spoke, and rebuked the wind, and the waves, there was a great calm. And it does mean that, a great calm, a calm, a flat calm.

And that's partly, why the disciples here, in the boat with him, were absolutely astonished. It wasn't just that, he actually spoke in this way, to the wind, and to the waves, but the result of that, the instant result of that, was this flat calm, this very opposite, to what they had been experiencing.

Who else could do that? Who is this man? That's the question. That's how he's demonstrating for them, as we'll see, that they have no need, really, to be afraid at all.

[17:45] And, when you go through, into the next passage, you'll see, that the theme really continues, in that way, this demon, possessed man, with the name of Legion, and when the Lord dealt with him.

There is a wonderful text there, where you, verse there, where you find, in verse 35, the people went out, to see what had happened, they knew about this man, he was well known, of course, and they came to Jesus, and found the man, from whom the demons had gone, and then this is the description, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind.

The calm, that Jesus created, in the, on the sea, for the disciples, in the storm, is replicated, in a spiritual, or moral, or mental way, in the mind, of this man, in the soul, of this man.

He's now, the very opposite, of what he was, when Jesus found him, disturbed, going around, naked, uncontrollable, bound with chains.

Where is he now? He's sitting, at the feet of Jesus, calm, placid, controlled, and he's clothed, he's dignified, and he's in his right mind.

[19:05] There's a great calm, in his soul, compared to the storm, that was there before. And that's, what we also need, ourselves, and our lives, whatever storms you have, that's where you take, this passage, and similar passages, and apply, because that's what it's there for, that's its purpose, that your fears, and your storms, and the questions, and the doubts, that arise, in relation to them, just like you see here, as he actually calmed, the sea, and as he calms, this man with the demons, so we apply it, to ourselves, to our homes, to our families, to our concerns, to our health, to our work, to the implications, of making a profession, of faith in them, or coming to remember, in his death, for the first time, maybe there's a wee storm, or maybe it's to you, a big storm, in your mind, or in your heart, listen to this, instantly, there was a great calm, you have no need, to be concerned, or disturbed, at the prospect, of doing, what Jesus requires, of you, because he himself, assures you, he's there, to take charge, of all the fears, that you have, all the doubts, that you may express, in your own heart tonight, take them to this passage, and see, what is saying to you, he rebuked the wind, and the raging waves, and there was a great calm, and then there are, two vital questions, two vital questions, again relating to, the identity of Jesus, but first of all, there's a question, that Jesus puts, to the disciples, he said to them, where is your faith, now they had been afraid, before, when they saw the storm, and the threatening, of the waves, coming in on top of them, and their liability, to sinking, but now there's another, type of fear, it's the fear of awe, it's the fear of being, amazed, spiritually, and in a moral sense, amazed at what they have seen, they were

afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, who then is this, that he commands, even winds and water, and they obey him, throughout the gospel of Luke, you often find these words, amazed, or marveled, scattered throughout, in relation to, the identity of Jesus, and the work that Jesus does, the miracles he performs, they were amazed, they were afraid, they were filled with awe, they were in the presence, of holiness, they were in the presence, of the power, which creates, and has a mastery, over the creation, they were in awe, but he says, where, is your faith, now is that, somewhat sharp, do you think, you and I understand, where they were coming from, why they were afraid, you can identify, with them there, can't you,

I would have been afraid, in the same circumstances, so would you, especially, if you can't swim, like I can't swim, so then, why is he saying, where is your faith, why is he as, straight about it, why is he as blunt, as that, the other gospels, say, very similar words, but it's this, certainly, almost rebuke, if it's not a rebuke, it's certainly, a very, straight, question, that he puts, to them, well, it's really, as we said before, he's very straight with them, because they have, actually, just seen, the reason, why they ought not, to have been afraid, when he spoke, as he did, to the waves, and to the wind, with such a result, what this question, is really putting, to them now, is, why were you afraid, why didn't you have faith, when I was with you, in the boat, to be sure, that even if I was sleeping, still I was in charge, of course, you, you find, a mystery, in that as well, don't you, there's, when we spoke earlier, about, the Lord, as God, but nevertheless, sleeping in the person, of Jesus there, well, it's the same, or very similar, here, isn't it, when you find, that,

Jesus, here, as he, as he asks them this, he's really saying to them, even if I was asleep, I'm still God, even if I'm asleep, in my human nature, he's still God, and that's, that's such a wonderful thing, such a, a mysterious thing, isn't it, that this person, sleeping, at the back, at the, at the stern, as it were, of this little boat, is at the same time, controlling the universe, that's profound, but it's true, it has to be true, because you read elsewhere, that everything in him, is held together, in him, and by him, if Jesus for a moment, stops holding things together, the whole universe collapses, so when he's sleeping, at the back of this, at the rear, at the stern of this boat, wherever it was in the boat, when he's sleeping there, you mustn't imagine, that he's no longer active, as God, that, this sleeping, on the part of Jesus, through his human nature, has not interfered, with his sovereignty, and his control, of the universe, as it stands, together in him, that's the God, that's the Jesus, that's the Savior, that you have us, your Lord, that controls your life, that is able to actually keep, not just keep the storms, from you, he didn't do that here, but to keep us, in them, and to keep us, despite them, that's what he did, with these disciples, and that's what he, can do as well, and if you go back, to verse 15, you'll find there, something similar there, to faith, holding on to his word, just at the end there, of the parable, of the sower, or the soils, as for that, in the good soil, they are those, who hearing the word, hold it fast, in an honest, and good heart, and bear fruit, with patience, or with perseverance, and that presupposes, that in all the circumstances, that they are found in, they still hold fast, to his word, to the word of God, to the word, of Christ, so when you have your fears, and when you have, a storm in your heart, and when you have, things which disturb you, in your process of mind, and some things, which you know, are maybe, working in you, to try and persuade you, not to do, what you should do, for the Lord, you hold fast, to his word, don't let some, other source of information, be what guides, your thoughts, or your attitude, or your conclusions, hold fast, and bear fruit, with perseverance, that's what, the word is for, the dependable,

Jesus, and his word, well, that's, the first vital question, where is your faith, and then secondly, who is this, that even, the waves, the winds, and the waters, they obey him, well, it is God, as we've said, the language, that's used here, the language of awe, the language of respect, and the language, that's proper, in the presence of God, that's what's used, and that's what's proper, to the situation, it's an act, of the creator, now we sang, earlier on, in Psalm 18, and, you can see there, in Psalm 18, how, those things, that are brought together, there are quite remarkable, if you leave the beginning, of the Psalm, out for the moment, just begin, there at verse 4, where the Psalmist, is saying, the cords of death, encompassed me, the torrents of destruction, assailed me, the cords of Sheol, entangled me, the snares of death, confronted me, in my distress,

I called upon the Lord, to my God, I cried for help, from his temple, he heard my voice, and my cry to him, reached his ears, and stop there, that's what he's doing, that's the situation, he's describing, and he's describing, the peril he was in, the situation that he had, and how out of that, he called to the Lord, and asked the Lord, specifically for help, how did the Lord answer, he does say there, the Lord heard my voice, my cry reached his ears, and then the rest, the next portion of the Psalm, right

through from verse 17, sorry, from verse 7, to verse 15, has to do with the Lord's answer, and just note, how it describes, the Lord's response, to this man's prayer, then the earth reeled, and rocked, the foundations, also of the mountains, trembled, and quaked, because he was angry, smoke went up, from his nostrils, and devouring fire, from his mouth, all the way through, as you read through, these verses, as we sang through some of them, until you reach verse 15, then the channels of the sea, were seen, and the foundations of the world, were laid bare, at your rebuke,

[28 : 08] O Lord, at the blast, of the breath of your nostrils, that's the Lord, answering the prayer, of the Psalmist, in his distress, for help, how does the Lord come, he comes as the mighty God, as the creator, the one who can move, heaven and earth, for his people, because that's what it's for, as your next verse, shows you in verse 16, he sent from on high, he took me, he drew me, out of many waters, all the convulsions, of verse 7, to 15, are in order, for him to get, to this man, that's perishing, and to lift him, out of his distress, that's remarkable, and it's also, wonderfully satisfying, and wonderfully assuring, that as we come, to experience, whatever storms, we experience, in our Christian experience, in our Christian life, as we cry to God, we're crying, to the one, who can cause, such mighty upheavals, in the powers, that may be ranged, against us, in order to come, and just lift us out, and protect us, and guide us, and keep us safe, it's no wonder, he begins the Psalm saying,

I love you, O Lord, my strength, the Lord is my rock, and my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn, of my salvation, my stronghold, tonight, we come, you and I, with certain, reservations, certain fears, still attached to us, even if we've been, to the Lord's table before, it's understandable, but when you can say, the Lord is my stronghold, not myself, not the strength, of my faith, not my ability, not my achievements, not what I am, compared to other Christians, the Lord, is my stronghold, then you can go, to the Lord's table, and you can go, to the Lord's table, because this is, the master of the table, this is the master, of the ordinance, the master of the communion, the master of the waves, the one who rules, the creation, and it does answer, this question, that you often hear answered, asked, by people, in the world today, well, if God exists, does he not care, of course he cares, of course he cares, he cares, for his people, with such a, fantastic care, that if it's, necessary for him, to just tear mountains, apart, to come to the rescue, of any one of them, he'll do it, that's the extent, of his love, and of his commitment, to them, and God's authority, as you see it, there in Jesus, is never detached, from his power, and is always there, for the benefit of, for the support of, for the protection of, for the guidance of, for the blessing, of his people, who then, is this, that he commands, even winds and water, and they obey him, well, we can see, ourselves, in our circumstances, tonight, he is the one, who is worthy, of our obedience, worthy, of our service, worthy, of our remembrance, that we do this, in remembrance, of him, may the Lord, bless us, to us these thoughts, on his word, let's sing in conclusion, now from Psalm, 107,

Psalm 107, that's on page, 384, and at verse 29, down to verse 32, the storm, the storm, is changed, into a calm, at his command, and will, so that the waves, which raged before, now quiet, are and still, then are they glad, because at rest, and quiet, now they be, so to the haven, he then brings, which they desire, to see, oh, that men to the Lord, would give praise, for his goodness, then, and for his works, of wonder done, unto the sons of men, among the people, gathered, let them exalt his name, among assembled elders, spread his most, renowned fame, and we, very rightly, sing these words, of 29 and 30, times, when we, sadly, come to the departure, of the Lord's people, from our midst on earth, and associate their, being taken to heaven, with God taking them, to that haven, and rest, which they desire, during this life, and that is, of course, so very comforting, and so very true, but it's also true, of every time, when the Lord, takes us out of distress, into a little haven, in this life, where we know his peace, where we know that peace, coming to invade our souls, and that assurance, from himself, they're just as appropriate, then, that the storm, is changed, into a calm, at his command, and we'll, we sing these four verses, then, in conclusion, the storm, the storm, is changed, into a calm, at his command, and will, so that, the waves, which many broken, then are they glad, because of rest,

And quiet not they be So to the heaven he them brings Which they desire to see O that men to the Lord would give Praise for his goodness then And for his works of wonderdom And to the sons of men Among the people gathered in

Let them exalt his name Among assembled elders spread His bold renowned faith I'll go to the main door in case there are those who need to leave Otherwise please remain seated after the

benediction If you're going to wait for a token Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the communion of the Holy Spirit Be with you now and always Amen Amen Amen